

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

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Mr. G. Arseneault (Campbellton-Dalhousie, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As tradition, we would call it, after a lapse of time following adjournment, we usually ask for a 15-minute extension to question period. For today, I would ask that unanimous consent be granted to do that again, as per tradition. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Do we have consent?

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): No, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, this is the extension of an already sitting session. So, there is no tradition in that regard. Also, we are under a calendar, Mr. Speaker, so the members know very well when we're coming back. Thank you.

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, no matter where I go in the province, the issue New Brunswickers are most worried about is health care. Last week, I heard about it from Ivan, whom I met door knocking with David Alston in Saint John East. Last night, on our Facebook Live Q & A, we heard it from Janice and from Karen, who has been waiting for two years for a heart echo.

[*Translation*]

That is why it made me feel sick to see this status quo budget yesterday, when our health care system urgently needs bold transformation with leadership at the highest level.

[*Original*]

Health care dollars need to be allocated with care. That is why the travel nurse contract with Canadian Health Labs (CHL) has New Brunswickers so upset. How did we get gouged like this? Mr. Premier, given your ultimate responsibility for the system and your focus on dollars and cents, can you please tell us when you first learned about the CHL contract?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a real privilege for me to stand and take the first question of this session here in the Legislature. We do understand that the use of travel nurses in the New Brunswick health care system is not ideal. Certainly, we would rather have nurses who are there on a permanent basis. This was a temporary tool that was used in order to make sure that emergency rooms stayed open and that some of the testing and some of the clinics stayed open.

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Mr. Speaker, we know that it is not a forever solution for the health care system here in New Brunswick. But I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker—the \$3.8 billion that is in our health care budget is the biggest that this province has ever seen. I want to congratulate the minister.

Mr. Speaker, this is an increase of \$214 million over last year's budget. That is an increase of 6%. That is the commitment that we are making to ensure that people have health care in this system.

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contract with CHL was more than twice that of other travel agencies. It included things that we were paying for that didn't end up in the hands of the people. It was an irresponsible contract to sign. It is clear that due diligence wasn't undertaken. I would like to know the Premier's involvement, his awareness of that contract, what he did after he found out that it existed, and what the government is doing to make sure that we don't waste New Brunswickers' tax dollars in this fashion again.

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take this week and be very diplomatic and very factual, but when the member across the way says the money was wasted on travel nurses, I want to ask the people who showed up in the ERs who were treated by a travel nurse. Was that a waste of time? Was that a waste of money? The member across the way is saying it's a waste of money to have travel nurses. Mr. Speaker, there are no solutions over there, just rhetoric. When it comes to the question of whether or not to have travel nurses, would the member across the way want to have a travel nurse or no nurse?

Mr. Speaker, we're doing very well on recruitment. We have a solution on the pathway forward. Since 2018, there's been a net increase—a net increase—of 1 110 LPNs and RNs within the RHAs. In the past year—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I find it appalling that the Minister of Health doesn't recognize that, when you're giving money to a company that says it will transfer that money to food for nurses but then does not—does not—provide the accommodation or transportation expenses, it's a waste of taxpayer dollars under this government's watch. I want to know what actions the Premier and this government are going to take against CHL. How will they prevent a predatory contract like this from being signed again?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we all know the member opposite and her colleagues, and the history is

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that there's been no accountability for dollars spent in any way, shape, or form. That's been a tradition with Liberal governments.

This is what we know. We've asked the Auditor General to look into this in order to understand all the nuances. We were dealing with a time of crisis when we had a shortage of staff to provide adequate health care to the citizens of this province. We had our teams and health authorities react to meet that need. We've made it our number one priority to make sure our citizens are safe and healthy and have services in health care. So, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General will look at this and do a study. We'll get a report, and we'll understand all this.

However, I'm encouraged that the Leader of the Opposition is actually even interested at all in how money is spent. Because, Mr. Speaker, we've just now presented our sixth balanced budget, something the Liberals have never been able to do. We're putting record amounts of money into every category. We have an economy that's reacting like it hasn't in generations, and I know that it feels good on this side and that it hurts on—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting that the minister is saying they did nothing wrong and the Premier is saying we need the Auditor General to look into it. There's a discrepancy there.

