

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



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HEALTH

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, New Brunswickers have been really clear about their priorities. For health, they want access to care—primary care, childcare, and senior care. For housing and homelessness, they want each New Brunswicker to have a safe home that they can afford. For affordability, families want help dealing with the rising cost of living. And for education, New Brunswickers want a safe and healthy education system with the resources needed to deliver great results in literacy and numeracy.

Yet, in this legislative session, we have not seen legislation on any of these priorities. When we ask questions about the government's commitments and actions on these priorities, we are told by the Health Minister that the members opposite are not here to answer New Brunswickers' questions. Well, here is hoping that today will be different. Minister, how many New Brunswickers have been successfully moved from Health Link NB or directly from Patient Connect NB into permanent primary care practices in 2023?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, the brain is an amazing organ. It makes up 2% of our body weight, but it takes about 20% of our energy. There are 86 billion neurons being fired back and forth between connecting other neurons or other target organs. That makes our thoughts, our memories, our understanding, our perception. I still do not understand why the members opposite, with all of that cranial activity going on, do not see the progress that has been made in health care here in the province. They can look to the reduction in the number of people waiting for cataract surgeries, which is down 86%. They can look at the number of people waiting for hip and knee operations. Long-waiters of over a year numbered 700, and now it is down to 350, with the expectation that the wait will be under 12 months next year because of the work that has been done.

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Well, I guess that there are no Christmas presents from the Minister of Health today, but we will try one more. Instead of focusing on the past and the data on people who are currently waiting for primary care, let's talk about the future. How many team-based primary care clinics will the government open in 2024?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite should know very well that this depends on a number of things, such as recruitment and retention. We have been working very, very hard on recruitment and retention. Our department has been working with the RHAs, and we have actually seen a significant increase in the number of doctors here in New Brunswick. It is up with a net increase over the past year. We have seen a net increase in the number of RNs here in the province. We have seen a net increase in the number of nurse practitioners and LPNs, and

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we have seen a significant increase in the number of internationally trained nurses here in New Brunswick.

The member across the way continues to not see the progress that has been made with respect to collaborative care clinics. In Vitalité alone, 15 have opened up, which include 75 doctors and nurse practitioners here in New Brunswick, right across all the zones. Mr. Speaker, that is progress. That is concrete progress. The list goes on and on.

Next year, we are going to continue opening collaborative care clinics right across—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): We always get right to the end and the minister is about to say it and time cuts him off, Mr. Speaker.

HOUSING

Ensuring affordability in the housing market and making sure that every New Brunswicker has a safe and affordable place to call home is no small task. The government has been talking about it, talking about addressing it, with two ministers now. This year, midyear, we finally got a strategy on paper. Unfortunately, the commitments remain the same, and the money remains unspent. We heard the same promise of \$100 million for 380 units again and again and again last year and this year while the waiting list for housing has grown and grown. The Premier's failed attempt to launch an election campaign this fall gave us the slogan, Stronger Than Ever: Let's Keep Building. Well, we would like to suggest that the government start building, renovating, and refitting in partnership with the not-for-profit and cooperative organizations that are ready to create affordable, supportive housing for New Brunswickers who need it. To a member opposite, how many units of deeply affordable or below-market housing has the government supported the creation of this year?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am more than happy to take that question because when I was the Minister of Social Development in charge of housing, we initiated a number of projects that are now seeing results. I look across to Fredericton North and Armand LeBrun who is just a saint for coming up with 12 Neighbours, which is up and running now, servicing a number of people here in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we look at Charles Burrell in the Greater Moncton Area. He is with The Humanity Project, which is mirroring what Armand LeBrun is doing in Fredericton North. He has a number of small units, where, again, he is taking some of the most acutely sick people to his location and giving them a home. That home-first initiative is so important. We have seen a number of other initiatives that have gone forward and are continuing to be

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moved forward. When it comes to the *Red Green Show*, I would rather watch the Jill Green show because she is getting work done.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of being charitable, I will help the minister out. It is Marcel LeBrun who is the founder of 12 Neighbours and has been fighting for years to develop that project. If the government were listening to him. . . He points out daily the frustrations and the challenges that he faces working with the government to advance that project that he has done largely by himself.

That does raise a question. I wonder whether the minister is informed enough to know the answer. I think that this list doubled while he was the Minister of Social Development. Could you tell us how many people are currently on the waiting list for housing in New Brunswick?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Yes, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, Armand LeBrun is a teacher at Riverview High School who has done some great things.

