

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



May 15, 2024

CONTENTS

SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Ms. Holt
Hon. Ms. Green
Ms. Holt
Hon. Ms. Green
Ms. Holt

HOUSING

Hon. Ms. Green
Ms. Holt
Hon. Ms. Green

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Holt
Hon. Ms. Green
Ms. Holt
Hon. Ms. Green

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Mr. M. LeBlanc
Hon. Mr. Turner
Mr. M. LeBlanc
Hon. Mr. Turner
Mr. M. LeBlanc
Mr. M. LeBlanc
Mr. M. LeBlanc

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

Hon. Mr. Steeves

EMERGENCY MEASURES

Mr. J. LeBlanc

Hon. Mr. Austin

Mr. J. LeBlanc

Hon. Mr. Austin

WORKERS

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Mr. Turner

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Mr. Turner

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Mr. Turner

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Thériault

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace

Ms. Thériault

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace

Ms. Holt

Mr. G. Arseneault

CLIMATE CHANGE

Hon. G. Savoie

Mr. LePage

Hon. G. Savoie

Mr. M. LeBlanc

Hon. G. Savoie

COLLEGES

Hon. Mr. Ames

Hon. Mr. Ames

Mr. Legacy

Hon. Mr. Ames

[Original]

SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day, I get messages of frustration from New Brunswickers who are looking at the increase in property taxes and wondering how they are going to pay their bills. I'm sure I'm not alone. Today, I got a Facebook message from someone who said that he's a retired senior considering going back to work to be able to pay his property taxes. Someone else says: Well, maybe I'll sell my house and look for an apartment. Except, apartment rates are going up by 9%. We have a vacancy rate of 1%. That's not an affordable option either. The housing crisis is affecting a lot of New Brunswickers.

The minister has spent the past year putting together a housing strategy and then, in the second half of last year, moving the pieces around internally to get that system in place. She has told us that everything is on the table except for a rent cap, an HST rebate on affordable builds, and property tax reform. So, I'm wondering about short-term rentals. We understood that a mayors' task force was going to be put in place. Can the minister update us on that?

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. Yes, we had a meeting with all the municipalities to have a discussion around short-term rentals. At that time, I'd committed to a task force to look at the situation in New Brunswick and how it's affecting certain jurisdictions within New Brunswick. I committed to the end of March, and I did not make that deadline, but we've put the task force together. We have the team from Environment and Local Government and the Housing Corporation working together with the municipalities, the Union of the Municipalities, and other representatives to look at the short-term rental situation and propose some solutions that we can consider moving forward.

That work is happening, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that she brought it up and that we can talk about it a bit more. We have many short-term rentals in New Brunswick, and it's very important to see how it does impact housing and our vacancy rate in New Brunswick. We'll continue to do that work, and I'll report back when I have more to talk about.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll commend the member opposite for owning up to the slight delay on the mid-March commitment to start the task force. But it's been started, so I'm wondering this: Could the minister give this House a sense of either when we could expect changes to the short-term rental regulations or how long she thinks the work is going to take before something is on the table?

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

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. When we met with the municipalities early in the new year, we shared the data we had received from the study completed by the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture. To give them a taste of the information that they would have to consider in moving forward, we gave them a snapshot of what it looked like in the province where the short-term rentals seemed to be centrally located. That information has been provided to them. They are looking at this right now.

The goal is to have the task force work through the next few months and, by the end of summer, have something to report back on with some recommendations. This fall, we should have some information on what the task force's recommendations are and how we can implement some changes here in New Brunswick. We need to make sure that we acknowledge that short-term rentals are also part of the housing spectrum. We need to understand how they impact our vacancy rates.

We will continue to work with that group, and I will be happy to bring that back to this House in the fall when I'm sitting on this side again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to learn that there is a plan, and we are going to wait and see what the recommendations are at the end of the summer.

HOUSING

That being said, there is something else I would like to know. The municipalities are asking us for a lot of things to help them deal with the housing crisis. They want to do the work in the communities, but there are provincial Acts that prevent them from doing it because they limit their access to unoccupied property when there are things to do. Can you tell us what you are doing as well...

[Original]

On top of short-term rental regulations, what are you doing to address the concerns that municipalities are asking about so that they can tackle the housing crisis with real urgency?

