

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



November 30, 2023

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[Original]

SCHOOLS

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, when I decided to run in the leadership race, I went all around visiting the communities of the province and visiting municipal leaders. I remember my first visit to Saint John very well for this reason. I met with Mayor Reardon in her office and met with Councillor David Hickey and Councillor Killen at Slocum & Ferris in the Saint John City Market. The first priority that all three of those individuals impressed upon me was the importance of a school in the South End. As they saw it, it was a catalyst for growth for the city of Saint John. It was seven years ago when the community got together and established this school as its number one need.

In 2021, the capital budget committed money to land acquisition for that South End school. In 2022, the government delivered a cost estimate for the school construction, and, 18 months later, no ground has been broken and the community has no clarity on the plan for this school. The city is setting its development priorities around this school. Could the minister tell us what the status is of the South End school for—

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Leader of the Official Opposition, there is a process involved when we go to construct schools. The first part of the process is land acquisition, and then we get into design. When we move from design, we look to issue our requests for proposals (RFPs) for the construction of a school.

The land has been acquired for the school that the member opposite asked about. The design is currently under way. This is a fantastic story for the school because it has a community hub in it that will provide services for the families and students of that area of the city. This is something that we want to try to continue to do. We know that our families and our children need additional services, and if we can have those right in the schools, we are all going to be better for that and families are going to be helped more quickly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the response. I would like a bit more information. The government said that the design and building work is under way. Can the minister tell us when this phase will be completed? What is the next step for this school that will be located in Saint John?

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[Original]

The community is looking to know when the next step is for the South End school. When will the design and build be done? When will this move on to the next phase?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is the same kind of question. As I said, the process starts with finding the land on which to build a school. This step has been completed; the land has been purchased. The decision was made, and the construction of this school with a community component has been announced. The next step is to establish a plan and work with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. Then, there will be a tendering process to find the business that can build this school. So, things will move forward as quickly as possible. I understand what the opposition member is saying and proposing. On our side, we are proposing something else to try to find a way to build our schools more quickly.

[Original]

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, minister.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I think that we can all agree that New Brunswick's schools are in need of some TLC. They are bursting at the seams, they are aging, and they have ventilation challenges. They need modernization and more.

Every student in New Brunswick should have a safe, healthy, and inspiring place to learn, and every educator should have a safe workplace as well. I can understand some excitement for a capital budget with more new school builds than we have seen in the past few years. I listened intently to the minister on the radio this morning as he described the schools that were approved for this year, the schools that had been approved in years past, and the schools that are on the list to be approved in the years coming. I have to say that it was hard to follow.

As we have seen with the South End school in Saint John, getting named as a school to be built does not magically move things along. I appreciate the minister saying that he wants things to move more quickly because it has been two years. Can the minister tell us how long it takes to get a school built?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say, just speaking personally, that it takes too long. It takes three to five years from when we start the process to when we finish the process and we actually have students and teachers in the school. Now, we are looking at. . . We did

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announce a fair number of new schools. We announced new schools last year, including one in Campbellton, for example. We would like to see students in these new, modern-state facilities as soon as possible. That will help provide a better environment for a quality education for these students.

We are looking to try to speed up the process by looking at design-builds, where we put two steps together. Yesterday, we had a conversation about how perhaps there is a modular solution to some of these schools. There is no magic wand to put a school here or put a school there. There are only so many places that build these things.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that, given the example of the Saint John school, three years sounds pretty optimistic. We are two years in since that was announced, and the ground has not been broken and the contract has not been awarded. So, I think that we are at least quite a few years away from that one.

I would love it if the minister would commit to tabling a report to just give us the schools that have been committed to over the years, their progress, and their updated next step and completion. We hear from lots of parents who are asking what is going on with the school in Bath. George Street Middle School was identified in 2021, and it is still on the list now. We do not know where it stands. A tabling of a report like that would be really helpful.

We also hear from district education councils and the parent volunteers in the community who put forward their priority lists of infrastructure and say: This is the number one need for our community. But then the government comes out with its priority list, and it often rearranges those priorities, taking something that the community recommended as a lower priority and moving it up. Could the minister tell us why the community's number one priority sometimes does—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Time.

