

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



May 16, 2024

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EDUCATION

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I couldn't believe my eyes when I read that the government's lawyer, external counsel from New Brunswick's biggest law firm—paid by taxpayer dollars—confirmed to the courts that Premier Higgs and Minister Hogan's review of Policy 713 was a political decision. For weeks, the minister stood in this House and told us that the Policy 713 review was because of public demand, that it was because of hundreds of emails, which now we know didn't exist, that it was because of petitions, which he hasn't produced, and that it was because of, and I quote, "a whole variety of things". But now, his own lawyer contradicts him in court.

This was a purely political decision not in the best interest of kids or parents. We know that it didn't start with the minister but that it came from the top. Now that your own lawyers have admitted it, will the Premier finally confirm that the review of Policy 713 was political?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, it's been quite a process with all this discussion around parents' rights. For parents to have the ability to raise their kids and be part of the solution, they need to know what's going on.

This is something that has come as a surprise right across the country. What are we learning in school? What are we teaching in school? How are we excluding parents? When parents want to be supportive, why do we put teachers in the middle of all this? How do we find the best and right ways to protect kids as they go through the different phases of their lives?

Mr. Speaker, this policy, put forward back in 2020, basically said to hide information from your parents. I'm proud to say that I was part of working with the minister to ask whether that was the right thing to do. Right across this country, we are seeing parents stand up and say: We want to know what's happening in our schools. By the way, what else is happening in our schools?

We want to work with teachers. We want to get it right. For the member across the hall here to suggest that parents don't matter—

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

[Translation]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, this Premier is relegating our education system to the basement. He's asking

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whether teachers are teaching children to lie to their parents. He's sowing confusion and undermining confidence in our education system. It's shameful to see such a thing here in New Brunswick. It's not what New Brunswick parents want, and it's not what students need. It shows a lack of respect toward the teachers, students, and New Brunswick families who needed Policy 713. You have put them in a dangerous position with your decision to revise your own policy.

So, are you going to apologize to the New Brunswick teachers, parents, and students you have placed in a precarious situation?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we know what the Leader of the Opposition thinks about parents' rights. She made it very clear on video not long ago. It was really clear that, in her view, parents don't matter. Parents aren't the most important individuals in raising young families and in raising kids.

This is an issue, and it's unfortunate it has gotten to this point. It's unfortunate that parents have to fight for the right to look after their kids.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): If the Leader of the Opposition wants to continue down this path, I would suggest she look across the country and the province and talk to parents about what they want to know, the role they want to play, and the foundation they believe is important for their kids as they grow up. Mr. Speaker, contrary to the Leader of the Opposition, I strongly believe in families. I strongly believe in parents, and I strongly believe in their right to help guide their children in the most formative years of their lives so they too can be very productive members of society and get the upbringing and the support they need.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly will look across the country and notice exactly what happened in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Minister of Education walked back his empty threats of dissolving the Francophone district education councils.

[*Translation*]

He knew he would never be able to do it because of our Constitution.

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[Original]

That leaves the parents, the students, and the teachers of the Anglophone East School District wondering whether the minister will walk back his threats to dissolve their council. If the Francophone DECs can't be dissolved for the same actions, how is it right or fair that the Anglophone East DEC be dissolved?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get on my feet. I caution the Leader of the Opposition from paying too much attention to the CBC because it doesn't always get it correct. What we're doing in terms of the DECs is currently before the court, at least with the Anglophone DEC. I'm not going to discuss that. I do believe in parents' rights. With the Francophone DECs—

(Interjections.)

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): We will see where we are. They're not school boards. They're—

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): You know full well that they're not school boards because you were President of the New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA). You complained about the government cuts that were made during the Gallant government. Don't forget that. I have your picture right here, front and centre.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I should direct my comments through you.

I'm still waiting to hear from the Leader of the Opposition about which two schools or however many schools don't have paper and don't have markers.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, on May 2, the member opposite said that he would file an application to the court to dissolve the Anglophone East School District. The judge said this process needs to happen quickly and in the light of day. Why haven't you filed that application yet?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Again, Mr. Speaker. I'm not at liberty to discuss issues that are currently before the court or discussions that we've had with our lawyers on the timing and what's going to be brought forth in the coming days and weeks. We'll see.

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However, I'm still waiting for that information. I'm also waiting to get clarification from the Leader of the Opposition as to what she meant about parent rights in that podcast from Ontario. If she doesn't want to tell us, maybe she'll tell the good folks of Woodstock in a week from Friday when she's up there for the rally. I think they'd like to know what you meant too.

Now, the best indicator of future performance is past performance. Let's look at us. What have we done? We've added Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and intervention mentors to at least 25 schools. What did the Liberal government under Brian Gallant do? It cut \$26 million from the Department of Education—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I'll thank the member opposite for making the point that we've made before that he has no idea what's going on in his schools. If he needs me to tell him which of the schools he's responsible for is short of whiteboard markers and papers, that's embarrassing. He should do his job. Mr. Speaker—

(Interjections.)

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): We have another day and another announcement of a family doctor in New Brunswick closing their practice. This time it's in Moncton. Add that to the doctors who have left Sackville, Canterbury, and Quispamsis and beyond, all this while the government is bragging about producing a long-overdue primary care plan without the support of the very people it's trying to retain.

