

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



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HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, last night, I learned the heart-wrenching news that two more people have lost their lives in an encampment fire in Saint John. It's hard news to read and to hear. It's the worst possible nightmare for family members, as well as friends, neighbours, and the local leaders who work in that community every day.

The media article was blunt, saying, "It's been a deadly winter for unhoused people in New Brunswick". So it begs this question. What has the government been doing to support people living out in the cold? Please describe for this House what you've done in the past year to prevent this situation in Saint John. More specifically, what has the Premier done since last month, when we lost another New Brunswicker?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, it's very sad indeed to see the loss of lives that just recently occurred in Saint John. Homelessness is becoming more and more of a challenge here, not only for our cities but for cities across the country.

I think there have to be some solutions that we find together. Initially, I want to say that my condolences go to the families of these individuals and of others who are living on the streets in peril and in jeopardy to themselves and the community.

Mr. Speaker, we can complain and blame each other, but, at the end of the day, there have to be some real solutions developed to help people get off the street and to help people recover from whatever reason they need to be on the street. We have to find a future for them in this province. I'm convinced we can do that, but we can't do it by pretending that there aren't real solutions and real remedies that we can work together on. It isn't about a government going back and forth, and it isn't about arguing with our colleagues. It's about finding a path we can all land on to get people off the streets.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the Premier. We need real solutions, and real solutions are out there. This government has not responded to the homelessness crisis with the urgent response that it demands. In Nova Scotia, we see arctic tents deployed with safe heating solutions and an increase in peace officers. In Miramichi, we see trailers deployed with the support of this government, yet, when St. Stephen calls an emergency, we're still waiting on a partnership with the government for trailers and a location.

Then we have Saint John, where the Minister of Housing told us as late as last October that she had yet to start conversations about its shelter. We have Saint John where the housing

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hub model that this government seemed so proud of has yet to roll out. It's scheduled to start on April 1, which is clearly too late. We have Saint John, the Premier's own community, completely left out. Please tell this House why Saint John has been left to deal with this problem on its own when you have the power to help.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate why the Leader of the Opposition would want to make this a political issue. But the point is that we have been working with communities. I think that's evidenced not only in Saint John but also in Moncton and here in Fredericton. In St. Stephen particularly—talking about that issue as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned it—we certainly worked to find a solution there to get people off the street.

The sad reality, Mr. Speaker, is that some people don't want to come off the street. Some people just refuse to do that. I think when we want to find solutions going forward, and we want to find solutions that would require people who don't want to be living or shouldn't have to be living on the street... That's where we have to find the long-term benefits. That's where we have to find a future for the individuals and the communities. We can come up with all the other solutions that keep people on the street, or we can find solutions that find a path to get them back into life as normal and back into a future here in our province. That is our goal, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, the municipalities are there on the ground trying to solve the homelessness problem in their communities, because this government has left them no other choice.

[Original]

The same municipalities that the Premier has been shifting the blame onto with ads in the paper and inserts in the mail, whose fiscal reform calls he's been ignoring, have folks on the ground who are trying to help. They are deploying their own solutions every day, as we see at 12 Neighbours and The Humanity Project. They are doing this work alone. Local representatives are struggling with this government's piecemeal housing solutions.

The Premier is standing there and telling us this: We need to find solutions. Well, you've been in power for six years, and the problem is only getting worse. We need to see urgency with how this government addresses this issue. What have you done since the first death this year to make sure no other New Brunswicker dies in the cold?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think we've seen homelessness expand across this country, and some provinces have been in this situation for decades. The situation has gotten worse. We can

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learn from some of those provinces and learn what they have done that doesn't work. I think if we talk about what has been done within the communities, then certainly our population increase has been part of that challenge.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are, again, going back to working with communities to provide shelters, to provide food, and to provide the different programs that we have put in place. We can go through all of those. But the reality is that life on the street should not be an acceptable practice. We should find a way to help those who have been on the street. Right now, Mr. Speaker, the reality is, and I've said it before, that some people just don't want to come off the street. Are we going to consider that an acceptable lifestyle and condone it? Or are we going to find a way to help them back into homes and back into a life that's worth living? Mr. Speaker, I want to help them in real terms. Thank you.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Premier, we are asking you to find a way to help them. We've been asking you to find a way to help them for months, more than months—years. The number of people experiencing homelessness in New Brunswick continues to grow. The number of municipalities asking for help continues to grow. We've seen the budget for assistance continue to grow from \$8 million to \$11 million, but that isn't reaching the communities on the ground. Here we are with yet another New Brunswicker who has lost their life. I'd love to hear what you are doing. You mentioned what hasn't worked. Tell us what hasn't worked. You mentioned that you're trying things. Show us what you're trying. We see community groups in St. Stephen doing the work, and we see the community in Saint John doing the work. What work are you doing for New Brunswickers?