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 might have missed just a little bit in the middle of that. We are also working with our federal counterparts on all aspects related to housing and the different issues that provinces are



Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

experiencing. We are working very closely with the Minister of Housing who, quite fortunately, is from Atlantic Canada. He does understand that the situation in Atlantic Canada can be a little different than in other parts of the country.

We are a much more rural province, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, our needs are different. We have much stronger needs for infrastructure and supports around infrastructure so that we have the water, sewer, and roadways to support new housing developments. We're working very closely with our federal counterparts to make sure that the actions that we, as a province, take don't impact the actions that the federal government is taking. That's the important piece about having close relationships not only with the federal government but also with our municipal governments. They're doing a lot of work on the ground, and we need to make sure that we're working hand in hand with them as well.

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): I just have a little point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. The question was about municipalities and their requests for changes to regulations at the municipal level in order to access vacant and derelict properties and do the things that they need to do. I appreciate the work with the federal government. Is there work happening on the side of the provincial government to support the requests of municipalities?

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. There is absolutely a large amount of work going on with municipalities and with our partners at Environment and Local Government because it's really hand in hand. We're supporting the work that the communities are doing.

We saw a news article about Fredericton looking at modular builds to speed up construction. Communities are looking at what they can do for their own community to really be part of the solution on this housing crisis.

Each community is approaching it slightly differently, but we're working closely, hand in hand, with each and every one of them all over the province and with our municipal organizations as well. Each community knows its own people and what it needs more than we do, so that's why it's so incredibly important to work hand in hand with communities. We may have one solution that works in Fredericton, but it may be a little bit different in Saint John, Moncton, Bathurst, Campbellton, or a small community. It's important to keep those relationships going, and it happens every day, Mr. Speaker.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to shift to a slightly different version of the housing crisis and specifically to how it is affecting seniors in New Brunswick right now. I know that, last week, there was a lot of excitement about the announcement of a new nursing home in Oromocto. We are hearing from seniors about the challenges they're facing in getting access to home care and getting access to long-term care facilities. From long-term care leaders across the province, we hear about their challenges in finding the staff that they need to care for these senior New Brunswickers because of the wage problems that we're having, the lack of a signed contract, and the insufficient funding to secure safe environments for seniors in New Brunswick.

I know that this is something that the Minister responsible for Seniors cares about deeply. I wonder whether she can tell me what we are doing to ensure that when that Oromocto nursing home opens, it will have the staff and the funding environment to properly care for the seniors of 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 very much, Mr. Speaker. There have certainly been some discussions in this House about seniors and the needs of seniors. These include issues related to housing and when people are ready to transition to new housing from where they may have raised their families. That is certainly something that we're addressing within the *Housing for All* strategy. We are looking for opportunities there, but also, as the Minister of Social Development, I am working very closely with the Minister responsible for Seniors, looking at the issues that families have.

This week, there was an article about seniors and the cost of providing services to seniors within their own homes. We are working through all these things, Mr. Speaker, to make sure we support seniors with the needs they have now so that we can keep them in their homes longer, if possible, and we can have the right transitions for them through special care homes and nursing homes. We are looking at all the criteria and regulations around that to ensure we provide the very best service for New Brunswick seniors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to see that the minister realizes this is an issue and that work must be done on it now; I completely agree with that. However, she also said she would do the supporting work when the problem is clear: The proposed compensation package for staff who care for nursing home residents and those receiving home care is not getting enough funding from the government to attract people to these positions.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

[Original]

We need to get the contract negotiated with urgency, and we need to see support given to the caregiving sector. We've put forward proposals about how that could be done, which the government has rejected. I'd like specifics from the minister on what is being done to address the wage and labour crisis in long-term care.

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. There were a number of wage increases included in the budget this year. I'll pull them up while you're asking my next question. I'll pull up those exact numbers. In our budget, we have added wage increases for the very critical workers who are working in our special care homes and our nursing homes and who are providing service to our seniors and our most vulnerable New Brunswickers.

We are working with the groups that represent the workers in the nursing homes to make sure that we're meeting the needs of those workers. They are a very important part of making sure that seniors are happy and healthy as they are aging and still contributing to the province. This is a very important issue. We are on top of this. We are working very closely with all the support organizations to ensure that we're providing the necessary wages. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do that going forward and will continue to make changes as required. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Mr. M. LeBlanc (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that labour relations in this province are at a historic low. The labour movement is feeling more and more neglected by this government. Despite having a change in the minister responsible for labour relations three times since my election one year ago, nothing has been done to improve relations. It's clear that, at the end of the day, the decisions rest only with the Premier.