(Interjections.)

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Yes, I know.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): I think the point is that there are a lot of people who are working very hard to do a good job housing people here in the province. We will continue to work with the people who are available and ready to make those housing projects available to house the most vulnerable. They are the people who need it the most.

Mr. Speaker, the housing grant that the minister went forward with is live on the website today. People can go on the website if they need some help paying their rent. There is a grant that is available to them. I would encourage people to go there because that is real help. That is a concrete action. That is this government making sure that the most vulnerable are being looked after the best that we can. That is real action that is available today.

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

TEACHERS

Ms. Landry (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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[Translation]

Last week, the Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries graciously replied to questions about education.

[Original]

But I would like to ask the minister whether he could give us some answers on these questions. In the report with 11 recommendations to improve the Anglophone education sector, one of these recommendations is to “increase the number of qualified teachers and specialized health services professionals”. It says that “the department will work with school districts and partners to develop and implement a comprehensive retention and recruitment strategy.”

Our teachers are exhausted, disillusioned, and frustrated, and they are leaving the profession. They need hope, encouragement, and appreciation. Can the minister give us details on how and when this new recruitment and retention strategy will be implemented?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): I will try to repeat the same answer as was given last week, Mr. Speaker. It was clear when we announced the recommendations that that was the first step that we would be doing and that we would have an implementation plan by the end of March 2024. That continues to be our plan. However, we are not waiting until the end of March just to come up with a plan to move forward. We have already met with the NBTA, AEFNB, and the Fédération des enseignants du Nouveau-Brunswick. We talked about retention and recruitment and how serious it is.

I want to say that I am proud to be a teacher. I am proud of all the teachers in our province. They get up every day, and they do a wonderful, wonderful job educating our students in the face of a lot of difficult, difficult challenges. Society has placed a lot of demand on our schools—

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

FRENCH IMMERSION

Ms. Landry (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): Mr. Speaker, in the same announcement, the minister mentioned that he wanted to improve and expand French-language learning, course offerings, and learning opportunities for high school students and rural students. He also asked the department to “explore the possibility for students to enter French immersion with greater flexibility based on readiness.” Can the minister give us details on what he means by “greater flexibility based on readiness”?

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Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I continue to be proud of the work that our teachers do every day in our province. You know, the demands placed on schools and on teachers today far exceed what was placed on them 10, 20, 30, 40, or 50 years ago. Schools have become a . . . We have to answer all the questions, and we have to respond to all of society's needs.

When it comes to French second language learning, we said when we released the recommendations that we are going to have an implementation plan by the end of March.

We did not release the implementation plan the other day; we released the recommendations.

[Translation]

It is clear that there is still a lot to do with the recommendations on expanding and enhancing French learning for our students in the Anglophone system. So, what will exactly be done will be announced at the end of March.

[Original]

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

[Translation]

AIR QUALITY

Mr. LePage (Restigouche West, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to be back.

[Original]

Mr. Speaker, students, teachers, and staff are getting sick from hazards in the air of their schools. As a matter of fact, 83% of the schools that tested their air quality had results above the accepted standards, standards that have not been improved even with the past COVID-19 crisis and the possible future outcomes. At the rate that this government is moving, we and the parents are wondering whether it is safe for our students and staff to attend the schools while they are being rehabilitated.

[Translation]

It has been proven that the air quality in our schools is poor. Along with students, school staff, and parents, we are worried, Mr. Speaker.

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[Original]

Can the Minister of Education reveal his revised plan to fix the air quality systems in the 64 schools that were identified, and can he clarify how parents and district education council (DEC) members will be involved in the construction or renovation process?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that the safety of our students and staff in schools is primordial. We take that very seriously. Air quality is extremely important. I know that the New Brunswick Teachers' Association has a policy regarding the air quality in schools and what to do if they feel that the air quality is not where it needs to be.

We test air quality in schools on a regular basis, and we look at the work that we are doing in the schools to replace ventilation systems so that we can continue to improve the air quality. Work that takes place in schools takes place outside school hours. I was asked a little while ago about one school specifically, and I received a letter from NB Lung about it. The district is taking that concern very seriously. It is testing the air on a regular basis and ensuring that the students are safe while they are in school. We understand that it is sometimes challenging to get that message across, but students—

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

[Translation]

Mr. LePage (Restigouche West, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I asked what the plan was, but that is not what was provided.