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): I am not sure that I caught the last part of that question. However, we do get recommendations from districts. From year to year, the list of recommendations for what their priorities are will change. In the department, it is a transparent process. We use the quadruple bottom line process to decide what projects we are going to address. We do have enormous pressures on the system in terms of creating new space, and we also have enormous pressures on maintaining our infrastructure. I know that, during the McKenna years, when no money was put into maintaining schools, we then had to spend that much more money to get those schools up to snuff.

We use the quadruple bottom line. We look at the province as a whole. Unfortunately, when we put out a list of schools—and George Street is on the school list—not everybody is happy with it and people have to wait. Thank you.

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Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you.

PROPERTY TAX

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, New Brunswickers are feeling the pinch of the rising cost of living, and they are having a harder and harder time making ends meet. That is why our team has proposed broad affordability measures that would impact hundreds of thousands of New Brunswickers today, such as cutting the tax on essential home electricity. While the provincial government waffles on affordability measures and tax cuts, many municipalities across New Brunswick are trying to deliver relief to their residents.

Our team is committed to property tax reform to ensure a transparent system in which everybody pays their fair share. We would give the municipalities the tools that they need to address their housing challenges and more. Municipalities such as Saint John, St. Stephen, and Saint-Quentin have been clear that the property tax system needs more classes and that the industrial and residential tax rates need to be decoupled in order for them to be able to improve affordability for New Brunswickers.

Will this government commit to decoupling the industrial rate from the residential rate, and, if so, when?

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I very much appreciate it. The Department of Local Government. . . This particular question actually goes across three departments. It could be Service New Brunswick, or my department, or Finance and Treasury Board. But for the sake of this particular answer, I will try to do what I can in terms of the scope of my department.

Financial reform, which is coming and is scheduled to take place in 2024, is going to do exactly that. When people come to us, whether they are municipalities, smaller local governments, or rural communities, we want to make sure that we understand the needs of each one of those entities and that we are responding in a way that is appropriate for the future of our province. When you look at the capacity that we have with our tax base, there is certainly a way that we can make sure that the province's needs are met in terms of what we are responsible for and that the municipalities and other local governments are able to react to what they are responsible for. So we will make sure that when those conversations take place, those things are kept in mind and—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, minister.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Losier (Dieppe, L): Mr. Speaker, every day, it is obvious that the operational plan for the implementation of *New Brunswick's Housing Strategy: Housing for All* is very weak. Tomorrow, it will be December; the cold weather is here and many people are living in financial uncertainty. People are wondering what to prioritize between housing, food, and medication, and, in some cases, how they will dress their children for the winter. That is sad.

Mr. Speaker, I often hear the words “we care about”, but I will admit that I take them with a grain of salt; why? It is because New Brunswick is going through the worst housing crisis in its history.

This week, when the capital budget was tabled, I learned that \$29 million of the \$33 million budgeted for capital construction this fiscal year will not be spent. Can the minister tell us why only \$4 million of the \$33 million will be spent by the end of March?

[Original]

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. New Brunswick, yes, is experiencing a housing crisis, but Canada is also experiencing a housing crisis. North America is experiencing a housing crisis. So we have put the *Housing for All* strategy in place. It provides 22 different measures to address housing issues in New Brunswick. I am doing a presentation next week to update the House and the public on where we are at with the *Housing for All* strategy, because, right now, we are at the six-month mark from when the Housing Strategy was released. We have made significant progress, and I am excited to share that with the House and the members opposite. There will be information in there about finances. There will be information in there about the programs, and there is going to be really good news for New Brunswickers as well.

Mr. Losier (Dieppe, L): I cannot wait until next week. Mr. Speaker, of the approximately 333 000 households in this province, 88 000 are renters. Out of the 88 000, 24 000 are paying 30% or more of their total income toward housing. Many of these renters are one paycheque away from being homeless. We know that, last year, there was an average increase of 9% in New Brunswick. What is odd about this government is that the members keep comparing us to other provinces when they want to shove through bills quickly, but when it comes to taking care of New Brunswickers, they do not compare themselves to other provinces such as Manitoba and Nova Scotia. I want to know why, and I want to know whether and how the minister will convince the Premier to go back to the rent cap, because people need it now.