Hon. S. Wilson (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This indeed is a very, very sad and unfortunate situation, but, right now, there has been a lot of work done. We have outreach teams on the ground dealing with each and every one of the homeless. If they refuse to come in, we can't make them come in. We try to work with them and get to know them so that we can develop a relationship with them so that we can encourage them to come in and get the help that they need.

We know that most of them out there are suffering from trauma as a child. It's a sad situation, and it is something that we've worked hard on. We've done a lot of work. We have more beds, we're going to open a recovery centre, we've added additional beds at the Centre for Hope and Harmony in Campbellton, and we've worked with Ridgewood Addiction Services. There's been a lot of work done to address needs. But first of all, we have to encourage people to come in, to come off the street, so that we can help them.

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

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Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is one of those days that makes this job feel weird because people have lost their lives. I know that nobody on this side or that side is happy about this. Nobody wants to see this. I get it. It's one of those frustrating days. You're mad. You want to yell.

But the sad thing is that it is happening. We learned, maybe around a month or a month and a half ago, that somebody lost their life. Did somebody from the government reach out to the people right then and there to see what could be done, really done?

I'll give you an example because I've been on this file for three years. I'll give you an example. When you speak to people who are on the street, they say one of the worst fears they have is for their safety in shelters. All they have is in their jacket and in their basket. Are we committing to making sure we that have security in shelters? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I used to be the Social Development Minister, and the commitment of this government has never waned in trying to help people on the streets who need help. The Leader of the Opposition said places such as 12 Neighbours have no help. That's incorrect, and I'd like to set the record straight. I was the Minister of Social Development when we initially contributed \$40 000 per unit—\$40 000—for that capital project. We knew that wasn't enough, so we upped the ante and gave 12 Neighbours \$70 000 per unit. What the member opposite said today was inaccurate.

Mr. Speaker, on this side, we're devastated when we hear of the loss of someone who is homeless. We know that it guts the people on the ground, the people in various sectors who are trying to help them and are trying to reach out. I know the member opposite—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister of Health for his response and understand his reaction. His government is the one in office, so the minister has to list the initiatives that have been undertaken, and we, on the opposition side, accept that.

The Minister of Health provided numbers. There is one number we do not want to hear. Now, we know that four people have died, but the number is probably higher. However, we know that four people have died in our streets in New Brunswick. Yes, numbers were put forward for things that are happening. Can you tell me whether someone goes to see people in the streets to ask them the questions that we wonder about on one side or the other and that the Premier himself has asked, since he does not want to see people living in the streets?

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Is there someone who went to sincerely ask those people what they would like to see, what could help them, or how we could treat them to offer them a life of dignity? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I express my sincere sympathy to the family and friends of the individuals who passed away. It is devastating when this happens. There is an ongoing investigation into the situation that occurred, the deaths that occurred, in Saint John. The Saint John Police Force is involved. The coroner is involved. Various people are involved.

I know that the folks who are on the street, using the bynames' list, know individuals. Actually, when we did the research, there was vacancy within the shelters last night, but, again, as the Premier said and as the member opposite talked about, there is security. Sometimes people make choices that don't end well.

From a standpoint of support, when we look at the amount of money in the budget that was invested and that is going to continue to be invested... The minister is going to do estimates here over the next couple of weeks. You will see, point by point, where that—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): First of all, I would also like to join our leader and the Minister of Health in offering our condolences to everyone affected by this situation. It is certainly not easy, and it must be difficult news to hear when you find out that someone you knew has lost their life in a fire.

That being said, there are things to be done. Seven questions were asked on the topic this morning, but, again... These are questions we ask the government. They are not just criticisms on our part, nor are they insults; they are questions we ask the government. We want details. When we talk about investing money, details are required. That is what will satisfy people. We do not ask these questions just for the fun of knowing the answer. There are people who want to know the answer. What are the details?