[Original]

Last June, this Assembly unanimously adopted our motion calling on the government to bring forward a plan to monitor, report, and improve air quality systems in public buildings such as schools, hospitals, and nursing homes in order to mitigate the risks associated with the transfer of airborne illnesses.

[Translation]

Since the unanimous adoption of our motion urging the government to submit a plan to improve air quality, it has been radio silence from this government once again.

[Original]

Inside and outside air quality must be addressed in order to mitigate the risks associated with the transfer of airborne illnesses, airborne contaminants, and other harmful agents, including scents.

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To the Minister of Environment, when will we see the proposed plan for the motion that this House adopted? Are new standards aimed at reducing the risk of disease transmission through exposure to infections and aerosols being written?

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the question from across the way. Multiple departments are working on this. We do not have an answer here today. I will take it under advisement to get an update for you, member.

I do want to welcome you back today. We missed you here. I appreciate you keeping us up to speed on the environmental aspect of this. We will get back to you with an update from the departments that are working together. Thank you.

MACTAQUAC DAM

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, if you take a moment to go on NB Power's website and click the "About Us" section, you will see a subsection that has the Mactaquac project. Make one more click, and you will get a lovely presentation on the Mactaquac Life Achievement Project. This gives a good explanation of what NB Power is trying to accomplish to ensure that the dam achieves its full life expectancy, until 2068. It also has a clear timeline at the end of it. The first step in this timeline is for 2023. It indicates that we will have the final scope and the cost estimate for the project.

Being that there are only a few days left in this year, can the minister finally enlighten us on what the estimated cost for this project is?

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, actually, we just talked about that during the media enquiries at Chancery Place when we released our energy strategy. We talked about the fact that the Mactaquac project has not been presented before the government. In fact, I think that I stood here in the Legislature a very short while ago and indicated the same thing. We understand that there is an urgency on that, and we have been working with the utility to make sure that it gets this to us so that we, as a government, can sit down and discuss what we are looking at as it relates to the Mactaquac project.

At the end of the day, as I said a moment ago in Chancery, I do not have a date circled on the calendar with a Sharpie as to when the utility is going to be bringing that to us, but having that date circled on the calendar with a Sharpie is less important than the utility doing the work right. We will have this coming to us in a relatively short period of time. The utility has been working on it. It has assured us that it will.

At the end of the day, whether it is our forestry plan, our Crown land strategy, or this, we will deliver.

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Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Understanding that there is an urgency, I am going to assume that the date that should be circled would be, at the very minimum, December 31 of this year, because that is what is on the website. I do not know. It seems like a simple answer.

You did talk about it in this plan. I had a chance to review it over 15 minutes when we were given a copy of it. Pages 39 and 53 are the only two places where I have seen it. What we are talking about is that the province of New Brunswick will evaluate the cost effectiveness. And there is an objective to finally complete the review.

We had an IRP this year, where significant resources were put to calculate how much it would cost not to do the dam, which is between \$2.8 billion and \$3.8 billion. This was enough to figure out what it would cost not to do it, but we cannot get a number on what it would cost to do it. Obviously, there is a number out there that the minister does not want to bring up. It is the big elephant in the room. Stop tiptoeing around it and give us the cost.

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, the inference that I am somehow sitting upon some finalized number on the cost of refurbishing the Mactaquac Dam is absolutely not an accurate statement. I do not have that number. We certainly know that we are dealing with a number that is in the billions. We certainly know that whether it is decommissioning or commissioning, at the end of the day, that will be an expensive project. We do not want to put the utility under the thumb and have it produce a number for us if that number cannot be backed up.

Keep in mind that, in the process of coming to terms with what the cost of that project will be, we have been dealing with supply chain shortages, a pandemic, and costs relating to a variety of its components that have gone through the roof. Understand that this is a large-scale project, that it is bricks, mortar, and cement, all the products on which prices have gone through the roof. We need to have the price, but it needs to be right. And we are going to let the utility have the proper time to do it in a forthright fashion.

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, understanding that there is a need for urgency. . . Now, you and I are probably the only two nerds who read IRPs regularly, so I am going to bring it up again. The 2020 IRP said that this project was agreed to in 2016. It was probably written in 2019. The line is very clear: The final decision on this project will be made by the provincial government in the near future. That was 2019. What is the near future to these guys?

