

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



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HEALTH CARE

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, 31 long months ago, the government launched a plan to try to stabilize the health care system. Since then, the number of people without access to a nurse practitioner, family doctor, or medical clinic home, has ballooned from 40 000 to more than double that number. Nearly 100 000 New Brunswickers are without a family doctor today, and that's with "primary care" as the very first pillar of your plan and with repeated commitments to build clinics that never come.

For years, this government has been blocking the very people critical to addressing this challenge: the GPs, NPs, and nurses in family practices. Sadly, the new primary care plan is yet another example of something developed without the very people needed to get 'er done. Why does the Premier refuse to partner with the professionals that we need to deliver great primary care? Why won't he listen to their advice?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to get up and talk about primary care here in the province and some of the made-in-New Brunswick solutions that are helping people get access to physicians or NPs. We know that the solution isn't complete, and we aren't raising the banner to say that our work is done. We continue to work, day in and day out.

I'm going to mention some of the things that we are doing to make sure that people get access to primary care. Health Link is one of the number one things that we are doing here in the province, and, if my memory serves me correctly, 58 000 people are now hooked up with Health Link and are in the queue to make sure they have access to a clinic for primary care. That is a real concrete step. Again, we know that there have been almost 250 000 people calling eVisitNB in order to get access to primary care right away when they need it.

We continue to work with the New Brunswick Medical Society. I had a discussion with the CEO this morning, and they—

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

[Translation]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A plan for primary care that does not receive the support of primary care providers is destined to fail. Please explain to me why you did not work with the New Brunswick Medical Society nor the New Brunswick Nurses' Union, the people who take care of us, to create this plan? Is it because you wanted to have a plan just to say you had one for communications and political reasons? It seems the plan was created out of nowhere, without the help of the people who have to provide these services. Explain to me

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why the New Brunswick Medical Society and the New Brunswick Nurses' Union were not involved in the creation of the plan.

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite couldn't be more wrong. Well, maybe she could be more wrong, but in this case, I'll correct the record.

Mr. Speaker, we've met with the New Brunswick Medical Society. We've met with the Nurses' Union. To put this plan together, we've met with all the stakeholders here in the province. It's been in action.

The family medicine model was actually put together when the Liberals were in power, and this is what we're doing because there wasn't much uptake in that. We are enhancing, we are improving, and we are making it better so that more family doctors will be moving toward that family medicine practice, which is the model that the New Brunswick Medical Society is pushing. That's collaboration. That's working together, Mr. Speaker.

However, Mr. Speaker, the real crux of the matter is this. We want to have a patient-focused primary health care plan, and that's what we are doing here in the province. I know the member opposite wants to talk—

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 minister refers to meeting with this group and that group—the Medical Society, the Nurses' Union—but they tell us they don't support this plan. So, in meeting with them, you obviously weren't listening to their advice and weren't listening to them tell you what doctors need in order to transition to a transformative new model of primary care, not a tinkering around the edges. We've got Family Medicine 1 and Family Medicine 2. We need to urgently address the transformation to this new model of primary care that includes clinics and practitioners.

Meeting with the Medical Society and the Nurses' Union is not enough. If they don't support this plan, it's going to fail. What's the minister going to do to ensure that these folks are on board and that he's adopted their advice to make the plan successful?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd just direct the member opposite to read a recent editorial, which just came out in the past day or so. It actually pushes back on the Medical Society to say: Money is not the only thing that will fix primary care here in New Brunswick.

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I can attest to that as well, Mr. Speaker, because, in the past five years, almost \$1 billion—\$1 billion—has gone toward health care. That is a substantial increase, Mr. Speaker, and we're still seeing some of the issues that we've been grappling with. That's why we have to work smarter. We have to work more efficiently and more effectively. That, again, is going back to patient-centred primary health care. The family medicine practice, the primary clinics coming out of Vitalité, and the modernization of Horizon's collaborative health clinics will roster patients. Physicians will be compensated for that rostering, and that will increase their—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, my best friend reminded me that health is everything. If you don't have your health, everything else is put aside. She has a sick child, and it is terrifying and all-consuming. New Brunswickers don't have access to health care. It's the number one thing that we hear from people. This minister likes to talk out of both sides of his mouth, saying that money isn't everything but we're putting \$1 billion more in. Well, you can't suck and blow at the same time, minister. We want to hear what you're doing. The most important thing that you should be doing... The thing that matters most is care, primary care. When can New Brunswickers expect to see the waiting list for care start to decrease? What targets has the minister set for when he's aiming to ensure that every New Brunswicker has a primary medical care home?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, that was a poor performance by the Leader of the Opposition here today.

