

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**May 9, 2024**

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### HOSPITALS

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I don't think I'm alone in expressing my frustration with the state of New Brunswick's health care system and the lack of progress in ensuring that each and every New Brunswicker has access to care. The primary care plan shared this week demonstrates, again, that the government isn't listening to the people on the front lines, and it isn't collaborating with the nurses, nurse practitioners, doctors, and health care professionals that we so desperately need to retain. This government is not acting with urgency.

Today we learned of the closure of the labour and birth unit at the Waterville hospital due to a lack of anesthesiologists. The government has to be aware of the anesthesiologist shortage. It was raised in this House last October and earlier by people in the system. These closures have a real impact on patients, who now have to figure out transportation and other arrangements at a time when they should be focused on their families and health.

Can the minister please explain to the people of the Upper River Valley what he has done to try and prevent this situation? And what will he be doing to ensure the Waterville hospital doesn't find itself—

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

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, the people in the Upper River Valley certainly have been notified that between Friday, May 10, and Monday, May 13, at 8 a.m. that... The individuals who are expecting should be aware of that. They would also know that expecting individuals who are 35 weeks pregnant and over will be contacted by nursing staff in order to accommodate the next steps if, in fact, they go into labour.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a significant amount of work done in the past little while. I can point the member across the way to the report that just came from Horizon about some of the successes that have occurred. The members opposite seem to be blind to the successes that have occurred and only want to focus on one or two things that have been addressed. Look at this: "successfully recruited 2,303 new employees".

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

[Translation]

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry, but there are reasons people of the Upper River Valley are afraid. They see the example of Campbellton Regional Hospital, where the temporary

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closure of some services has lasted for two and a half years. People are still waiting for these services to reopen.

[Original]

What can you tell the people of the Upper River Valley to reassure them that, come Monday, there will be a plan in place to ensure there won't be future closures of this unit and that we will have the anesthesiologists that the system needs?

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll point to the press release from the Horizon Health Network. This is evidence that says the unit will reopen Monday, May 13, at 8 a.m. If the member across the way doesn't want to believe a press release out of Horizon, I would suggest that she talk to Horizon. The fact of the matter is that I believe the press release. I believe that obstetrics will open again at 8 a.m. on May 13.

However, when it comes to the recruitment of anesthesiologists and all doctors right across the system, there's been tremendous success. Again, I point to the *Report to Our Communities* from Horizon Health. This is the fourth report that Horizon has done. They were nonexistent when the member opposite was advising Brian Gallant. The fact of the matter is, of those 2 303 new employees at Horizon, 150 were physicians—150 were physicians. Mr. Speaker, that's concrete action. That's getting the work done, and that's because—

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

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That number is nowhere near representative of the need, so it's concerning to see a celebration when less than 10% of the hires are the family doctors and people that we need most in the system. So I share New Brunswickers' concerns with how the health care system is being administered right now.

I want to advocate for the patients and people of Charlotte County and the Charlotte County Hospital. Two years ago, the community came together and raised lots of money for a CT scanner for their community hospital. The Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation chipped in because it was seeing the long waits that patients were experiencing, the challenges of driving from St. Stephen to Saint John for these tests, and the pressure and cost that this was putting on the people of Charlotte County. The funds were raised, the CT scanner was purchased, and now the community is waiting. We hear that the equipment is in storage. Can the minister tell the people of Charlotte County the reason for this two-year delay and when they can expect this piece of equipment to be installed and in use for the people of this community?

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**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just need to reset the table here for the member opposite. This is a clear and concise definition of what primary health care really is.

*PHC is a whole-of-society approach to health that aims to ensure the highest possible level of health and wellbeing and their equitable distribution by focusing on people's needs ... as early as possible along the continuum from health promotion and disease prevention to treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care, and as close as feasible to people's everyday environment.*

That's from the World Health Organization, Mr. Speaker. This is what we focus on with primary health care—the people's needs, and the patient's needs. I know that the member can go around the province and say: What about this location; what about this location? Mr. Speaker, we are taking a province-wide approach to collaboration within the health care system. That is addressing the needs of the patient, the needs—

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

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I think the people of St. Stephen and Charlotte County will be as frustrated as I am that when asked... They have been waiting for this CT scanner for two years. They put their money toward it. The patients continue to drive to Saint John. It's in storage, waiting to be put into use, and you're sitting here lecturing us on the definition of primary care. I think that the people of St. Stephen and Charlotte County deserve to hear when this piece of equipment is going to be installed and in use for their community.

