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October 20, 2023

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[Original]

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier to try to put himself in someone's shoes. Picture Michael. He is in his 60s. He lives in Quispamsis, off the Vincent Road. He has worked his whole life. He dreams of retirement, but right now he is driving a forklift at a warehouse on the other side of Saint John. He has two kids who are grown and one grandchild, with a second coming soon. He thought that he would have his mortgage paid off by now. He used to pay his credit card bill in full each month.

He and his wife, Jenny, are sitting at their kitchen table with the radio on, looking at their mortgage statement, their power bill, and their credit card bill. They do not have the money in the bank to pay all three. He thinks about how he would like to buy his grandson a great Christmas present. His ears perk up when he hears the Premier on the radio. He has voted for you four times, and he listens as you say, I am going to hold off on cost-of-living measures because I might need them for a political announcement down the road. What do you have to say today to Michael and Jenny about why you will not help them?

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I love how the Leader of the Opposition quotes the CBC, because we know that it is an accurate source of information, and we have all learned that over the years.

Mr. Speaker, there are probably 15 initiatives here on affordability measures that have already been put in place. I know that in not reading the speech, the Leader of the Opposition could not recognize any of them. So, I can understand that, but the one thing that she should recognize is that Michael's situation is totally and greatly enhanced by federal policies.

The Leader of the Opposition said yesterday that she would like to get rid of the clean fuel Act, another program enforced by the federal government, so I would like to include something with that, Mr. Speaker. Let's put a unanimous motion together and get rid of the carbon tax too. Let's all agree that we want them both gone, and let's all stand here unanimously and say, We want them both gone.

Mr. Speaker, let's do it. Let's do it right now. Let's do it soon because I agree with her. These carbon taxes—these taxes on fuel from federal policies—are really hurting Michael at home. Thank you.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, let me try a different one, although this one might be more of a stretch. I want you to put yourself in the shoes of a young woman named Rebecca. She is the daughter of a

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single mom here in Fredericton. She just graduated from UNB, and she got a good, entry-level job at Irving Oil earning \$50 000 per year.

It took her all summer to find an apartment, but she finally got one in September at Carleton Towers for \$1 300 per month, utilities not included. She is paying more than 40% of her income on rent. She is also trying to pay back her student loans.

[Translation]

In addition, she has to buy furniture for her apartment and professional clothes for work.

[Original]

She would like to go home and visit her mom, so she is looking at bus tickets and the price of a used car.

[Translation]

Everyone tells her she should save for her retirement. We tell her she should save to buy a house.

[Original]

She is 22 years old, and she is stressed. She was doing her online banking when she saw a news story pop up with the headline: Premier “says he’s holding off on inflation relief in case of election”.

What do you have to say to Rebecca about why you will not help her?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition feels that the CBC headline is the one to quote. With the student loans, we know that we took those to zero, but I would refer to all the issues that are in relation to what has happened in many areas on affordability. There is a common theme here. A common theme is that our situation has been directly created by federal policies. We should not be in this situation in New Brunswick. We should not be in this situation in Canada. But the federal policies have directly put us in this situation.

Everything that the student or that Michael is experiencing from high costs is directly related to the cost of transportation, the cost of everyday fuel services, and the cost of heating—all generated unnecessarily by the federal government. So, Mr. Speaker, once again, I would say, Let’s join the MPs, my colleagues across the floor’s MPs, who have gone to the federal government and said, It is really hurting Atlantic Canada. We can all be united

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on one common theme: The cost of energy in this country is unaffordable. And it is because of federal policies.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On just a point of clarification for the Premier, MLAs are on this side of the House and not MPs.

The Premier's Minister of Finance announced on September 27 that affordability measures were coming in the next few weeks—that he had affordability measures. It is interesting to hear him describe himself as being so powerless to help New Brunswickers, as though he does not have tools that he could implement today—then he is choosing not to use them. So we have some ideas for you. How about you renew and expand the Fuel and Food Benefit so that more middle-income New Brunswickers are eligible? Will you do that, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, just for clarification, in case you did not know, there are a few Liberal MPs in the province and in Atlantic Canada. I am referring to those MPs. They are the Liberal MPs who came out against the federal government and said that the policies were unnecessarily impacting Atlantic Canada. Those are the MPs. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition must be aware of them.