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Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We continually scan our neighbours to see what they are putting in place to address issues related to housing and affordability—every measure. We learn from the things they do well, and we learn from their mistakes. I have said this so many times: There is not one particular measure that is going to correct the situation we are in. It is going to take all levels of government, all service providers, and all of us working together to solve this. The opposition keeps talking about one thing. One thing will not fix this, Mr. Speaker, and I have been adamant about that.

In particular, let's talk about Nova Scotia. It has a rent cap, yet its rents have increased much more than New Brunswick's, Mr. Speaker. Definitely, we can learn from our neighbours. Thank you.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. M. LeBlanc (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week, the Minister of Finance stood in this Chamber and said: "We cannot ever talk about bargaining in this House very much. We cannot bargain here." He further emphasized: We are always engaging in "serious bargaining with all the unions". However, it appears that he might not have consulted with the Premier before making those statements because on Tuesday of this week, the Premier, unprompted, decided to unleash on the union members who were present in the gallery, even resorting to telling them as they exited. My question for the Minister of Finance is as follows: What developments have occurred since last week that prompted him to introduce legislation yesterday that contradicts his previous commitment to not engage in bargaining within this House?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you for the question. I think that it was clarified yesterday. Certainly, I did it yesterday and the day before in relation to the pension reform bill and the need to do so. I also clarified the fact that in the 2021 agreement, we had an MLA who basically said that we would have a process in place that would end in June 2022. That was a year later, Mr. Speaker. We gave extensions to that to the end of August. We gave extensions to that until November, and there is no progress today—no progress. It ended, so we are now at a point of saying: How do we fix this? How do we do what we did 10 years ago that worked just fine? Through a pandemic, through world events, it has been secure, sustainable, and fair to employees and to taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about negotiating a collective agreement. This is about a pension that is unsustainable and about having a fair and balanced approach for taxpayers and for employees. We are providing the information to each and every employee so that they will understand what it means to them, and they will realize the benefits. Thank you.

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Mr. M. LeBlanc (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To set the record straight, the extension was requested by the government.

I will redirect my question to the Minister of Finance, as it pertains specifically to his current role, because we all know that the Premier once held that responsibility as Minister of Finance, a job that he failed miserably at by not negotiating with any of the unions. My question to the Minister of Finance is this: Does the minister recognize that workers possess rights that are outlined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*? Is he cognizant that fair bargaining is compromised when one party opts to legislate its preference, and does he genuinely believe that imposing a unilateral approach on New Brunswick workers, especially considering the numerous orders that have been imposed on the negotiation, is the most appropriate course of action?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will try again. The negotiation process ended in June 2022 because no progress was being made. What the bill proposes is a process. If the member looks at it very closely, he will see a process in which all the parties are engaged and in which the actuaries are engaged. It will identify, on both the CUPE actuarial process and our actuarial process, the state that pensions are in and what is needed to fix them. It is outside of collective bargaining because that process ended.

The point is that we have an unsustainable program that is not serving the best interests of taxpayers and employees, a program that had been proven to be successful. The option that was presented after seven months of silence was a program that would cost a billion dollars to the taxpayers, with no long-term program that would fix this issue. The point that I am trying to make to the member opposite is that this is not a part of the collective bargaining process. It is part of a process that did work, and we are moving to the next phase.

Mr. M. LeBlanc (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the gag order has been given to the Minister of Finance, I will direct my next question to the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. Having cultivated a career representing unions, does she genuinely endorse the current approach as the right course of action? I am also curious to know how she would have reacted in her previous capacity, representing a union, if the government had imposed its preference on her membership. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Dunn (Saint John Harbour, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Minister of Indigenous Affairs; Minister responsible for Immigration, PC): Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. I actually pride myself on the relationship that I had with labour for over 32 years. It was not only with labour. It was also with employers. I had the opportunity to move to the province of Newfoundland and, for the first time in my career, represent ExxonMobil, the owner, as well as the contractors, the employers. What I would say is that during the course of my 32 years in collective bargaining, there was always give and take on both sides.