**Hon. Ms. Bockus** (Saint Croix, Minister responsible for Seniors, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond to that question. I have been in constant contact with the President of the Charlotte County Hospital Foundation about the installation of the CT scanner. Yes, the money was raised two years ago, but the equipment is very, very heavy. We needed to remodel the room in the Charlotte County Hospital to bring it up to spec so that this equipment could be installed.

There have been a few delays. It was supposed to be installed by the end of April. I don't know what the delay is. I will certainly inquire. There are delays, and the equipment is still on schedule to be installed. Yes, it will be wonderful that people won't have to drive to Saint John or Fredericton for their CT scans. Thank you.

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member opposite shared some information there, but I am confused by what she said. She said that there were some delays but it's on schedule. She doesn't know what the delay is. It was supposed to be April. I'm hoping that you can provide some more clarity to the people of your community. When can we expect the room to be ready and the CT scanner to be installed?

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**Hon. Ms. Bockus** (Saint Croix, Minister responsible for Seniors, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know for sure when the CT scanner will be installed. It was supposed to be done by the end of April. Now I'm informed that there is another delay, and it could possibly be sometime this summer. When I do have that information, I will certainly share it with the people of Charlotte County. Thank you.

### ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We learned this week that the government has suspended the introduction of its so-called compassionate intervention legislation. What we need is a commitment from this government to abandon this legislation completely. It has been seen as a cynical attempt to clean up the streets without addressing the underlying social determinants of health.

Forcing people into treatment has been described as a violation of basic human rights and has not been proven effective based on data and research. In fact, researchers and experts have told us that it can make matters worse. Following their release from involuntary treatment, people are at a higher risk of overdose and death. It's a very dangerous solution to a complex problem. Mr. Speaker, is the minister prepared to admit that she was wrong in bringing this forward and commit to abandoning this idea once and for all? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. S. Wilson** (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Thank you for that question. I want to remind this House that we're talking about the most vulnerable people in society. We've already lost several people, and we don't want that to continue. Losing one person is just one too many. We are committed to moving this forward. Yes, we put a hold on it for now, but that's because we want to take a deeper dive to really look at what other jurisdictions are doing and what their successes are so that we can implement them. Other jurisdictions have been successful in dealing with people with severe substance use disorder, and we want to be part of that solution. We want to make sure we get this right when we bring it forward. This is something we've committed to.

I get many emails. A lot of people are looking forward to this legislation because they don't know how to deal with some of their loved ones. I'll remind everybody that these people are someone's children and someone's—

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

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, researchers and experts have told us this is not the answer. I wonder whether the government has consulted with them. What the researchers and experts are telling us is that it leads to the risk of overdose and death. What we need is a government that cares for the needs of New Brunswickers, instead of one that causes chaos daily. Right now, there are people who cannot get access to

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treatment who want to get access to treatment. They are being turned away. This approach is taking a hammer to something that requires care.

This week, the New Brunswick Psychiatric Association came out against this idea. It said that this type of intervention is not compatible with ethical medical practice. It said that we need better access to voluntary mental health and drug addiction care within local communities. We also need to increase mental health and addiction services in jails and establish a mental health court province-wide. Will the minister abandon this reckless position and get to the root cause of the issue?

**Hon. S. Wilson** (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. For us, not addressing these issues is not an option. Maybe the opposition doesn't care about the people who are suffering on the streets. But do you know what? I do. This side of the House cares. We are going to address this. We don't want to make the mistakes that other jurisdictions have. We don't want to do things that don't serve the purpose they are supposed to. We want to make sure that we get this legislation right. Yes, we will talk to professionals. We will listen to anybody who wants to bring solutions forward, but I have not heard one solution from the members opposite.

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, we need to increase access to voluntary treatment. We need a government that focuses on the root causes of homelessness, substance use disorders, and mental illness, instead of pulling people off the streets with no plan—no plan—for social supports following their release and reintegration into society. We need to focus on programs to help them get ahead, not force them into institutions. We need to offer things such as quick access to housing for the homeless population and those suffering from substance use disorders. We need to implement policies to address poverty and income inequality. We need to develop programs that allow people to regain self-esteem and resume an active role in the community. Mr. Speaker, that would be a compassionate approach to take. Will the minister abandon her misguided idea and truly follow a compassionate approach to care?