(Interjections.)

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

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the investment in health care, the opposition says: Well, that's the wrong direction. So, we talk about working more efficiently and effectively, and the opposition says: That's the wrong direction. When we say that we've taken the considerations and the suggestions from the New Brunswick Medical Society, the opposition says: Well, you didn't do it enough. You didn't do it fast enough. You should do it more.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to remain parliamentary and not repeat some of the phrases that the member opposite said, but I think that the member really has to look in the mirror to see that there is no real set course over there at all. We are investing money. We are getting results. We are training more doctors here in New Brunswick. We are recruiting more doctors internationally. The results are there. They're concrete. The member opposite should realize that the investments that we're making in the students and the doctors coming aboard—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there is no set course for health care in this province as the minister delivers a primary care plan out of thin air and has not fostered the listening to or the relationships with the stakeholders involved in order to see any sort of progress on a reduction in the number of people waiting to access care in New Brunswick.

HOUSING

But there are other people struggling in New Brunswick as well. People are struggling to find an affordable place to call home. The average cost of a house in New Brunswick is now nearly \$300 000. Rent in New Brunswick surged another 9% last year alone. It's totally out of control, and residents are paying the price.

The chambers of commerce for Greater Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John wrote the Premier regarding the need for urgent action on housing development. The province is grappling with this shortage, and New Brunswick is falling short of our targets for new housing. We're lagging behind neighbouring provinces where builders can get an HST rebate on affordable builds. The minister has said that everything is on the table, but not a rent cap and not an HST rebate. Can the minister tell us why she won't consider the measure that is showing success in other—

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

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. Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We on this side of the House take housing very, very seriously. We have a big problem, and we have a big plan to make some differences in the housing market. We released our *Housing for All* strategy in June of last year. We spent this year implementing that plan and working the plan, and we're learning as we go along the way, Mr. Speaker.

Many times, I've said that everything is on the table and under consideration. But we don't just make changes without having data to back it up. Throughout this year, we have been gathering the data as we implement our plan.

I would just like to say that we have some amazing things going on in the housing sector. We've seen 750 housing starts in the first quarter. That's an all-time high going back to when they started recording this data, Mr. Speaker. I'll share—

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

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Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the minister has reiterated that everything is on the table, but then we have seen that certain things are off the table. She says she has the data to back it up. Well, the data now shows that the HST rebate is finding success. The provinces around us are seeing new starts that far outpace New Brunswick's. We are lagging behind our peers. Builders are telling us that they are much happier going to Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, or other places where affordable new builds are supported. Can the minister tell us what data she has that suggests that this is not a great option for New Brunswick?

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. As I was saying about the housing starts, the last time that they were even close to this was 1978. That was when we were in a serious housing crisis. Our builders, our community, and our government are responding. We had 313 starts in February of this year. Pre-COVID-19, we had 13. I can tell you this: We are working within the *Housing for All* strategy, and we are seeing some differences.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there continue to be more options and things that we're looking at. The first year will be under our belt in June. There are a number of different criteria and items that we are looking at, and we are making some meaningful changes in order to continue to see the improvements that we're seeing. We are discussing everything related to rent. We've made a huge number of changes on rent, but we continue to look at what other jurisdictions around us are doing and to implement things that are having success. We need our year to get our data to set the strategy for the next three years.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear the minister specifically answer the question about the HST rebate program. I'm not sure whether she's avoiding saying that she doesn't support it. That gives me a little bit of hope for the motion that's coming on Thursday. We're going to propose that the government adopt this solution. I hope this means that there's an openness on the other side to do something that could help us house more New Brunswickers faster.