Here is my question for the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour: Community college instructors are currently at an impasse, even though both parties at the table feel heard regarding a respectable offer for everyone; so why the interference from the Premier? As well, considering the current labour shortage, how does he intend to alleviate the intensity of the potential strike action that could jeopardize our community colleges? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

[Original]

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): Well, thank you, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite. Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is actually working in a number of different areas throughout the province to increase our workforce development. In particular, we are working with our community colleges first of all. We're increasing the number of trades that we recognize, such as Red Seal carpenters, plumbers, and electricians—all the trades required to build the houses we need to move this province forward economically. We need houses. We can create jobs and employment, and we can also welcome students from all over the world, but it all begins with the training of those students in our community colleges and postsecondary institutions.

Then, we can go into health care. We're also working to increase the number of seats in our province's health care programs to make sure the health care sector has the number of people that it needs to keep our province safe. We'll use Oulton College as an example. We just launched a program with Oulton College to develop nurses for the province. In the very near future, within the next month or so, we'll be recognizing Beal University—

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

Mr. M. LeBlanc (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Mr. Speaker, you can add as many fields of study as you want and you can increase the number of students as much as you want, but if you have no teachers to teach, you have no institutions.

The situation regarding labour relations is deeply concerning, as evidenced by the recent impasse between CCNB and NBCC and their teachers, which ended up on the Premier's desk. Given the critical labour shortage our province is facing, what concrete steps will the ministers take to make sure that we still have seats in those classes come September?

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, through you to the member opposite, it's really obvious where the questions are coming from—the gallery and the audience that's here. The members are playing to the crowd that's in the building. That's fine, because the teachers at CCNB and NBCC in our province are extremely important to our pipeline. They make sure that we have a continual flow of students and that they are ready for the fall.

Having said that, we, as a province, are not involved in the negotiations. It is between NBCC and the union representing the teachers. They are the ones who are doing the negotiations. We, as a government, are obviously there when they reach a settlement and reach an

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

agreement. They will bring it forward for us to look at. We look forward to that opportunity.

At the same time, it's not something that we get involved with. These are labour negotiations. It's not something that we are a part of, per se, because NBCC is run by a board of directors, as the member knows well. He was once an EA in that department. He knows how the system works, Mr. Speaker. I don't understand why today, all of a sudden, this is a major concern. He knows the answer to that.

Mr. M. LeBlanc (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Mr. Speaker, where to begin? Yes, we will defend the rights of workers in this House every day we can. Unlike the government, we won't go to court and waste taxpayers' money there when all we want is to have workers who are fairly compensated and who have their rights respected.

(Interjections.)

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

Mr. M. LeBlanc (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): It's not about their being here in the gallery. Because workers matter, we have fought for them time and time again, at every opportunity we've had, unlike this government. It would rather spend money on outside consultants and glamorous travel around the world when it should be starting to compensate the workers of our province.

(Interjections.)

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

Mr. M. LeBlanc (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): What will the minister do to make sure that the school year is not altered come September? When will it make sure that there is a fair deal for teachers who have such a vital role representing our education system in this province?

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you for the question and thank you for the talk this morning. I love that the opposition members say that it's not because there are people in the gallery. No, of course not. The opposition members just happened to talk about it today. Do they talk about it every day? They don't talk about it every day. Do they talk about it every week? No, they don't. Do they talk about it every month? No, they don't.

The fact of the matter is that this is built on relationships. These are relationships between the union and government and then Cabinet. There is a way to do this. We certainly don't do it on the floor of the Legislature. We do negotiations with the union and government. Once those negotiations have been fulfilled within the mandate, they are then brought to Cabinet. It's as simple as that. It's a simple process, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are doing

Oral Questions

with not only those workers but also workers in a number of unions. Active negotiations continue.

[*Translation*]

EMERGENCY MEASURES

Mr. J. LeBlanc (Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé, L) Mr. Speaker, on May 1, 2024, the Director of the New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization informed the President of the New Brunswick Ground Search and Rescue Association that, beginning in 2024, so this year, the association would no longer receive its annual \$80 000 grant. There are currently nine teams throughout the province that provide crucial support in emergency situations to help New Brunswickers return home safe and sound.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Safety. Why has the funding for these organizations, which provide emergency services in times of crisis throughout the province, been cut?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Minister of Public Safety, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that question. It gives us a chance to highlight the important work that the New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization does every time there is a disaster in this province. We know that, in the past, whether there has been flooding or fires, our team has worked very effectively on the ground with a lot of the volunteer associations such as fire departments and other local emergency measures operations. They work collaboratively to ensure the issues are resolved as quickly as possible.