Now, we are up to four cases that we know of. We do not want to get to five. Is there someone on the other side of the House who can rise to tell us what the concrete plan is to avoid a repeat of this kind of situation for anyone in New Brunswick?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite talking about what concrete plans are

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needed in order to change the situation that we have. We talk about security being an issue, but it's not only security that is keeping people on the streets. It's an opportunity for us to identify the real concerns. It's not right, Mr. Speaker, to have people walk by and try to encourage someone to come into a shelter on a freezing night knowing that, if they stay there, they are at risk, high risk. Yet, we have been doing it for some time, not only recently but also for many years. That's why, in this session, we will be bringing forward a compassionate intervention Act. This Act will recognize the reality that, when people's lives are in danger, we can help them find shelter so that they will not die, they will not pass away, or they will not freeze. From this discussion today, I am expecting that all members will support this because it's a clear path forward.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that is clear is that this government has no plan for a clear path forward. For years now, we have been asking for help for housing, for wraparound services, and for mental health and addiction treatment. Finally, today—finally—we saw that the Higgs government signed onto the new federal health bilateral agreement with priority areas including primary care, recruitment and retention, and mental health and addiction help. These were the priority areas identified by the federal government, and this provincial government needed to sign on, but it was dragging its feet. It is the last one in Atlantic Canada, one of the last provinces in Canada to sign onto the agreement. When the funding was announced 14 months ago that the provinces would have had extra funds for health care, this government had its head in the sand, fighting the pet projects of the Premier. When we're seeing tragedies, why did this government leave so much money on the table for so long?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, the tone of the opposition is really disturbing today. I am going to call them out on this, I'll tell you. They have weaponized a tragic, tragic incident. They've politicized a tragic incident. I am really, really, really ashamed that the opposition would take this direction here today.

Mr. Speaker, there is a significant amount of work being done, and yes, there was an announcement this morning with the federal government, between Minister Mark Holland, Minister Dominic Leblanc, and Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor and Minister Bockus, Minister Wilson, and me. We have been talking for 14 months. We've included this money in the budget, and the programs are already underway. When we talk about some of the mobile X-units that go out to seniors, about seniors without walls, about some of the fall prevention things—

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

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is absolutely not weaponizing a tragedy. This is us doing our job as the official opposition, when for the past six years, we've been pounding the table for more funding for mental health and addiction services and for more help for housing while this government leaves its budgets

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unallocated, unused. It has... I don't know. Housing—there was \$30-plus million in the budget, and it used \$5 million. The same goes for mental health and addictions, when money has been left on the table for 14 months and we're seeing tragedies happen.

I am doing my job by asking why this government has not been using that money. All it has been doing is padding surpluses when it receives money from the federal government. So, I do want to know... The minister said the money is in the budget. I want to know if the money is in the budget that was tabled last week, if the \$3.8 billion in health care funding includes money for mental health and addiction services that are badly needed. Is that part of the \$3.8 billion, or will we see new revenues coming—

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

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, the opposition is taking this tragic event and politicizing it, and it's a shame. It's a shame that it's doing that.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side know very well what we have been investing, and we know we will continue to do that. The estimates will be here in the next couple of weeks. The vote on the budget will be next week. I hope the members opposite support it. If they don't, they'll be voting against housing, they'll be voting against wraparound services, they'll be voting against mental health and addiction services, they'll be voting against nurses, and they'll be voting against doctors. So, I think the opposition should come out and tell us where it sits on this budget, and we'll get to work. We can have the vote.

When it comes to mental health and addictions, the Premier has moved dramatically. We've created the Housing department. We've had a new Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health. Mr. Speaker, they are the people working very hard with the people on the ground—

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

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, it's a simple question. We don't need to wait for estimates. It's a simple question. Is the money in the budget that was tabled last week or not?

We know the government has a history of padding its surpluses with federal dollars. A couple of years ago, \$40 million for surgical backlogs was announced moments before the provincial budget. Lo and behold, it was not in its budget, only to find out at Q3 that it had \$40 million sitting in General Revenue unallocated, padding its surplus. We have stakeholder groups looking for significant investments in primary care. They asked for \$70 million. I know Vitalité alone is looking for something like \$50 million, but this government is allocating only \$20 million. If you look at its Medicare budget, you see it is virtually unchanged from last year. That means there are no increases for patient visits, for

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new physicians, or for increased specialist care. So we're curious to know whether the \$1.89-per capita increase in the budget was funded by the federal government, or if the Higgs government—

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

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The dialogue being touted by the opposition critic is just... I don't know where to start, because they should know full well that we knew this money was coming 14 months ago. Yes, we included it in the budget.