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I want to go to something that the Premier said, because he gave New Brunswickers some hope when he said that he was going to look at property taxes. I am wondering when New Brunswickers can expect to see his plan or any action on the property tax reform file.

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

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At the end of the day, during the Liberals' time in government, they had an assessment scandal. They tried to dig into people's pockets and fast-track an ability to take their tax dollars.

Juxtapose that with how differently we do things on this side of the House. We started a structural reform. That structural reform was always meant to be followed by a fiscal reform, and it is. It will be a fiscal reform to help make sure that our communities are viable, that our local governments have the funding they need, and that the province will be able to do what it needs to do in terms of its responsibilities. It will make sure that the number one priority is that the interests of the taxpayer are protected.

We can make sure that people can afford to live in this province, whereas, under the Liberal government, it was very clear that Liberals believed that they knew how to spend people's money better than the people did themselves. The difference between there and here is very clear, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that people's interests—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member opposite, that fiscal reform is coming when?

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Right now, Mr. Speaker, we are working on it with our partners. At the end of the day, it's not about making sure that we figure out ways to take more money from New Brunswickers at a time when they are really struggling. We're trying to figure out how we can make sure our municipalities are supported. We realize that they depend very heavily on assessments.

What we are trying to do, through a consultation and conversation process with municipalities as our partners, is make sure that we understand how we can arrive at a system that makes sense for the breadth and width of the municipalities that we have, as there are different municipalities that offer different levels of service. Mr. Speaker, ultimately, therein lies the difference between a fast-track assessment scandal and proper consultation. We are working with stakeholders and making sure that we're doing it right on behalf of taxpayers. That's the difference, and we're doing it.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. C. Chiasson (Victoria-La Vallée, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe it was during question period last week that the Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries spoke of the overabundance of rain during the last growing season and of the detrimental effects that were felt by our potato growers. On that note, the potato growers have filed a claim to AgriRecovery. The claim is for \$39 million, \$10 million from the province and the balance to come from the federal government. Can the minister please update this House on that

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application? Will the farmers be compensated for their loss, or will we see a repeat of 2018 when this government denied their claim?

Hon. Ms. Johnson (Carleton-Victoria, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member opposite for the question. Only on Friday did I have a lovely conversation with the head of Potatoes New Brunswick, and we have entered into a formal assessment of this dire situation we had last summer. We're going through the process, we are doing the assessment, and we will be working with the farmers to find them a solution.

Mr. C. Chiasson (Victoria-La Vallée, L): She said that last time I asked her.

In speaking to several farmers from my area, it seems the minister may have said to a group of growers that she would not seek re-election if the Premier did not support this claim. Can the minister confirm that we will have a response to this claim before the next provincial election, which is scheduled for October 21 of this year? Will she keep her promise to the growers?

Hon. Ms. Johnson (Carleton-Victoria, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, I prefer to work on facts and not rumours. I don't believe I was here in 2018, but I'm glad he thought I was. I have worked with my stakeholders, with boots on the ground. I have been having numerous meetings with Potatoes New Brunswick. I've met with its board of directors.

As I said, we're going through a formal process. We are assessing the damages and the problems they had last summer. We know it was a miserable year. They lost to rot, and they lost to hollow heart. We are working to make sure the assessment is formal. We have been working with our federal counterparts as well, and we will be looking at helping our farmers.

[*Translation*]

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, 13 centres in New Brunswick provide community services to women who are victims of sexual assault. Last year, five of these centres, the ones in Fredericton, Moncton, Edmundston, the Acadian Peninsula, and Saint John, had their funding increased from \$100 000 to \$200 000. However, the eight other centres, the ones in Sussex, Miramichi, Woodstock, Campbellton, St. Stephen, Bathurst, Shediac, and Kent, had their funding remain at \$100 000. However, through an agreement signed by the department, they were promised \$200 000 this year. It is May 14, and the money is still not there. So, here is my question for the Minister responsible for Women's Equality: What's happening?