I'd like to talk now about the more than 80 000 New Brunswickers who find themselves without a doctor, a nurse practitioner, or a primary health care home. To fix the health care system, we have to start with the stabilization and transformation of family medicine and primary care. Our team knows that you need to listen to and involve the people who'll make the changes on the ground. You need to involve them in the planning and development process. Anytime you're making big changes, you must have strong relationships. Partnership is key, and leadership is needed at the top.

[*Translation*]

To make these changes, the people who will be implementing them on the ground need to be listened to and involved in the process. To do that, you have to have built strong relationships. Partnership is key and requires collaborative leadership.

[*Original*]

Can the Premier tell us why nurse practitioners, nurses, and doctors were not involved in the development of the secret primary care action plan?

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Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, once again, on the first day of questions, I'm holding the opposition members accountable for their words. I was the one who wrote the letter to the Auditor General asking them to look into the contract. So when the member opposite says that I was saying they did nothing wrong, once again, her words are revealing that she's not being forthwith on the facts when it comes to this situation. That's why the Auditor General is going to look into the contract and how it all came about.

What I was going to say the other day is that, when it comes to partnerships, working together, and the people on the wait list—the member across the way asked for the wait list—is that we're working with the success occurring here in the province. Our population has grown. Again, it depends on what time frame you take, but, according to my learned colleague, there were about 64 000 people in the past number of years. Those people have to find housing, have to find medical care, and have to find schools, so the—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is specific to primary care, the first point of access for people when they are feeling unwell. New Brunswickers don't have that access today—not when they need it, not in their communities. It is critical that we transform our primary care system. We have heard that from all the experts in the system, and everyone in this House has agreed that collaborative care is the way forward. So I would like to know why we are not involving the partners who deliver that service in the development of the plan.

Can the Premier tell us when he last met with New Brunswick Medical Society President Dr. Paula Keating, with the nurse practitioners' association and Chantal Ricard, and with the head of the Nurses' Union, Paula Doucet? These relationships are key, and we need government to have a close connection with those leaders.

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that we are arguing to agree on the fact that, yes, we are moving toward collaborative care in a number of different ways. With respect to Vitalité, its collaborative care clinics are actually giving a significant amount of access to care in a very, very quick and effective manner. We have money in the budget for Horizon Health to modernize its primary care collaborative practices. And the member opposite forgets to talk about Health Link, which, again, is one of the modern tools that we are using here in the province to alleviate the fact that there were so many people without a family doctor. We have 54 000 people registered with access here in the province, and they are each tied to a clinic, a clinic that has electronic medical records, a clinic that has modern administration and modern scheduling so that, if a person's particular clinic is full, they can go to another. We are just—

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

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Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are really excited to hear all the rhetoric about primary care. Will the minister make public the primary care action plan?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric is certainly coming from that side more than this side, because we have concrete action plans. We have action plans, and I can just point out that one of the pieces of that primary care plan is the annual report sent out by the RHAs. We can look at a number of different areas where we can see that primary care and the access to family doctors, the access to that care when needed, has actually increased. Let's look at the urgent care clinic right across on the Northside. That is part of the primary care plan that is allowing people to see a physician when they have an emerging situation in their health.

So, Mr. Speaker, from a standpoint of making sure that there is additional access to care, we are moving forward with that. There are additional Health Link offices opening in Greater Moncton and here in Fredericton. Again, even if it is a temporary solution, that is allowing people to be tied—

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

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The responses that we are receiving this morning in relation to the questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition on the travel nursing contracts with CHL show us that this government is simply not taking the issue seriously. In reality, it is nothing short of a scandal that has been led by the mismanagement of the Higgs government over the last six years. We have heard that the Premier claimed that he did not know the finer details of the contract, but everybody who follows New Brunswick politics knows full well the micromanager that the Premier is would not have let that go by. We need to set the record straight.

We have the former trustee of Vitalité saying that this government was fully on board with all those contracts, but then we are hearing this: No, oh no, we only knew about two or three of the contracts. So, once again, what did they know, when did they know it, and can they give us an indication that they are taking this issue seriously?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, we are taking this seriously. The member across tries to make it into some Perry Mason courtroom drama. Look, we are going to get to the bottom of this and understand fully what was in the contract and who the lobbyists were who maybe introduced CHL to Vitalité. You know, who was promoting these contracts behind the scenes? Maybe that is something that the Auditor General can look into as well.