The opposition is diminishing some of the investments that are being made here: access to primary care, \$20 million to expand collaborative practices in primary care; \$562 million to expand midwifery services; and \$2 million to modernize the electronic record. Mr. Speaker, those are some of the items that are modernizing the health care system. Those are some of the items we've been working on for a long period of time, and they're having an effect. We have decreased the wait time for cataract surgery, we have decreased the wait time for hip surgery, and we have decreased the wait time for knee surgery. Mr. Speaker, we are making progress here in New Brunswick. That's because of federal investment, provincial investment—

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

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. K. Arseneau (Kent North, G): Mr. Speaker, listening to this debate and thinking about people working full-time jobs at minimum wage who are not able to pay rent, not able to buy a house, not able to eat, and not able to pay their power bills.

It is because these same old Liberal-Conservative policies that have been put in place make the rich richer and richer and continue to make the poor poorer. This is not an individual problem. The Premier is not going to convince every individual to get out of a bad situation and go into another bad situation. We need to be looking at this collectively. This is a collective and societal problem.

Another thing we need to be looking at collectively is making our communities safer through prevention. Personal theft is up. Vehicle theft continues to rise. It has risen by 51% since this government has been in place. There was a series of thefts in my community. So I want to know whether the Minister of Public Safety will commit to making crime data mapping available in real time so that communities can—

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

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Hon. Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Minister of Public Safety, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do take the crime that we are seeing here in New Brunswick very seriously. It is something that is happening right across Canada. We are seeing that crime is up in every category, but New Brunswick is unique in terms of the amount of crime. Because of that, we have actually invested \$20.5 million for 80 new RCMP officers to work on that crime here in New Brunswick. They have been doing a great job. We have seen it going down over the last little bit.

In terms of public safety, again, we are taking the approach that you can be tough on crime and be compassionate toward those who need rehabilitation. We are doing both. On top of the \$20.5-million investment in the RCMP, we are also investing \$3.6 million in programming for every single inmate who comes into a correctional facility. This will get them on the right path to reduce recidivism. So while the opposition parties and the Greens want to take a soft on crime approach, we are doing the opposite. We are going tough on crime and tough on rehabilitation.

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

Mr. K. Arseneau (Kent North, G): The Conservative Party is going tough on spending. While the minister likes to toot his own horn on being tough on crime, what we see are new prisons and more bureaucracy. That is not what is helping our communities to be safer in the end. What people need is community policing. The RCMP has been giving us horrible service in rural areas all across the province. It takes an hour and a half—an hour and a half—to respond to calls in communities like mine and like those of many of the people sitting here, even on your side. So what I want to know is this: When are you going to make community policing a priority?

When my dad was in the RCMP back in the day, I remember that he would be a hockey coach, he would be talking in the schools, and he would be a scout monitor. We had police officers in our communities. Police officers aren't in our communities anymore. They are all centralized in a big building somewhere that the minister continues to—

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

Hon. Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Minister of Public Safety, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think that New Brunswickers today will see the contrast here very clearly. You have a governing party that respects police, including the RCMP and the hard work and quality service that the officers give, as opposed to our opposition members, who seem to be less hopeful about policing and the work that police do.

What I can tell you is that, on top of the \$20.5 million that we have invested in policing, we have seen an incredible uptick in community involvement. I have toured every area of this province and met with every single regional service commission. The number one complaint that I get is not about the quality of service but the quantity—there are not

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enough officers. That is why this government has invested substantially in the RCMP, and it is why this government and this department have invested substantially in municipal policing to expand the boundaries. We are going to be tough on crime, and we are going to ensure that, when people are in our care, we give them every tool possible to get them on the right track so—

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have established that the health budget this year amounts to a mere \$1.89 more per New Brunswicker for our health care, and that is while we now have a forecast of more than 120 000 New Brunswickers without a family doctor this year. The Medicare budget appears to be up just enough to cover contracted commitments.