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If I had been in the situation where someone had signed an MOU and said: You need to go back to your membership and figure out a solution, I would have done that, quite frankly. I think that is what is missing here.

My recommendation would be to, as part of this process, get the parties back to the table and come to some viable solution that makes sense for everyone involved. That must include the New Brunswick taxpayers. Thank you.

[Translation]

WOMEN'S EQUALITY

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for Women's Equality. We recently learned of an important change in the structure of the Women's Equality Branch. You can verify whether my information is correct, but it seems as though the Women's Equality Branch, which had always been under the Executive Council with an assistant deputy minister, has been moved to the Department of Health. In fact, it has been moved to Community Care and Women's Equality. Meanwhile, we lost the assistant deputy minister and now apparently have an executive director. Can the minister give me the rationale for these changes and tell me how they will contribute to the advancement of women?

[Original]

Hon. S. Wilson (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for that question. Women's Equality remains a separate entity from the Department of Health and all government departments. It continues to be so. Nothing has really changed. It has always been separate from any government department.

[Translation]

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): We received different information. If you look on the website, under the Department of Health, you see Community Care and Women's Equality. The assistant deputy minister disappeared, and she is now in another position. The new assistant deputy minister is responsible for Community Care and Women's Equality. Could you clarify this situation, Madam Minister, because what you are saying does not line up with the information we find on the Internet and hear about in the field? Thank you.

[Original]

Hon. S. Wilson (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Well, thank you for the question. I think that it is important for the opposition to know and this House to know

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that, in any government department, sometimes you make changes. The Women's Equality Branch works with the Department of Health, but it is not under the Department of Health. Sometimes changes are made, but it is usually to improve things. This is not really anything new. It is a little different, yes, but the Women's Equity Branch is still a separate entity from government.

PENSIONS

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, the Premier agreed to a collective agreement with New Brunswick's school bus drivers and custodians that would see competing pension proposals referred to a panel of actuaries if the parties could not come to a negotiated agreement. The actuaries would decide which pension proposal carried the lowest cost in terms of risk and uncertainty. The Premier and the school bus drivers and the custodians, through their union locals, agreed that the panel's decision would be final and binding on them.

That is where the pension dispute was headed, until the Premier abandoned the agreed-upon decision-making process and decided to legislate his personal choice of pension. He broke the contract with the school bus drivers and custodians, and he broke his word. Why did the Premier break a negotiated agreement and go back on his word? Is it just because he feared that his pension choice might be rejected by the panel of actuaries?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I guess that the Leader of the Green Party may be half right. The process in the sense of the actuaries being involved and the process to define and decide on the pension plan, including what was sustainable and equitable for taxpayers and employees going forward, that was indeed the plan in the MOA. That is true. The issue is that there is no end in sight because the time has run out on the MOA.

The bill that has been put forward actually puts the timelines in place to do the very same thing. It only puts a timeline in place to get it done. What we saw, Mr. Speaker, was continual procrastination that was basically driven by the national union. It was not driven by the employees of the province but the national union because it just does not want to talk about it. The national union would just assume that the liabilities continually fall on the taxpayers of this province, 65% or so of whom would not have a pension plan.

The point is that this process that we are putting forward is simply reinforcing the very process that we had agreed to in the MOA with a timeline attached. Thank you.

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, not only is the Premier breaking the agreement on binding arbitration with the school bus drivers and custodians, forcing his choice of pensions down their throats through the force of law, but he has also launched a surprise attack on the pensions of nursing home workers with Bill 17, which will repeal the *Nursing Homes Pension Plans Act* and its regulations, if adopted.

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Mr. Speaker, nursing homes are plagued by a huge shortage of staff. I cannot imagine what kind of recruitment and retention strategy this is. The Premier surely understands that he can only exercise his authority if he has the confidence of his entire caucus. Why has the Premier decided that the only way to govern is by the way of the autocrat?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the soundbites that the Leader of the Green Party wants to continue to put out there, but there is no collective agreement that has been broken. This was a mutually agreed upon commitment to have something accomplished within a specified timeline. That did not happen. The process that we are putting in place right now is going to ensure that it does happen. That is the part that I just answered a minute ago.