So, Mr. Speaker, in this increase that we are seeing across every sector in terms of home and in terms of trying to make ends meet, there is one common denominator. I will repeat myself again. There are numerous areas where we have made affordability changes. The throne speech outlines many other ones, many others that are in relation to the Low-Income Seniors' Benefit and others that are in relation to the home spousal benefit and the continued spike protection benefit. Those are all in the throne speech, and there are other talks about tax reductions. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition missed them all. Would it not have been interesting if the Leader of the Opposition had actually read the speech before she responded to the speech?

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, New Brunswickers are looking for relief today. They are looking for action on things that will make life more affordable for them, so I have another suggestion for you that is within your control that you could do tomorrow. Will you reform the property tax and its assessment system to make life more affordable for New Brunswickers?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we have put in, continued, and enhanced the spike protection program because we are experiencing something that we in our province have never seen before. The Leader of the Opposition missed that too. We are experiencing unprecedented growth. Yes, it brings challenges on housing, on homelessness, on the cost of building supplies, and

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all of that. But it does not need to be enhanced by policies from the federal government that are so bad that you cannot fix them. You just cannot fix things that are wrong to begin with. The Liberal Opposition Leader would continue to say, Oh, just continue to put band-aids on it, but let's look strategically at what needs to change on federal policies. Mr. Speaker, what we are forcing Canadians and Atlantic Canadians to do is to pay a price, a price for pollution that we do not make here. We are 1.5% of the world emissions—1.5%. Do you think that the situation in China with coal plant production is going to change because of New Brunswick?

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[*Original*]

The Premier is talking about band-aid policies, and he mentions spike protection. We need spike protection because our property tax and assessment system does not have an ability to counteract the volatility of the market today. So, the spike protection is a band-aid policy. Will the Premier consider what is within his control? He is focused on Ottawa. We are focused on New Brunswickers. Will you take action to reform the property tax assessment system so that it benefits more New Brunswickers?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. It would have helped if the Leader of the Opposition had read the throne speech. The band-aid policy that she refers to in relation to the spike protection was first put in place in 2012 or 2013. It was somewhere in that range. It has been in place for a long time.

What has been done right now is an enhancement of that policy, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it helps to ease into the fact that properties are beginning to be worth more. That is an ongoing 10-year program. It is not exactly a band-aid.

But the issue—the issue—is her buddy in Ottawa, Prime Minister Trudeau, who does not care about the average citizen and the money that they have to spend to survive and does not care about policies that make no sense. He only lives in this psychological bubble or this theoretical bubble.

So, let's get together and let's decide how we can really have an impact on citizens. We could reduce fuel costs here by 20% or 25%. Really, Mr. Speaker, we could have a huge impact. But we need to work together, and we need to deal with Ottawa.

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Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it is interesting that he references the things that they are doing to help New Brunswickers in this speech from the throne and then mentions a policy that has been in place for 10 years as something that this government should get credit for in terms of affordability measures.

I have another suggestion for you, because we are focused on New Brunswickers and things that you could do today to make life more affordable. How about you fund school fees for parents and school supplies for teachers to make life more affordable?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): So, I guess I will slow my speaking down just a little bit, Mr. Speaker, because the MP thing got missed. I had to clarify that. Now I have to go back to the spike protection because the spike protection has been enhanced to include, I think, all properties. It only included residential before. That was in the throne speech, but it was missed, Mr. Speaker.

I think, again, what we see is that the only imagination that the Leader of the Opposition has would be the typical Liberal approach. How many things can we just keep doing to make it look good to people as opposed to what really makes a difference? Mr. Speaker, you can sprinkle things everywhere or you can fix the root problem, the root cause. You can say, Why are New Brunswickers, or why are Atlantic Canadians—all of us in Atlantic Canada, including the Liberal Premier in Newfoundland—appealing to the federal government that these policies are negatively impacting us? Mr. Speaker, the MPs—Liberal MPs—appealed to the federal government. The only one who will not appeal to the federal government is sitting right across the hall from me.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[*Original*]

I think the root problem for New Brunswickers right now is sitting across the aisle because he has the power and the ability to make life more affordable for New Brunswickers tomorrow and is choosing not to. He continues to blame Ottawa when he has tools in his hands that could help New Brunswickers who are struggling. It is appalling to me that he cannot answer for why he will not take action today to help people such as Michael, Jenny, and Rebecca.

We propose to take the provincial tax off of electricity bills so that New Brunswickers could have some relief as things get colder. It was adopted in this House by everyone sitting here. Will you take the provincial tax off electricity to make life more affordable for New Brunswickers?