The fact of the matter is, we know that the travel nurses are not going to be forever, but we have called in the AG. We have called in the AG to look at the various aspects of these contracts and how they all came about. Again, the AG has great powers to talk to people and

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listen to them, and the results are clear. We are making changes when it comes to recruitment and the number of students in classes.

We've said that the RNs who are graduating will be hired. Now there are about 1 600—

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

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, as I said, there's no indication that this government is taking the issue seriously. We need to get to the bottom of it, but we also need to bring in measures to remedy the situation moving forward. Yesterday's budget did not show us any indication that the government is ready to wean itself off travel nurses. We know that Vitalité is on the hook with contracts with CHL until 2026. Those are for hundreds of millions of dollars, and all we saw from this government yesterday was a \$1.5-million increase to the health care budget, while it continues to pay these travel nurses six times—six times—what we pay our own nurses for accommodations, travel, rental cars, and air fryers. The contract pays the CEO of CHL for hotel accommodations for the nurses while he's pocketing the money because he's evicting seniors from their homes in Campbellton so that he can own those homes, Mr. Speaker. It is scandalous. What can the government tell us that it's doing to show that it is retaining health care workers in New Brunswick?

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

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I already talked about the net increase that we've received with respect to RNs and LPNs. Over the past five years, the number of RNs studying here in New Brunswick has basically doubled. When the Liberals were in charge, there were about 888 student nurses in the system studying for the RN. Now, there are 1 689. Mr. Speaker, that's pretty good.

It's clear that the member opposite didn't do too well in the accounting practice because the standard accounting practice talks about budgets being made on a year-over-year basis. The numbers that he was throwing out don't make any sense at all because, year over year, this budget is increasing by \$214 million, which is a 6% increase. That's accounting. That's accounting, Mr. Speaker. Again, I ask the member to look—

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

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, if the government is taking the issue seriously, we would have seen something for the retention of our health care workers in the budget yesterday. There was nothing. Zero. There was zilch in the budget. Nada about the retention of health care workers. You can do a little word search. There's nothing in there.

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The government's talking about net increases in workers. That number could be tenfold if it could keep the workers. There are two sides of the equation: recruitment and retention. The government is ignoring our own people. It's demoralizing for our workers. It disregards the workers that we have here in New Brunswick, Mr. Speaker. It completely disrespects them at the same time. There's nothing in the budget about retention or improving working conditions for our health care professionals. What is this government's plan moving forward for retention of health care workers so that we can wean ourselves off these irresponsible contracts with CHL?

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Health has been very clear. We have a net increase in the number of nurses. We are educating more nurses now—twice as many as before. In the previous Liberal government, there was money paid but there were no nurse increases. That is typical of Liberal financing.

Talking about where the real needs are, with \$214 million more in the health budget—the largest increase in health spending in New Brunswick's history—our health budget is \$1 billion more now than it was five years ago. Don't say that we are not putting money into health care.

Mr. Speaker, we are hiring more nurses than we are losing. We have people who want to stay and work in New Brunswick. They are coming here from all parts of the country and internationally as well. I agree with one point: Our focus is on better working conditions, better work-life balance, and better shift balance because they want a life to go with their health profession. We have a lot of dedicated nurses in our system. We are proud of every one of them. We are going to make a better spot for each of them to work.

[*Translation*]

NURSING HOMES

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the conversation will move on to the nursing home file, because it was the focus of sections in the budget yesterday. There are nursing home staff members who have received nothing. They have received nothing, and what I heard from them this morning is that they are thinking, not about retiring, but about changing jobs. If these people decide that they are so discouraged by their salary not increasing and by the lack of collaboration from this government, they will simply change jobs, Mr. Speaker. If they change jobs, they will not return to the system.

Can the minister tell us something encouraging for these nursing home workers so they can be retained, because, ultimately, seniors are the ones who will have to pay the price? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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[Original]

Hon. Ms. Bockus (Saint Croix, Minister responsible for Seniors, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. As you know, seniors are of paramount interest and concern for our government. In fact, they're so valuable and so important that the Premier has created a ministry for seniors. Senior care is very, very important, and we will do our best to help all those who want to work with seniors to keep their jobs and improve their conditions, and we will continue with our work.