**Hon. S. Wilson** (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we have intervention workers working on the ground with people who are homeless and suffering from substance use disorder. Some 85% of them are there because of childhood trauma and different situations in their life. They didn't have the ordinary life that most people get to enjoy. We want to help them, and we want to provide the right services for them. When people become a danger to themselves or to someone else, it's incumbent upon government to do something about it and address those needs. How we are going to do it moving forward is by having the right services in place. We're going to have the right treatments in place. That's one of the reasons that we put a hold on this. We wanted to make sure the support systems were there at every step of recovery, and we're going to do this.

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[*Translation*]

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. LePage** (Restigouche West, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the 2024-25 budget, I noticed two expense items for the Climate Change Fund.

It shows the traditional investment of \$47 million to replenish the coffers of other departments and corporations to address some effects of climate change, though more than \$56 million was spent last year.

However, what a surprise it was to learn that another \$18 million is available this year for the Climate Change Fund, in the form of subsidies for large businesses. Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change explain the reasoning behind this \$18 million for large businesses?

[*Original*]

**Hon. G. Savoie** (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. I want to make sure that I understand the question from the member opposite correctly. Is he talking about the Output-Based Pricing System? Is that what he is referencing? I just want to make sure that I understand this correctly.

Basically, what we're trying to accomplish here is... Large corporations, on their own, are not necessarily going to invest in climate change adaptation or mitigation. So, with this program, we are making sure that there are funds set aside—that they are forced to set aside, based on their output—that encourage them to invest in that material or that system. At the end of the day, what is taken away from them gets given back, and they are encouraged to invest even more.

We are looking for a reduction in the overall output from these large industrial emitters. Through this program, we're making sure that these numbers keep dropping. If I remember correctly, I believe that we want to get them down to 18%.

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

**Mr. LePage** (Restigouche West, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During estimates, we also heard that \$18 million was collected for the Climate Change Fund last year and will be awarded this year. In this year's budget, under miscellaneous revenues, we see that another \$19.2 million will be collected. Can the Minister of Environment explain how government collects this money and from whom?

**Hon. G. Savoie** (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Climate Change Fund supports climate



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change initiatives in New Brunswick. These initiatives reduce greenhouse gas emissions, similar to what I just talked about with the Output-Based Pricing System. They build resiliency to climate change and/or increase climate change literacy in the province. Through the fund, the province has been able to accomplish a variety of initiatives, such as the launch of the provincial electric vehicle rebate program and building upon the electric vehicle charging across the province. We've also funded energy efficiency programs such as NB Power's Enhanced Energy Savings Program, established climate change programming in school systems, and provided opportunities to grow the clean technology sector by funding the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. LePage** (Restigouche West, L): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, but the minister just explained the \$47 million, not the \$18 million. We are looking for how the \$18 million under the Climate Change Fund will be attributed. Who is admissible? What are the criteria? What are the GHG reduction targets? What is the deadline for applications? Who will select the winning projects? How can the minister justify \$18 million to large industries when our business sector and especially New Brunswickers are most affected by the damaging effects caused by climate change?

**Hon. G. Savoie** (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know that I'll be able to answer all of that in the 11 minutes and 37 seconds that we have left. I think that the best thing to do... To be fair to the member opposite and with the level of detail that he is looking for in that one question, which had about 17 questions in it, I will take it under advisement. I will report back to the member in order to make sure that I can get those direct answers for him.

Ultimately, I think that it is important to recognize, through the Environment side of the Department of Environment and Local Government, the work that is done by staff in this department every single day to try to find a balance between protecting our environment while also doing the right thing by making sure that we can advance the interests of this province by protecting its citizens. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the employees of this department work their utmost every single day to ensure that those achievements, those goals, are met. Through the policies that we've enacted, we will make sure that we can—

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

## COLLEGES

**Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure could give us an update as to when we can expect the RFP for the drawings and designs of the new college in Bathurst to come out. That is, when can we expect the RFP for the drawings and the designs to come out?

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**Hon. Mr. Ames** (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will take that under advisement and get him some details. Thank you.

**Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): I appreciate the answer, Mr. Speaker. This announcement came out on December 20. It was actually on my birthday last year. That is five months ago for drawings and designs. We still don't have a date to have that coming. I am going to ask a question of the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

The Minister of Tourism essentially fired DTI from doing her project on the museum. Considering that we are still waiting five months for a design, is the minister considering doing the same thing in his department?

**Hon. Mr. Turner** (Moncton South, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Minister responsible for Immigration; Minister responsible for Opportunities NB; Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that question. No, the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is very, very satisfied with the relationship with DTI and all other government departments that we work with.

I have been to Bathurst. I have been to the project, I have been to the school, and I have toured it. Really, I think that it is outstanding to see the progress that is being made. The school was hoping to get a project off the ground that would increase student housing. Unfortunately, the town actually turned its back on that project. We are working together with it on housing.

We also want to make sure that the building moves forward as efficiently as possible. At the same time, there is a lot of work to be done. We appreciate that work that is being done by DTI. I don't know how you can short-change it. These things don't happen overnight. It takes a lot of work, research, and engineers to make sure that we get the thing right. That market is growing. There are a lot of great students that are coming from other countries to the area to train and learn at—

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

[*Translation*]

## POVERTY

**Mr. K. Arseneau** (Kent North, G): Mr. Speaker, recent data from the Saint John Human Development Council shows that poverty in New Brunswick is on the rise. In fact, 18.7% of children lived in poverty in 2021, while 16.6% did in 2020.

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According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, poverty costs New Brunswick about \$1 billion per year in gross domestic product. One of the most effective ways to eliminate deep poverty is to establish a guaranteed basic income. A guaranteed basic income pilot project in Prince Edward Island has been proposed, of which the federal government would cover 75% of the costs. New Brunswick would benefit greatly from a similar program.

My question is for the Premier: Will he join me in asking the Trudeau Liberal government to fund a guaranteed basic income pilot project here in New Brunswick?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Ms. Green** (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased that the member opposite is talking about poverty in New Brunswick and the work that this government is doing to address poverty across New Brunswick, not just in the Saint John area. This government has introduced a significant increase to the minimum wage. We have put 50% more into our Low-Income Seniors' Benefit. We have increased our social assistance rates by \$200 per month. We have done a significant amount of work to address poverty in New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, I can agree that much more work needs to be done, and this government is here to do the work. All these departments are working together to look at affordability issues for New Brunswickers. We are working on housing solutions for New Brunswickers. We understand that there are New Brunswickers who are struggling, and this government is here to help New Brunswickers.

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

**Mr. K. Arseneau** (Kent North, G): It is not enough, because 18.7% of children are still living in poverty. There is a solution, but it is too bad that neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals are joining us in calling for a guaranteed livable income for New Brunswick. They have no interest in really helping the most vulnerable and improving the common good. We already have forms of guaranteed income that work, such as the Canada Child Benefit, Old Age Security, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Data from UNB economist Herb Emery show the massive benefits that a targeted guaranteed livable income would have.

It would reduce poverty rates from 10% to 2%, it would eliminate deep poverty, and it would have minimal impact on labour supply. So why won't the Premier join me in calling on the Trudeau Liberals to fund a guaranteed livable income pilot project here in New Brunswick?

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**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you for the question. To the member, I think the balance is in trying to find the right process where we can help those who need it the most and also find ways to get people into the workforce, whether it be through education or just through counselling and coaching. It is about finding education programs that work, that identify where people's strengths are and make it work.

During the time of COVID-19 and the CERB, I think we saw that many people stayed home out of the workforce, and it created a tremendous strain on the system. So we need to find a balance between helping those who need it the most and helping those who can help themselves to get into the workforce. We need to do it in a meaningful way that both helps them and helps our ability to succeed as a province and work together. I think it is a balancing act, and we have to find a way to go forward. When we talk to different people, we learn that we have more workers now in the system than we've had, but we also have more demand than we've had. So we need to find ways to help people get involved in the workforce and to help those who aren't able to be in the workforce to—

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

## GASOLINE PRICES

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While government ministers are flying first class and staying in fancy hotels, New Brunswickers are struggling to pay their rents and mortgages and fill up their tanks. This government cannot be trusted because its words don't match its actions. Here's one example.