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Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for an opportunity to stand and answer a question. Let's just talk about some mathematics. I get accused of being political all the time. I really try not to be. I cannot be accused of that—I cannot be accused of that—if we talk about empirical facts and math. Let's have a look at what that is.

The removal of provincial tax from our electricity amounts to approximately \$120 million per year of reduced revenue, okay? Let's talk about the fact that this government worked to ensure that \$2 billion worth of debt is paid down, which in and of itself is a good accomplishment, but what does that mean? That means that the province is paying \$90 million per year less in interest just out into the air. Okay? We have seen a strategy to save \$90 million but spend \$120 million. That sounds like a reckless and irresponsible strategy. It sounds like a Brian Gallant policy. It sounds like a lack of experience. It sounds like a leader who is not ready for the job.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, with those savings, this government could be doing more to help people like Michael, Jenny, and Rebecca with their health care needs.

I would like to review the update on their health care action plan. When it comes to primary care, their goal was to launch NB Health Link, a temporary solution, and have everyone transferred from the Patient Connect wait list by March 2022. We are a year and a half behind schedule. Their goal was to expand the NB Health Link to include mental health practitioners, pharmacists, and more by December of last year. We are already a year in, and I have not heard a peep about that. Their goal was to reorganize the care networks with a collaborative approach. The team-based clinics that everyone is asking for were supposed to be done last December, but they were pushed two years down the road.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Minister of Health has missed or delayed all the targets set in his plan for primary care. The public had high hopes, but this government failed them. Can he provide a full explanation on why he has not been able to meet his targets and provide better primary care to New Brunswickers?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much. It is a great opportunity to stand again and talk about health care and some of the good things that are happening. Mr. Speaker, we continue to work, and we get the information to set up goals for ourselves and to reach those goals. Again, when it comes to recruiting doctors to work in clinics or to help in Patient Connect and NB Health Link, sometimes those human resources are in short supply. We continue to work, and we continue to reach toward those goals.

We have actually reduced the number of people waiting for a doctor from 74 000 to 20 000. That is a significant improvement. As a matter of fact, when the population grows by 100 000 people, those people show up in New Brunswick without a family doctor. We

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continued to work to make sure that they are connected to a clinic so that they can receive their primary care. I have more information, and I hope to get a second question.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): I hope to get answers to my questions, Mr. Speaker. What they are doing is just transferring people from one wait list to another. They are not meeting any targets. They put maybe 2 000 people in connection to a permanent medical home for their primary care needs. In the throne speech last year, they announced four locations that would be getting community care clinics. We have seen nothing with respect to their establishment. Now, in passing they have mentioned some other areas of New Brunswick that might be getting some clinics. Again, they are not providing any updates on the progress being made with respect to implementing those care clinics. Surely the minister can listen to my question—hopefully. Maybe he needs to put his earpiece in and answer the question that I am asking because he is just giving us political talking points. These are real issues facing New Brunswickers. With the savings that they are paying down on the debt, the government could make a real difference for the health care needs of New Brunswickers. What is the update on establishing those clinics that they promised last year?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about political rhetoric. I think that he should spend a little bit of time in front of the mirror. That is where the political rhetoric is coming from, not this side. This side is coming from facts. We are coming from a position of results. Mr. Speaker, he talks about two wait lines and just switching one to the other. One wait line had no doctors. The wait line that we talk about with respect to Patient Connect and NB Health Link has access to a clinic with physicians and nurse practitioners (NPs), and primary health care. That is a big difference. That is a result. That is moving forward to make sure that the investments that we make, which are in millions of dollars. . . Our budget increased health care by \$344 million this year. That is a significant investment. Mr. Speaker, I have much more information that I am going to share this afternoon in my throne speech. If I am lucky enough to get another question, I have more to say.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): It is a theme of this government. They are announcing that they will make announcements down the road, but then they do not deliver on those promises, Mr. Speaker. In this year's speech from the throne, there is an omission. There is no mention of the establishment of these multidisciplinary care clinics. There is one vague line about reducing the number of physicians working in solo practices. Again, this raises serious concerns about this minister's commitment to establishing those clinics. In its health care plan, the government had given a timeline of finishing that by last year. It is now two years down the road. Yes, the government talks about one wait line having access to health care and the other one not. That is true. But it is a band-aid solution. We heard the Premier say this morning that we do not need band-aid solutions.