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll tell the people who wrote to me to send the messages, because doing your best is not giving them anything. You have given them nothing. Then to take the words of the Minister of Health, does this government want nursing home workers or not want nursing home workers? Is that forthwith enough? So what can you do to help those workers? Give them a salary that they deserve because they are going to walk out before the summer, and it's going to be on you.

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, Mr. Speaker. That was a really interesting way to frame... I don't even know if there was a question there. It was more of an accusation.

We had a very rousing budget speech yesterday that talked about some of the investments we're making in the nursing home sector and in our care workers. Information about that was in the speech, but I can't wait to get to main estimates to answer all your questions. I can tell you there's very good news for nursing home workers and care workers.

Social Development's budget has gone up over 10% this year, and we're investing in the people, who matter, in New Brunswick. We're taking care of our seniors. We're taking care of our most vulnerable. We're putting our money where our mouth is and taking care of those individuals. I'm not going to talk about all the details because this isn't the time or place, but I'm certainly going to be very happy to talk to you about it during main estimates. That's the purpose of main estimates, so you can get all your questions answered there. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Premier has six business days left to use the \$246-million surplus for the good of the people working in our health care system and for the good of the people working in our long-term care system. This is the opportunity to let our nurses, long-term care workers, and other health care workers know we value them. Now is the time to provide each and every one of them with a retention bonus.

Nova Scotia did it. Prince Edward Island did it. To compete with Nova Scotia, it would mean investing \$100 million in our nurses from this surplus. The money is there, for six more



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days, Mr. Speaker—six more days. Another \$100 million could be used to support retention bonuses for other health care workers and long-term care workers. This would leave \$46 million to put against the debt. Will the Premier commit in the next six business days to providing retention bonuses to our nurses and allied care workers from this surplus?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think it's evident in this budget that we have made major investments in three main categories—all categories, really, but three main categories—health, education, and social development. This means we're looking to find new people coming in and better working conditions for existing people, and we want people to have a work-life balance that they really like so that they really want to stay.

To the Leader of the Green Party, we think the answer is this: How do we cause people to stay here longer? It's to have the right working environment for them to be in and to pay competitive salaries that compete with other provinces, particularly in Atlantic Canada. We're going through those negotiations right now. We have to find ways for people to value their jobs, because they're valued in them. We believe in those people, and we want to show that value.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Green Party's solution is always just to put money wherever, because it doesn't matter. Just put it out there because you might have some to pay off the debt. Mr. Speaker—

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

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, given the loss of nurses from our hospitals and the loss of personal service workers from our nursing homes, you would think the provincial budget would contain a budget for retention bonuses. But what does the budget say? Some \$1.5 million for recruitment and exactly nothing for retention—nothing. The budget ignores the problems we face. The minister and the Premier talk about an increase in the health budget and the money that they've spent, but it's not getting the kind of results that we need. This Premier is supposed to be about results, but he's not getting them. It's as if the Premier is on automatic pilot.

We need to care more about our care sector when he seems to care less. As I said, he doesn't even need to dip into next year's budget to fund retention bonuses. He could fund them from this year's surplus. There are six business days left where he can make that decision. I'll ask him again: Why won't the Premier use the surplus to provide retention bonuses to our nurses and other health care—

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

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, again, when it comes to competitive salary benefits and places to work, Horizon and Vitalité are certainly

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organizations that have done a very, very good job with recruitment and retention. The numbers show it. The member opposite can look in the annual report.

I just have some numbers that I want to look at from Horizon. Since April 1, 2023, Horizon has recruited and onboarded 609 registered nurses, 282 licensed practical nurses, and 634 personal care attendants. Horizon has hired 168 internationally educated nurses since April 1, 2023, and recruited 129 net new physicians.

Mr. Speaker, they have an improved culture in engagement that is driven by staff and that is helping with retention and attendance. Again, working together is making the results, contrary to what the member of the Green Party is saying. We have a competitive—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, nurses, nurse practitioners, licensed practical nurses, and other health care system staff are leaving their jobs for greener pastures, because they are not respected and because they are tired, and this stems from the chronic mismanagement of our health care system, which is falling apart.