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[Original]

Hon. S. Wilson (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Well, I thank the member for that question, Mr. Speaker. Actually, she will be happy to know I just signed nine letters last Friday. Some new programs have just come out, and we're looking for reports back from the different centres on how the money is being spent before we give them additional funds. Great work is being done. They do a tremendous amount of work. As everyone would know, domestic violence is a big thing, and we are working hard to address that. They do exceptional work, and I'm very grateful for the people who are on the ground looking after those women who are victims of abuse. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, the minister may be happy to hear that I saw the letter she is talking about. This letter only confirms the first amount of \$100 000. In fact, here is what happened. On April 9, right after the meetings of the committee tasked with the consideration of estimates, the organizations received a simple email stating that, ultimately, the \$200 000 would not be allocated.

This was devastating news to people on the ground. They are worried because they were in the middle of a hiring process to obtain new resources and provide new services. So, when the organizations expressed their worries to the department, they were asked internally to wait for 30 to 45 days for a solution to be found. That was in early April, and it is now mid-May. The letter sent last week only confirms the first payment of \$100 000. With regard to the second payment, everything is very fuzzy. So, without the second payment, the organizations cannot plan out their year. Can the minister keep her promise?

[Original]

Hon. S. Wilson (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Mr. Speaker, to answer that question, an evaluation is being done. In the contract, if the member took the time to read it, there was money to be distributed in April and again in October.

These facilities know that. They know they're hiring people. They're coming up with programming, which we want to evaluate. We want to look at the programs to see what the facilities are doing. If they've hired people, there's money there for them. Actually, that money will probably be distributed this week. This work that's being done is just a different way of doing things because the programs are new. We want to evaluate them. We want to make sure that the programs are working and that the money is well spent. Thank you.



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[*Translation*]

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): If I understand correctly, in her first answer, the minister said that she sent a letter to 9 of the 13 centres, while, in her second answer, she said that, actually, it depends on a few other things. There are three fundamental things missing from these letters: first, the specific goals the organizations have to reach, because they are not clear, second, the amount of money they will be given, and third, the exact date of the payment that was set out in the agreement you signed on October 1. Without that, it is impossible for these organizations to continue, and, most importantly, it is impossible to reassure victims who need another therapy session. It is impossible to move forward with that; everything is at a standstill.

Madam Minister, could you rise in the House and confirm that these centres that support victims of sexual violence will receive their second payment on October 1, as expected?

[*Original*]

Hon. S. Wilson (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that the member take five minutes to sit down and read the contract. It's in there. Everything's in there. The facilities will get their second installment in the fall.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the work that's being done by these individuals. We also recognize that fundraising isn't always what it was. We've upped it. We've decided to give the facilities extra money, \$100 000, so they can continue to do good work and develop new programs. It's in the contract. She just has to sit down and read the contract, Mr. Speaker. Then she'll understand it.

[*Translation*]

ENVIRONMENT

Mr. K. Arseneau (Kent North, G): Mr. Speaker, to this day, the people of Beaurivage are continuing to fight for the quality of life they deserve. This plant that was established by means of subsidies in 2016, under the Liberals, is very poorly located for its operations.

Behind the scenes, people are openly saying that the Acts that protect the people need major and serious updates. Behind the scenes, people are unashamed to say that the plant is very poorly located and should be in an industrial park instead of a residential area near a school.

So, my question is for the new Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Regardless of the decision of the Farm Practices Review Board today, can the minister commit today to taking steps to move this smelly plant into a place that is more suitable for this kind of industrial activity?



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Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I understand the worries of the people of Beaurivage, in the riding of the member opposite. Mr. Speaker, this is something we are taking seriously. We have to ensure that the plant is carrying out its operations according to the established regulations.

As you know, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change only gives out work permits, but the plant must follow rules. We have officials on the ground to ensure that the regulations are followed. We are working with École Soleil Levant there to ensure that everything at the school is healthy for the students, and that is still the case. Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue working with the people of the region to...

[Original]

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

[Translation]

Mr. K. Arseneau (Kent North, G): Based on his response, it seems that the minister doesn't understand a thing.

[Original]

Mr. Speaker, you can't help but think and wonder whom our successive governments will pledge to work for. Another example of ignoring New Brunswick's people is the use of herbicides in our forests and under power lines.