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Will this minister commit to establishing those multidisciplinary care clinics that the government promised years ago and is continuously punting down the road? What is the timeline to establish those clinics that it promised?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has a selective memory and understanding of the health care system. Also, he is very selective about what is going on, or he is unaware of what is going on within the province, so I will tell him. Currently, our RHAs operate a network of health centres, community health centres, throughout the province. They have a collaborative team approach. There are presently 55 sites in every health zone, when we include all the health zones. Here in the province, there are 55 sites of collaborative team practices and clinics. Again, those are results that the opposition members forget to mention when they have their political rhetoric stances.

It continues. In September, Horizon's Saint John Uptown Health Centre began offering same-day appointments. In August, the Canterbury Community Centre started offering clinics. In Vitalité, they are continuing in Dieppe, Edmundston, Rivière-Verte, and Lac Baker. We are continuing to do the work to provide primary care.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. LePage (Restigouche West, L): Finally got the floor. Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to talk about another file, that of air quality. Like us, you have heard people in Beaurivage complaining about foul odours coming from the Coastal Shell Products plant for a long time. Their distress is worsening every day.

[Original]

In June, the government issued an order regarding shell storage, banning storage in trucks and allowing it only in the facilities of Coastal Shell. On July 31, an approval to operate was issued by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change with 30 conditions.

[Translation]

In July, the minister issued an operating license listing 30 conditions to the company.

[Original]

How did the government handle and verify the complaints received? Who was involved, and how were the citizens of Beaurivage informed about the evolution of this situation?

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Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. There were a lot of questions in there. I cannot answer them all at the same time. Back on July 31, operations did cease. We signed off to continue that during the testing period, which is taking place now. Back on August 1, money was being put in by the company to ensure that the odours were reduced by the scrubbing system. The first deadline is November 30, which is coming up soon. We are hoping that the results will be in by next week. The individual letters have been responded to. The second deadline is actually a year from then; it is July 31, 2024.

I have been there myself. There is a coalition of people who, I believe, are in court right now, so I cannot speak on that. With the company, there are things in place as well regarding operating hours. They are working. There was a test recently in which the school cooperated. The municipality cooperated as well to ensure that the system is working. More information should be coming, Mr. Speaker, hopefully next week. Thank you.

Mr. LePage (Restigouche West, L): Mr. Speaker, that was my second question that he just answered. I wish he would answer my first question. My first question was about the citizens of Beaurivage. How were they informed and kept in the loop on this situation? How were they informed about the action, or inaction, of this government during the past months? Who was consulted, and who was involved in delivering the message to each of those residents in Beaurivage? Who was?

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. On July 31, I was in the Toronto airport. We had a conference call with the mayor of the municipality. Actually, we did not; he could not make it. The MLA for the area, the member for Kent North, was unavailable; he was away for two weeks. They were informed. Everybody was kept up to speed. You can speak to the member himself. He is kept up to speed on a regular basis through our department. The department has done a great job responding to people. There are a lot of emails from the people who belong to the coalition.

Regarding communication, we do need the local governance. We need the municipality to work together. I do not believe that five or six years ago, those who were responsible. . . We know who they were—the mayor at the time, I guess. I do not believe that those who were responsible for putting Coastal Shell Products at that location thought it would be what it is today.

It is being dealt with. I drove there myself about two weeks ago during the downtime. There are stipulations that I will mention just briefly here. They are open from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m.

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

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Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you.

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[Translation]

NURSING HOMES

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year, the government announced with great fanfare that four new nursing homes were opening. I am echoing the words of my colleague from Bathurst West-Beresford, who said that the government made the announcement so many times that I thought there were 16 new nursing homes. It was indeed about four nursing homes.

So far, two locations where a new home would open have been mentioned. It would be nice to know the locations of the two others. Before we are informed of the other two locations and accused of not knowing what we are doing, I want to note that the question is not just being asked by the official opposition. Right now, there are people who were supposed to have received answers, but still have not. They are working without knowing what direction to take to find alternative solutions. If you have the name of the other two nursing homes, say so now, so that these people stop wasting their time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Original]

Hon. Ms. Bockus (Saint Croix, Minister responsible for Seniors, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the member opposite, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to answer my first question as the Minister responsible for Seniors. At this time, I would like to make mention of two of my most favourite seniors, my 92-year-old mom, Connie Heighton, of Hampton, and my husband, Walter.

As you can imagine, the first few months in this position have been like drinking from a firehose. I would like to thank the department staff for all their help bringing me up to speed on various files and helping me chart a path forward.