Good people who were following their calling, who enjoyed their work, and who cared about the services they provided are leaving. Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier not ensure that this budget provided for retention bonuses for the people who are the heart and soul of the system so they can continue to work here in New Brunswick?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister of Health was very clear on the results that he's achieving with the new recruits in the system, a net increase in nurses. To the Leader of the Green Party, I'm fully in agreement. Results matter, and we are getting results.

I think the point is to look at those results. Let's look at where we're putting additional money into a better workplace. People are getting tired because they are working multiple shifts, and that has reduced dramatically, Mr. Speaker. Vacations are now a way of life rather than before, where they were something cherished that people couldn't achieve. The travel nurses play a role in that as well, and we'll deal with that.

However, I think that we ought to go back to the primary care access. We have a MyHealthNB app that's second to none in the country, Mr. Speaker. When sharing with my colleagues in Atlantic Canada, they say: Well, look at this. Who did that? Well, we're doing it right here in New Brunswick with New Brunswick companies. With the whole access to



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primary care, the next thing is navigation through the system. We're already booking X-rays and blood tests. We'll keep moving in a way—

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

POWER RATES

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to talk about the rising cost of living. More and more New Brunswickers are just hundreds of dollars away from not being able to pay their bills.

[Translation]

NB Power bills are one of the biggest monthly expenses in my riding, Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore.

[Original]

Yesterday, we learned that NB Power rates are going up by almost 13% on April 1. That's 12 days from now. In New Brunswick, when power rates go up, the tax revenue to the government goes up.

[Translation]

We believe that home electricity is essential and should not be taxed.

[Original]

We believe that home electricity is essential and should not be taxed. Removing the tax is a clean, simple move with limited administration costs and a low need for bureaucratic overhead. Will the Premier show empathy, fairness, and leadership by eliminating the provincial tax on NB Power bills for all New Brunswick households?

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development; Minister of Indigenous Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker to the member opposite, I will answer that question. Before we do that, let's muse a little bit about what provincial power bills would look like if NB Power weren't hit with a crushing \$110 million worth of extra fuel costs directly connected to the carbon tax that the federal government supplied. We know that costs are increasing and that New Brunswickers are facing significant hardships, absolutely. Our utility, as well, has costs at a provincial level, and those are creating pressures within the organization. We need to ensure that we create a climate where the utility can survive as well.

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When we see carbon taxes put hundreds of millions of dollars worth of extra costs on our public utility, we know that New Brunswickers are going to suffer. We need to ensure that we are here as a government, and this budget has a number of cost-saving initiatives to bring relief to New Brunswickers because we are aware that we have to be there for the people of the province.

PROPERTY TAX

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, affordability is one of the things that New Brunswickers are wrestling with the most. I was out knocking on doors, as I mentioned, in the Forest Hills neighbourhood of Saint John East with David Alston last week, and the other issue that we heard about was property taxes. Many New Brunswickers have had double sticker shock—once for their assessment and now with their property tax bills.

[Translation]

New Brunswickers are wondering how they will manage to pay that bill this year.

[Original]

We understand that 10 000 property assessment appeals were lodged this year, even with the tight turnaround times between an assessment and the cutoff for appeals. Will this government commit to reviewing and improving the assessment process with a view to providing New Brunswickers with transparent and predictable assessments? Will the Premier commit to property tax reform for New Brunswickers?

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The good news is that we are on a path to reform. Mr. Speaker, we started this process. You can go back to 2008. Shawn Graham did the Finn report, and the Liberals did nothing with it. The Alward government did some work to it. The Gallant government did nothing. This government started down the path to reform, and we are going to continue through the fiscal reform that is taking place right now.

It is going to be taking place with our partners. The Union of the Municipalities of New Brunswick, Service New Brunswick, Finance and Treasury Board, my department—we are all working together to find a way that is going to make sure that the system that we live under in the future will work for municipalities, for the province, and, more importantly, for taxpayers.

Let's talk about the credibility over there, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about when the Liberals under Gallant were in government and the assessment scandal. We have absolutely no lessons to learn from them in terms of how—



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