This idea of having the actuaries look at both plans or all five plans and them saying: What can we do here . . . As far as the nursing home workers go, this is going to give them a secure pension plan. Unlike the current plans, no matter what hours they work, they can participate in a pension program. Mr. Speaker, we have a plan that actually has proven its reliability and effectiveness, unlike the discussions that went on 10 years ago. The point today is for people to just look around at the benefits that we could provide. There is fairness to taxpayers and employees and the security of a pension plan that is there when you need it and that government cannot mess with.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that we are seeing the Premier struggling to build respectful and productive relationships with New Brunswickers, and in this case, the unions that represent school bus drivers, school staff, and nursing home workers. He took the unusual step of personally negotiating with CUPE back in 2021, and ultimately, after collective bargaining, established an agreement with clear terms and steps that both parties signed onto. We understand that there have been proposals and delays on the part of both parties over the past two years as they work through this agreement.

The elements of that agreement have not been fully deployed to date, but now it appears that the Premier no longer likes the terms. He has abruptly decided to break that agreement. This sounds as though he has created legislation that mirrors the terms of the agreement. He has also thrown in three other unions, such as that of the nursing home workers, to further confuse the issue. We are deeply concerned. Imagine if our nursing home workers go on strike now, of all times. Will the Premier pause this legislation, listen to his labour minister—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition is deeply concerned because she was part of a government that campaigned in 2014 and said: If we get elected, we will get rid of the pension reform that the previous government made

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in 2013-14. That government said that it would get rid of it. Guess what happened in 2015-16? There were no changes. Those members did not even touch it because they knew that this is a good plan. They know that this is the future. They got a report that said: Oh, do not touch this.

The Leader of the Opposition was there. She knows this full and well. She is deeply, deeply troubled because she is confused about what she can do about this. She knows that if it is worth doing, it must be done to protect pensioners, and it must be done to protect taxpayers. This is a fair and equitable way to move forward, and it is a proven way to move forward. Even in a pandemic, this pension plan survived, thrived, and paid out more than the other pension plan would have had it been left in place.

Mr. Speaker, the future is clear: Bring sustainability. We are doing that all over this province and that includes for the employees and the future taxpayers of this province.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier's lack of ability to get a deal done with good relations and fair negotiation is troubling to me. We continuously see things falling apart with multiple unions and with the teachers, with nurses, and now with school bus drivers and nursing home workers. We have certainly seen this with First Nations relations and contracting.

If we see any strikes happen now. . . We are coming into the holidays. School bus drivers going on strike, nursing home workers going on strike, now, in the winter, with the holidays. . . The Premier's actions call to mind the Grinch. We should be extending the hand and figuring out how to achieve a result—

(Interjections.)

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Oh, I am sorry.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Order.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Will the Premier sit down, talk, and come to the solution as described by the actuaries, which have already been identified, rather than banging legislation down onto people's heads and forcing—

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, the program that was in place was not fulfilled.

The deal that was in place was to have a program done by June 2022. It did not happen. Extensions were given. It did not happen. The actuarial process was well defined. Both sides would look together. That is the same process that happened back in 2012, 2013, and

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2014. When the actuaries looked at it, they said, wow, this really has a problem, and we do need to fix this.

That is the process. What the legislation does is simply reinforce the process. It is not a matter of procrastination. It is not a matter of waiting seven months for no reply and then coming back with a plan that will cost taxpayers a billion dollars—a plan that is totally, totally inconceivable to accept. The idea is that this is a plan that puts timelines around the process where timelines could not be met previously. It is as simple as that—a way to get a resolution.

SCHOOLS

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I want to jump back to something that the Minister of Education said. There are two things, actually. He acknowledged that the district education councils put forward the communities' priorities for education but that the government sometimes decides to put in place different priorities. We have heard a lot of concerns about that expressed by communities.

He also mentioned the community-hub model that is going on at the south-end school. He seemed really excited about that model, which is a feeling that I know the community shares. I am wondering whether he can tell us why that community-hub model was not approved for the north-end school.

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to try to be nice here. In the speech that I read yesterday, I did say that there is a community-hub model in the north-end school.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): The time for question period has lapsed.