In relation to what the member is mentioning, again, we're going to continue to look at every aspect to ensure that we have a robust system that works on the ground for the people who need it the most and that it's timely. When these disasters hit, people don't want to be put in a place where they have to wait for an exorbitant amount of time to get relief. We are working very effectively. I think our team is doing a great job. We are going to continue to enhance, build, and be better. We know that storms come and incidents happen. We'll be ready when they do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. J. LeBlanc (Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé, L): My question for the minister was about why the \$80 000 in funding was cut, Mr. Speaker. New Brunswick ground search and rescue teams use this money to pay for liability insurance, the mapping system, the call system, information systems, and two meetings annually. The money helps teams prepare the operating budget of \$2 500 per team.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

If the association doesn't get this annual amount, it won't survive. This means the individual teams will not have any money to pay for registration, insurance, or vehicle repairs. My question is simple: What is the government's plan to ensure New Brunswickers are safe without the help of the more than 300 dedicated volunteers who will no longer have the required funds to provide their services effectively?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Minister of Public Safety, PC): Mr. Speaker, this innuendo that we are somehow not supporting or funding volunteer operations is frankly just nonsense. We put a lot of money into our volunteer organizations to do the work that needs to be done.

Now, if the member opposite is worried about \$80 000 over the multiplied millions of dollars that we put through DFAs to ensure that communities, residents, and homeowners get the help they need when they need it, then we can have that debate. But I can tell you that we're going to operate in a way that is effective, that is direct, and that is going to help people when they need it the most. What we're not going to do is to continue to simply bounce around and hope that disasters mitigate themselves. We are working effectively on mitigation and recovery, and we're going to continue to do so because we on this side of the House get it done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WORKERS

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, today marks 18 months since the Legislature directed the law amendments committee to carry out a study on Bill 27, which would grant paid sick leave to all New Brunswick workers. It has been over a year since that committee requested that the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour undertake a review of the issue of paid sick days. It has been six months since the public consultations ended on December 11, 2023, yet we have heard radio silence from this government on the report and what the government plans to do with it.

Paid sick days have many benefits, including reducing absenteeism, facilitating recruitment, improving morale, and fostering retention. Will the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour bring forward a bill to give all New Brunswick workers access to paid sick leave this spring?

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, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the member opposite, thank you for the question, first of all. The government continues to examine the *Employment Standards Act* with regard to legislated sick leave, and we recognize the need for balance between various industry perspectives. We have been talking not only to the workers but also to the employers



Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

throughout this province to make sure we have a balance before we bring anything forward for government approval.

Obviously, it's important to recognize that workers need sick leave and deserve to have that protection, but at the same time, employers also need... It is not necessary to have government legislation in the workplace all the time. It's important that employers have the opportunity to be competitive among themselves. In other words, they want to retain workers because workers, especially good workers, are in short supply, as we all know. This is one area that employers have where they can be competitive to make sure that their workers have safeguards in case of sickness in the workplace—

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

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, I believe every single worker deserves the right to have multiple paid sick days, and this government clearly has no plans to implement paid sick leave for all New Brunswick workers this spring.

A robust public consultation process was already undertaken on this bill. We had public committee hearings where chambers of commerce, the CFIB, the Federation of Labour, the Common Front for Social Justice, the Cancer Society, and others made their views known. CFIB presented findings stating that over half its members favoured some form of paid sick days. The bill even included provisions to create a fund to help employers with the transition to providing additional sick leave.

In the public accounts committee earlier this year, the deputy minister told me that the stakeholder consultation report was complete. When will the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour release it, and if he won't, what is he trying to hide?

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, Mr. Speaker, and to the member opposite, once again, here we go. We'll talk about it over and over and over, as we have on a number of occasions.

You know, I think that paid sick leave, obviously, as was mentioned, is a very, very important element for workforce development in our province and throughout our country. Right off the top, I have to tell you that only three provinces in Canada actually have it. We're among the majority. There are seven provinces that do not have this legislation right now. Only three do, and those three aren't even in agreement. All three of them have developed totally different arrangements within their workforce.