Months ago, the Premier complained about the EUB formula that made New Brunswickers pay more for gas. He supported a review of the formula and even mused about changing the regulations. The EUB reviewed the formula and decided it should stay, and New Brunswickers right now continue to pay 3¢ more for gas. To this, the Premier says that he is pleased. He is happy that New Brunswickers are paying more for gas when the price should be put on the refiners. Does the Premier now support the additional 3¢ on the price of gas for New Brunswickers, or will he direct the EUB to stop passing the cost on to New Brunswickers?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition fails to recognize that we are in a regulated market and fails to recognize that all the Atlantic Provinces—Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island—are in a regulated market and actually saw an increase with this Clean Fuel Standard tax at the same time. The opposition also fails to recognize that the 3¢ that we are currently paying is compared to the over 5¢ that is being paid in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Prince Edward Island too—we are not sure of their rate because it is a blended rate.



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Mr. Speaker, it is finally time for the Leader of the Opposition to recognize that a regulated market requires a formula that includes the Clean Fuel Standard that comes from the federal regulation. There is no hiding. The Trudeau government's imposition of costs in our province has been outstanding, and this is just one more example. If we get rid of this and the carbon tax... I will put forward a motion tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, and I expect support from the Liberals.

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier is going on about the regulated market that he himself mused about changing. You blamed the regulated market and then talked about maybe changing it, but now you're saying: No, I'm actually not going to do anything about it; we're going to continue to let New Brunswickers pay more. You're comparing us to Nova Scotia? That's pretty rich. In Nova Scotia, they do things quite differently than we do here. They fully fund their health care system and pay significantly more per capita for the health of their people. They also better fund their education system, and they don't have the same shortages. So if you want to compare yourself to Nova Scotia and its gas pricing, go ahead, but I'd like to see us pick up on some of their other examples.

Will the Premier say today that he is in support of New Brunswickers paying 3¢ more on the price of gas and that he chooses not to give them that relief?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting. Once again, we see the only solution that the Leader of the Opposition has, or any member of the opposition has, for that matter: Just spend more money, and it will all get better. I would suggest that our health stats be compared directly with those in Nova Scotia. Compare our actual service providers and our actual number of patients that are on wait lists. Look at the results that are happening here in this province. Look at the new hires that are happening here in this province. Look at the hip and knee surgeries happening here in this province. Look at the cataract surgeries. Mr. Speaker, look beyond the dollars that are spent.

I know that it's difficult. It's very difficult for any member over there to look at the actual results because the only thing that is understood is how much money can be spent.

That applies the same way in education, and it certainly applies in this situation. We have asked for a regulation review to understand whether or not there's a benefit. Now, if the federal government keeps dumping more taxes onto the province, it may be a pretty obvious solution, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that the Premier is comfortable asking New Brunswickers to spend more. We are prepared to give them that relief, and he refuses to. I think he needs to own that because that 3¢ could be removed today. He has the power to do it. He's choosing not to and should take responsibility, because New Brunswickers are getting increasingly

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frustrated with a government that talks a good game but can't be trusted because its words don't match its actions. I'll give you another example of this. There is an unmet commitment on school food programs, and there are promises of health care clinics that never materialize.

### PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

Now, we have action to support the rights of people with disabilities at work. Two years ago, this House passed *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act* so that people with disabilities could be fairly and fully paid for their work. Today, the Act stands unproclaimed, and people with disabilities continue to be treated unfairly. Can the Premier explain why he hasn't followed through on his words and the will of this House?

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development; Minister of Indigenous Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for an opportunity to stand up and answer the question. When the Leader of the Opposition stands and asks whether the Premier will eliminate 3¢, what is she talking about? Is she talking about removing the fuel standards, or is she talking about allowing that to actually get trapped and held in the supply chain so that small businesses—more than 100 small businesses—in New Brunswick will have that and not be able to pass that cost along, severely compromising their ability to do business and potentially shutting down small businesses in New Brunswick? Is that your economic plan? Is the economic plan of the member opposite to do that?

I know she comes from an area where the citizens are much more educated and refined than those of us in rural New Brunswick. However, I'll tell you this right now: Every citizen in New Brunswick, and those on this side of the House, is worried about small businesses. Flippant comments like that without understanding unintended consequences, if ever in government, could have grave effects. That means she's not ready.

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