I know that the Premier says that he does not like having the government interfering with NB Power, but not doing anything also seems to be some kind of interference. Is NB Power waiting for you guys to make a decision so that it can finally move forward on this project? We would like to know because it is going to have an impact on this whole strategy that we

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are talking about. It is the biggest project on the file right now. Why can we not get some actual information on this?

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, it seems as though the member opposite is more concerned about just putting out information than ensuring that due diligence goes into making sure that it is legitimate. It seems as though the member opposite is more worried about making a statement than doing something that is well thought out and clearly in the best interests of the province.

Do you know what? I am not going to get political here, and I am not going to point to the past, to when the Liberals made lots of moves without thinking things through well, when they moved forward with knee-jerk reactions. The history of the Liberal Party and NB Power over the course of time, from 2006 to 2019, was fraught with problems.

I am not going to bring that up here today and talk about the fact that there was a series of knee-jerk reactions that led to some significant problems for them. At the end of the day, you can do things in a number of different ways. The plan that we have is to do it once and to do it right. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

RACISM

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this is the final sitting day before Christmas. Last year, on the final sitting day, Dr. Manju Varma released her report on systemic racism in New Brunswick, with recommendations. One year on, the Premier has still not responded to Dr. Varma's report, even though she called for quarterly updates to report on the progress toward implementing her recommendations. In the meantime, incidents of racism are growing in our province—anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, transphobia, and anti-Black racism. Just last week, Mount Allison's Black Resource and Information Centre was the target of vandalism and hate speech.

A year ago, Dr. Varma called on the government to develop a clear strategic plan to combat hate and discrimination. Can the Premier tell this House why he still has no plan to combat hate?

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. Actually, I am really happy to rise today to talk about this. I was quite concerned, actually, over the past several weeks that no one was even talking about the report or talking about the importance of racism and what we are doing about it in the province. I do want to give you an update with respect to what is happening. As per the commissioner's report and its 86 recommendations, we have taken that report and are actually looking at the recommendations right now.

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We have composed an intergovernmental department group that is going to be looking at data across all our government departments. That is one of the things that we do not have right now, and this is very important to the people who are suffering from the impacts of racism. You know, when we look across hiring practices, for example, how many people do we have right now in the province who are working for GNB and who are Indigenous? How many are Black? How many are newcomers? These are the things that we are looking at right now, and I am pleased to report that, as part of this inter-governmental-department working group, we are actually collecting data right now—

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

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Well, Mr. Speaker, after a year, the government is starting to look at the recommendations, but there is still no one at the provincial level who is responsible for overseeing the dismantling of systemic racism in this province. It will not happen without this. Dr. Varma clearly called for this government to create a body with someone at the level of a deputy minister to oversee the dismantling of systemic racism across government and across Crown corporations.

I know of a Black teacher whose life has been damaged by the racism he was subjected to on the job, in the education system, and by the wholly inadequate responses of his supervisors. I know of an Indigenous woman who worked for NB Power and whose life has been ruined by the racism she experienced on the job and then by the inadequate response of her superiors. Then there is the systemic racism that exists in the justice and health care systems that Dr. Varma identified in her report. Why has the Premier failed to create a body to dismantle systemic racism across this government and its Crown corporations?

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, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate this question. There is no doubt about it: Systemic racism is real. There is no doubt about the fact that it actually does have a massive impact on those who suffer from it.

But one of the things that I would like to make sure that everyone in this House and across government is clear on is this. We have 86 recommendations. For example, if you look at the first one, you will see that it says something to the effect of: Educate the public servants or government individuals with respect to the root-cause analysis in terms of the definition of systemic racism. That is assuming that if you take educated people and you make them understand the definition of racism, they will no longer be racist.

These are recommendations, and I think it is important for people to understand that we need to get to the root cause. What is the root cause of systemic racism? That is the reason we are making sure that our approach is data-driven. Once we get that data, we can start looking at the root-cause analysis and making changes so that there is a real impact with

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respect to this file and the people who are suffering from this every single day in this province.

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Premier does not care about data. And apparently, he does not care about the damage that hate and racism are doing to individuals and families in this province, to the communities that they are part of, and to the society at large in New Brunswick. I would have thought that with Dr. Varma's report in his hands, as Premier, he would have made this a priority with an all-out effort to combat hate and racism across government and throughout New Brunswick. He has had a year to do something—anything—and all we have heard is crickets. Crickets.