I have met with people from the CFIB. I have met and sat down with them. We have discussed it. I have met with people from the Common Front for Social Justice. We have sat down and discussed it. Yes, they have feelings. They also have feelings for the employer as well. They realize that the employer has a role to play in this and that government doesn't

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

always have to put rules in place. Employers will make the right decisions for the right time and for the right reasons and get the right results. That is what we are really concerned about here—having the right results for the people in the workforce to make sure that they are protected when the time comes. Thank you.

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Through you, Mr. Speaker, they are not achieving the right results, and they are not protecting workers. I will keep talking about it, and I will keep raising this with the minister until there are paid sick days for all New Brunswick workers.

It is unconscionable that there are only five unpaid sick days for New Brunswick workers if they get a diagnosis of cancer, for example. That should be extended. There are more than three provinces that have extended that to many weeks beyond five days. How could we have gone through a pandemic and not learned the value of paid sick days?

I think that this minister is trying to bury this report that recommends paid sick leave for New Brunswickers. He says that he wants to stand up for businesses. Well, the Greens are the only party calling for paid sick leave, and we are the only party calling for a lowering of the tax rate for small, locally owned businesses.

I think that there is a conflict of interest in being the minister for both business and labour. Will the Premier explain how it is acceptable for—

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

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. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, let's go through the list one more time. There are three provinces in Canada that actually have legislated paid sick leave. There are only three, okay? In Quebec, it is 2 days after 3 months of employment, in British Columbia, it is 5 days after 90 days of employment, and in Prince Edward Island, it is 1 day after 5 years of employment.

As you can see, there is no consistency among those three, and the other seven provinces, again, have decided right now to keep examining, talking, working, and working on solutions. That is the moral of the story here. The number of businesses that are affected by this is considerable. The number of employees is even larger. It is important to have a balance between both, as I mentioned earlier.

This is something that we continue to discuss with our counterparts right across the country, including at a recent meeting that I had with all the Labour Ministers in Canada. As early as April 5, we had that discussion with all the Labour Ministers in Canada and with

Oral Questions

the federal minister chairing the meeting. Right now, that is where it stands. It is under review. We are working on—

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

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, the last years of a mandate are interesting. At the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, it's as though the deputy minister were saying: This is my last year, so I'm moving on. And it's like the minister was saying: This is my last year, so I'm taking a trip. The problem is that they did it with taxpayers' money.

After spending a week visiting Europe last fall, the minister also went to Miami, Florida, this spring to attend Seatrade Cruise Global, a gathering for cruise operators. Could the minister tell us what her role was during this event and how much this trip cost New Brunswick taxpayers? Thank you.

[*Original*]

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace (Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to finally receive this question from the member opposite. I think, for starters, that we will look at the need for the Tourism Minister to leave the province, from time to time, to form relationships and to generate tourism in the province.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, tourism spending was at \$2.2 billion, which is 23% higher than it was the year before. You know, I look at the member opposite who just asked that question. Before she was elected, she had no problem going to Paris with her musical group by using a grant from the department.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace (Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, PC): I look at the member beside her who, as Tourism Minister, had no problem dining with Moroccan princesses. Mr. Speaker, sometimes the travel is absolutely—

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

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to know that the minister doesn't support artists who work and are ambassadors for the province when travelling internationally. They do it to showcase the province. The artists who are listening to you will take good note of your opinion of them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking all these questions because the highlight of tourism is Rendez-vous Canada, which has existed for 50 years. This event brings tour operators from around the world into contact with Canadian tourism businesses. Last year, this event took place in Quebec, and this year it will be in Edmundston. Now, many of these tour operators that the minister said she met with in Europe attend Rendez-vous Canada every year.

So, I'm wondering if the minister went to Quebec, since it's just next door, and whether she preferred to go to Europe or if she said: This is my last year; I'm doing them both.

[*Original*]

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

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace (Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, PC): Thank you very much. Most certainly, to the point the member opposite was making, these relationships are important. It was important for her to go and perform in Paris because the relationships there are very, very important. This is a key market to New Brunswick, one of our most important markets.

Mr. Speaker, from time to time, very rarely, I travel outside of the province. Yes, I was very happy to accompany Port Saint John to Miami a couple of months back. That work and my being there were invaluable to the port and the province. We are seeing higher rates of tourism in this province than we've ever seen. Mr. Speaker, we cannot draw world-class events like the World Juniors and PGA tournaments by... There has been an increase of 23% in tourism. You don't get that work done by staying home in New Brunswick all the time.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you. Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Oh, question period is over. Question period has expired.