I want to get this straight, minister. You haven't budgeted for any net new hires of physicians. You haven't budgeted to fill any of the current vacancies. I would like to understand how many of those remain. These figures suggest that we haven't planned for any increase in patient visits, any increase in surgeries, or any increase in specialist care.

Can you please explain to New Brunswickers, with our growing population that you like to claim responsibility for and with the Medicare figure not increasing, how we will handle more patient visits? How will we hire more physicians and have more surgeries and specialists? This is a commitment that this budget—

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

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is wrong—totally wrong—almost to the point of being incapable of conducting the questions here in the Legislature. I will tell you, I am serious, Mr. Speaker. I am serious. The opposition members took a tragic event down in Saint John and politicized it. They weaponized it. Now they are making statements that are incorrect.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the budget and you see that there is \$70 million to ease the pressure on our health care system and help stabilize it, that is going toward additional services. That is going toward offsetting inflation. When we come to doctors and nurses, there are a number of FTEs out there that are not filled. So even within the existing budget, those positions have to be filled before we add to them. When we get to the point where we



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have more doctors than we have FTEs, then I am marching down to the Finance Department and demanding more.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, too many New Brunswickers are waiting for a nurse practitioner or family doctor, and right now the list is getting longer and longer and longer. In January of this year, NB Health Link told us that 76 000 New Brunswickers were in the waiting room for a family doctor or nurse practitioner. As of last week, the number of people without a dedicated family doctor, nurse practitioner, or clinic grew to more than 90 000 New Brunswickers.

[Translation]

At this rate, we could have over 120 000 people on this list by the end of the year. Graduates are not choosing to go into the government's current family medicine system.

[Original]

Experienced physicians and nurse practitioners are packing up because the model just doesn't work any more. The situation requires urgent action. It requires commitment and leadership from the top. Mr. Premier, can you please speak to these 90 000 New Brunswickers and let them know how much longer they should expect to wait for someone to care?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact is, we need to do health care differently in this province. The fact is that you can have three new doctors replace one old doctor because the patient loads are much different. Access to primary care comes in many different forms, whether it is through a nurse practitioner, through a pharmacist, or virtually. To use the same old argument when we have more doctors per capita than just about any province, if not any province, in the country...

We have to find a better way to utilize family practitioners. We have to find a better way to deliver health care. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we have to find a way for both Vitalité and Horizon to work together, build our health care network together, and deliver services, no matter where in the province. If you can't get it here in Fredericton, maybe you can get it in Bathurst. Maybe you can get it at the Dumont, or maybe you can get it at the general.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to continue to pretend that we can isolate each other in our capacity, we will limit our ability to deliver the best service to the citizens of this province.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We agree—we need to do health care differently. A rare thing has happened in this Legislature where we all agree. All three parties, external medical

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societies, nurse unions, researchers, and patients all agree that team-based collaborative care is the way to go. That begs the question: Why isn't this government moving at light speed in an area that we all agree on?

In 2022 the Premier committed to advancing those clinics in four locations: Charlotte County, Dalhousie, Sussex, and Fredericton. Now we are hearing that it is going to take until at least 2025 before even one of those clinics sees the light of day. The budget last year had \$10 million for those clinics. Where did it go?

This year, the estimates from Horizon Health Network and Vitalité exceed \$70 million partnered together, and the Premier has only funded \$20 million. Can he tell us why he chose to support only about a quarter of the need for this health care that he wants to do differently? What will that cover? How many clinics?

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, can you imagine... The way that the Leader of the Opposition is speaking is to say that the only way to get better health care is by trying to throw more money into the system. Every government has done that. We have a billion dollars more in health care than we had when we started. That is a billion dollars more per year at \$3.8 billion. This year, our budget is up \$214 million from where it was last year.

While we can talk about all the nuances, the real improvement is in how we manage health care differently. How do we get a better system in place where we work collaboratively? What I want is for the Leader of the Opposition to answer a question. Does she agree that our two health networks should be working hand in hand, both in French and English, to deliver better health care to the citizens of this province? Does she agree with that, or does she agree that we should just stay in isolation?

Mr. Speaker, there is a way to provide better health care. Primary care is going to be delivered very, very differently going forward. That is why we are putting money into MyHealthNB, and we are putting money into a whole new—

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Question period has expired.