What Dr. Varma feared has happened. She wrote in the report that she was concerned that it was going to end up on the shelf, and that concern was repeatedly echoed by those she interviewed for the report. Too much hope, she said, went into this report for it to fall on deaf ears. Tragically, Mr. Speaker, that seems to be what has happened. When will the Premier act against hate and racism in this province?

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. Once again, it is great to stand in this House and make lots of flourishing statements with respect to what your opinions are. But at the same time, I want to remind everyone here that we do not have any data in the province of New Brunswick with respect to what is happening with this issue. We have 86 recommendations. There is nothing in those recommendations that would indicate, if you implemented one of them, what the impact on racism would be. That is a problem. That is why we need the data. It is because we need to measure ourselves in terms of whether we are actually making any progress. That is what we are doing right now. PETL is responsible for this.

I can tell you that we are going across government departments. We are going to do an exercise in gathering this data. I will come back, and I will talk to the House about this. I think that everyone in this House knows that this is something that is very near and dear to me because it actually impacts all the people that I work with with respect to immigration and my personal family. You can rest assured that I will be back in here talking about this. We are taking it very seriously.

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

MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The year 2023 has been a really difficult year for many New Brunswickers. People are receiving some of the lowest social assistance payments in Canada, and people with disabilities are receiving benefits that keep them below the

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poverty line. Many New Brunswick families who used to be comfortably middle class are now finding it hard to pay the rent, to pay the mortgage, and to make ends meet. They are making really tough choices. This is not to mention the nurses and health care professionals who do not see a light at the end of a long, dark tunnel and the teachers who have so many challenges in the classroom, which we talked about today, and who have been thrown under the bus by their government. Then we have the government promising false hope to people—there may be tax cuts coming and there may be some help with the rising cost of living. Things have not been coming.

So, we are struggling with mental health, and I am looking for some hope in 2024. I hope that the minister responsible for mental health can tell us her vision to provide New Brunswickers with support for their mental—

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

(Interjections.)

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): That is great. Thank you, guys. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. Yes, we have talked about affordability measures, and we have talked about this a lot. We have talked about some of the things that we are doing and some of things that we have done. Absolutely, it continues. It continues with the monthly \$200 household supplement for social assistance recipients and Youth Engagement Services recipients to assist with the rising cost of food and shelter.

(Interjections.)

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): I hear the member from Restigouche at the back chirping. I think it was a thank-you. I think it was probably. . . You are welcome. You are welcome, so thank you for that. On behalf of the citizens of New Brunswick, thank you.

There is a policy change for spousal contributions for a care facility. This is the 60-40, 40-60 split when one member of a couple has to go into care. It used to be that 60% of the income would go there. Now, it is switched so that 60% stays with the person who is staying in the home and 40% goes to the person getting care. There are other options like that as well. We continue with the housing situation—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, New Brunswickers are experiencing challenges with mental health. Look, it is challenging my mental health to sit here and listen to the member opposite ask to be thanked when we have people waiting to get access to mental health services in schools

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where we do not have psychologists. We have people desperately seeking residential mental health support that was promised years ago to be delivered in Moncton, and they are still waiting. We have people who are struggling at this time of year particularly, and we see a lack of support and we see a lack of action on any mental health strategy. When we ask for the minister's vision of what might give New Brunswickers hope for improved mental health in 2024, instead we get a laundry list of niche promises.

This time last year, the government announced a Christmas present of a food and fuel benefit for all New Brunswickers. Perhaps this is your last chance to give New Brunswickers some hope. Maybe the Premier has his final statement. How are you going to help New Brunswickers improve their mental health in 2024?

Hon. S. Wilson (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question because it is important to know that there has been a lot of great work done. There is a lot of work being done. We know that we have a crisis, and we are dealing with it.

Besides some of the other things that I mentioned the other day. . . I do not have time to talk about all the things that we are doing, but we have reduced wait times by 60%. There is Bridge the gapp, an addictions and mental health website that can be used by New Brunswickers during times of heightened stress and uncertainty. The New Brunswick Addiction and Mental Health Helpline, at 1 866 355-5550, is a free, confidential, bilingual, 24-hour service for citizens dealing with various addictions and mental health concerns. There are additional beds in Campbellton for addictions and mental health. We have Planet Youth, a five-year pilot project that assists communities in finding ways to reduce substance abuse. We have increased funding to community organizations such as Atlantic Wellness, Partners for Youth, and JUST US. We are—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, minister. Question period is over.