Over 35 000 New Brunswickers have signed a petition calling for a ban on the spraying of Crown lands, the largest petition in New Brunswick history. The Legislature's Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Stewardship made 20 recommendations about glyphosate use, including a ban under power lines. The Minister of Environment is responsible for administering and enforcing New Brunswick's *Pesticides Control Act*. NB Power can only spray glyphosate under its power lines if the Minister of Environment issues it a permit under that Act.

Has the Environment Minister signed NB Power's permit to spray under its power lines this year, yes or no? And if so, why does he continue to ignore New Brunswickers on this issue?

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is important to recognize a few facts. Glyphosate is an approved herbicide as per Health Canada guidelines and regulations. It has been studied. A recent study that was done a couple of years back reaffirmed the safety of glyphosate when

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properly applied. It is important to note that it is one of the least toxic and most environmentally benign herbicides on the market today. There are others available that are more toxic and more difficult to use because of the selectivity of the way glyphosate works. It manages to get into the roots and kills the plant without cross-pollinating or affecting anything else. It's very effective. It is a broad-spectrum herbicide with little to no soil residual. It does not bioaccumulate in humans. If you do get something inside you, it does not turn into another chemical. It gets passed through the system. So, Mr. Speaker, this is a safe product—

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

ACCESSIBILITY

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, this year's Statistics Canada data shows that New Brunswick recorded the largest increase in disability rates in Canada. New Brunswick's disability rate has increased from 26.7% of our population to 35.3% of our population. New Brunswick has the second-highest rate of disability in Canada, yet New Brunswick is one of the last provinces in Canada to develop accessibility legislation.

The Premier's Council on Disabilities recommended that an Act be put in place by the end of 2021. In December 2022, the select committee promised draft legislation within a year.

[Translation]

Last year, the Minister said in the House that this legislation was coming; he was waiting for it. Patience is being exercised, but this bill is really important.

[Original]

It really matters to a growing number of people, people who are more likely than not experiencing challenges with the cost of living and challenges with everyday life. Could the Premier confirm when the House can expect the accessibility Act to be tabled?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you for the question. The Leader of the Opposition is correct. Accessibility is a major challenge for many people in the province. A lot of work has been done with the committee, the review, and then the recommendations that were put forward here a little while ago. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to say that, in this session, we will be bringing forward legislation on the accessibility Act and the recommendations that were put forward. Thank you.

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Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): As a quick follow-up, could the Premier confirm that members of this House will receive a briefing before the second reading of that bill?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you. I appreciate that. We ask because it's not always the case. Sometimes a bill lands here and we're expected to debate and analyze it without having had the chance to dig in, and this is a really important piece of legislation.

GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

I'm going to switch to something else, because I think that many of us were surprised last week to learn that a minister is driving a government-owned Tesla around the province and beyond. Other EVs can be bought at half the price of a Tesla and serviced by New Brunswick dealers. At a time when a lot of people are facing financial hardship, I'm wondering what justification is provided for this policy change and how it aligns with the principles of responsible financial prudence. I'm hoping you can tell the House this: How many government-owned Teslas are currently in use? What led to the decision to allow ministers to drive these luxury vehicles, especially considering the higher cost compared to other electric vehicles?

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Oh, Mr. Speaker, here we go. This is an example of politics at its worst. We've got an opposition that is chasing the CBC or whatever other media suits its fancy to try to create a smear campaign. You know, the opposition members like to follow their lord and saviour, Justin Trudeau, and say: We're going to make all kinds of policies that are going to make the world better. Well, all they're doing is taking money out of people's pockets.

What we, as a government, are doing is instituting the use of electric vehicles to do our part to try to make the environment better. So, to be clear and transparent, I was asked by DTI to be part of a program that it wants to roll out to ministers and eventually to MLAs so that we can electrify our fleet.

I was not privy to the details as to why a Tesla, in particular, was chosen. My understanding is that DTI got it at a lower price point.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we are making sure that we are making the right decisions for our climate—

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



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Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I am confused by this because the Premier had previously put a freeze on new cars and a new fleet. I am hoping he can tell us what changed and why.

Hon. Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): At DTI, we are going to follow through on the Climate Change Action Plan. I don't know what else to say. We are electrifying our fleet. School buses are in the mix as well. They are used throughout the province. Ministers use electric cars. It is time to get into 2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Time is called for question period.