I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of seniors throughout the province and with groups and organizations that support them. I have also met with people who care for our seniors in nursing homes.

My goal, Mr. Speaker, is for every senior in New Brunswick to live with dignity and in comfort. I am very proud to be the Minister responsible for Seniors, and I intend to bring much-needed attention to the people who helped build this province.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): The member for Memramcook-Tantramar.

(Interjections.)

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HEALTH

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, for 20 years, successive Liberal and PC governments have talked about team-based multidisciplinary care here in New Brunswick but have refused to fully fund this model. Once again, in its throne speech, this government referred to the need to decrease the percentage of doctors working in a solo-practice model without proposing a solution.

We know that team-based health care, where nurse practitioners, dieticians, respiratory technicians, midwives, mental health care specialists, and other allied health professionals work with doctors, provides the best care for New Brunswickers. But despite proposals from the health authorities and the asks of younger physicians, we have seen year after year of inaction from successive governments. Will the Minister of Health finally commit to providing the necessary funding to create team-based community health centres all around the province?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to once again talk about the commitments that we have made and the commitments that we are fulfilling. In 2023, the provincial budget committed to an additional \$39.2 million to improve access to primary care, which included \$10.35 million for the transformation of primary health care from solo practices to a team-based approach. There is the commitment. There is the money, and we continue to do the work.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we continue to recruit the physicians, NPs, and the proper allied health care professionals to staff these facilities. When you are working with these facilities. . .

I suggested earlier that there were a number of successes. In September, Horizon's Saint John Uptown Health Centre began offering same-day self-referral appointments. In August, a Tuesday-night after-hours clinic was established in Canterbury. Within the province, there are 55 of these—

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

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that there are many communities, and many doctors and nurse practitioners want to practice in these clinics but do not have access to them. It is an important tool in terms of recruitment and retention.

One specific example of a proposal is in Sackville, where Horizon has opened a part-time clinic and wants to expand it to serve more people in our community. After two doctors left this summer, I worked with community leaders to urge Horizon to create a stopgap measure to ensure that residents still have access to primary care until a permanent

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solution is found. The clinic opened in September. However, thousands of residents in Tantramar and Strait Shores still need primary care.

We know that we need team-based health care all across the province, where nurse practitioners and other allied health professionals can work with doctors. What is being proposed in Sackville is what we need. Will the Minister of Health commit to providing the funding that Horizon will be requesting to expand the Tantramar Community Health Centre?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, and I appreciate that the member across the way is a strong advocate for her specific community. I know—I have been to Sackville many, many times. I graduated from Mount A, as did my daughter.

The fact of the matter is that Sackville is an important part of the health care network across the province. We were there and just did a ribbon cutting on the new emergency facilities there. Again, we are making sure that the investments are made within the community. Mr. Speaker, we have talked about Beal University, which is going to be locating, training, and educating RNs in Sackville.

There is lots going on in Sackville that the member opposite just decides to ignore. We have had commitments from the RHAs. We have had commitments from Margaret Melanson, who was down in Sackville. We were in the atrium, which is a very nice place where people can go to convalesce and take care of some of their needs with respect to mental health. Again, the investments are being made.

When I look at Vitalité—

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

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to come back today to the Minister of Education, because New Brunswickers are still trying to make sense of his comments in Woodstock as well as his comments in the Legislature on Wednesday. I am wondering: There have been different things said in the past few days about the Conservative-People's Alliance coalition. It says that society is safe, but then that there is a demonstrated need for an increase in public safety spending and a comment that we need to bear arms to defend ourselves.

So, I hope. . . Now that the minister has had time to reflect, could he please acknowledge the fears that he raised and the concerns that he has brought upon gun clubs across this province with his comments about taking back our country? Could he confirm for New Brunswickers exactly what he meant and what he believes to be true?

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Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has certainly been an entertaining morning.

Contextually, I stand by what I said in Woodstock. The federal government has a gun buyback program whereby it wants to take guns away from law-abiding citizens. I personally do not support that.

You know, I am very concerned with what I hear over across the way. It is as if somehow there is a magic wand and an endless bucket of money where they can just go, poof, and they can change something overnight. What are you going to do tomorrow? Well, some things take longer than one day.

We are investing in our schools. We are investing in our food program, which I am very proud of. We have realized a food program for every school in our province, which is fantastic. I understand that there are volunteer groups that we depend on. We are going to have a meeting and work with them.

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