Mr. G. Arseneault (Campbellton-Dalhousie, L): I have a point of order with regard to question period, Mr. Speaker. When we are listening to question period, we always check the time to see how much time we have left and whether we have time for a next question.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

We noticed that there should have been time left for at least the last question from our leader. The time was changed during the last question.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): I have already made a ruling on that.

CLIMATE CHANGE

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. I would like to answer a question that I took under advisement last week. My Critic for Environment asked a question concerning the Output-Based Pricing System. I do have more detailed information that I will give him. I just have to get it translated. I don't have it just yet, but it is coming.

The New Brunswick Output-Based Pricing System is used to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from large emitters, which includes the industrial and electricity generation sectors. The system was implemented by the province to meet the federal benchmark for carbon pricing in Canada for the 2023-30 period. The intent is to put a price on industrial greenhouse gas emissions. Revenue collected in the system is recycled back to industry to help fund projects and initiatives with the intention of further reducing overall emissions from industry. The return of revenue collected through the system in 2022 was \$18 million. The estimate for the fund credit purchases for the 2023 calendar year is \$19.2 million. Revenues collected in the year following the compliance year, therefore 2023, will be collected in December 2024.

I must stress that money only flows back to fund projects that have been determined to be the most efficient way to further reduce emissions. The OBPS model for revenue recycling is not unique to New Brunswick and is employed in a number of different carbon pricing systems in Canada. I should also mention, Mr. Speaker, that this is not dollar for dollar. Funds recycled back can only fund a maximum of 50% of a project, and a single project can be awarded only up to 50% of the funds held in the industry fund. I hope that answers the question for the member.

[*Translation*]

Mr. LePage (Restigouche West, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Original*]

I understand where the \$18 million comes from. My questions were more about who is admissible and what the criteria are. You said it is 50% of the project. Is it that they ask for \$1 million and you give them \$500 000? Is that the only criteria? Those were my questions that were not answered. Maybe in the translation, the minister can translate the right answers.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

[*Original*]

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can appreciate the effort from the member opposite, but there's only so much time. We do try to stick to the minute here, even in supplementary questions or questions taken under advisement.

Mr. Speaker, how this works is that the project has to fit the parameters that are established under the program. That would be a very simple, broad-based answer to what the member is asking. If it fits the criteria of the program, an application has to be made. The project has to fit the criteria of the program for it to be approved. Applicants also have to put their own money into it. That's how we're trying to get an 18% overall reduction in emissions.

At the end of the day, we'll continue to make sure that we're holding our large industrial emitters to account. This is one of the tools we use to do that. It was approved by the federal government. It works here, and it works in other places in Canada, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do the work. Thank you.

Point of Order

Mr. M. LeBlanc (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Following the response from the Minister of Environment, last Tuesday, May 7, the Premier took a question under advisement. We still have not received an answer. The answer should be given after subsequent days. I think the delay has been getting a bit long. I would like to maybe hear a ruling on why we still haven't received an answer to that question that was taken under advisement.

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the member opposite is actually reading the rules. It does say "subsequent". It doesn't give a time limit. For respect of the House, government does try to get answers as expeditiously as possible, but in this particular case, the answer is not yet forthcoming. It is being worked on, similar to the one that I just gave. It took me a couple of days to get all that information together.

Mr. Speaker, for the respect of the House, we will continue to make sure that we get this done as quickly as possible, but "subsequent" means exactly that. It does not give a definite time period. Thank you.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, members. The rules say “subsequent”, and there is no timeline. I will leave it at that at this point in time.

Oral Questions

COLLEGES

Hon. Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): I took a question under advisement, and I just wanted to address it for the member from Bathurst. It was about CCNB.

The project is to create an intricate, versatile, and flexible campus at CCNB in Bathurst. Phase 1 will include moving all activities that currently take place at the Youghall campus to the new 152 000 ft² number two building. The existing building will receive major renovations in Phase 2—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): I would ask that you not read from your phone.

Hon. Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Okay. That was it anyway. Thank you very much.

Mr. Legacy (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): I’m sorry, Mr. Speaker. There were a lot of people wondering why the minister was reading from his phone. The question was this: Has the RFP been put out for the designs and plans for the new college? I can’t make it any simpler. Has the RFP been put out? Is it out there now? Can people bid on it?

Hon. Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): CCNB is still reviewing the functional plan. As soon as we have that, we will move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.