[*Translation*]

A promotional video highlighting all the successes in the health sector has even been produced, even though waiting lists are getting longer and New Brunswickers are suffering.

[*Original*]

The waiting list is growing. New Brunswickers' patience has run out. When will we see the first new clinic under this new family medicine model of this government?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Once again, I appreciate the question. I want to take some time to educate the members opposite on how the primary health care plan works. The other day, I was trying to stress that it is a patient-focused plan. It is a patient-focused plan, and there are many, many stakeholders that have had input.

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We had the paramedics here yesterday. I wonder whether the members opposite would call that “meaningful consultation”? I would be anxious to know whether they think that was meaningful. I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker. Those are the types of meetings that we had with the New Brunswick Medical Society, the Nurses Association, the radiological technologists in Saint John. We’ve had that type of meeting with a number of people. We take all that input very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of collaborative practices that will be opening up soon. There is a pilot project in Dieppe, if the member opposite wants to know exactly where. It has already opened. They have already started. They are taking patients now. We’re getting it done.

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Mr. D’Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, the need for affordable housing is dire everywhere in New Brunswick, and the government must take action to be part of the solution. Housing is being built elsewhere in the Maritimes, but it’s not going well here in New Brunswick.

We now know that 10 units will be built in Edmundston in 2024 on part of the former école Sacré-Cœur property. According to our information, the building would have only one floor. Given that the building will only have one story, can the minister explain why similar projects elsewhere in New Brunswick will have two stories, doubling the number of units on the same amount of land? Why not maximize the number of units, Mr. Speaker, since there is dire need in New Brunswick? Can the minister commit to changing her decision and to building 20 units instead of 10 units on the former école Sacré-Cœur property?

[*Original*]

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the member opposite. We need many more affordable housing units here in New Brunswick. The member opposite is correct. We have a development planned for Edmundston this year. It is a 10-unit building that we’re planning. I can’t speak to whether it’s one story or two stories. I might be able to look it up before I’m done question period. It’s planned for 10 units. There’s an additional piece of property there in the Edmundston area that we’re evaluating for more units as well.

I am happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that we now have 208 units being worked on this summer and fall. By December 2025, we will have over 320 individuals moving into public housing units.

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(Interjections.)

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, guys.

To the member opposite, I'm happy to evaluate the number of stories in your building.

[*Translation*]

Mr. D'Amours (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, if I were the Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, I would be ashamed to say that only 350 people got access to housing over the last two years. Imagine, there is dire need throughout the province, but the minister says getting 350 people housing is a big success. How many thousands of families don't currently have access to affordable housing in New Brunswick? How many thousands of families don't have access to housing in New Brunswick?

In the past, the minister should have done her job to ensure the growth and expansion of infrastructure projects so that there would be more housing being built. Today, if we look at the whole province, we see that there are almost no shovels in the ground, Mr. Speaker. The reality is this: The minister must look at the situation because we are in an urgent crisis. Is the minister going to commit to doubling the number of units in Edmundston and throughout the province to ensure that everyone has a place to live?

[*Original*]

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can't believe the opposition would say that we're not doing any work to get more housing built in New Brunswick when we're breaking records every day.

There were 313 housing starts last month, when the average before that was 13. That is many orders of magnitude more than we had before. We are breaking barriers with 750 starts in the first quarter. We haven't seen numbers like that since we started keeping track, and that was in 1948.

I'm happy to work with the member opposite on more units in his community, but I would like to remind him that we're looking at the entire province and not just his community. The 350 families that I'm talking about are public housing builds. There are many other builds being built. I can report more on that when we update the study.

[*Translation*]

ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

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

[*Original*]

On May 3, we learned that about \$9 million was awarded to 195 projects through the Environmental Trust Fund. We know that more than 330 projects were submitted worth an estimated \$21 million in potential investment. That means 59% of the projects were successful and only 42% of the financial aid requested was awarded. We also know that there are no more guaranteed revenues for the Environmental Trust Fund. There's only a diminishing \$22-million surplus available for the next few years.

As we all know, the Environmental Trust Fund supports projects led by community groups, municipalities, First Nations, nonprofit organizations, and institutions. Can the Minister of Environment explain how his department, which is not an eligible recipient, was awarded \$236 000 for two projects?

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 appreciate the question from the member opposite. The Environmental Trust Fund is an important tool that is used in this province. There were 331 applications. There were 195 projects approved with a total funding envelope of \$9 million. Now, with increased costs and a fixed budget, some historically funded groups were not awarded funds this year.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, I find it very, very rich that we have Liberal opposition members trying day in and day out to tell New Brunswickers that they have it all right and we have it all wrong. The facts say completely otherwise, because here's what we're looking at. If I look at just one case of ETF funding alone, I can go back to a day when a former Liberal government used \$2 million to paint walls in Marysville Place. We have no lessons to learn from that group over there on how to protect our environment.

Mr. LePage (Restigouche West, L): Mr. Speaker, this is about financial management and a question of respect for the quality of the projects submitted by nonprofit organizations and municipalities.

(Interjections.)

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

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Mr. LePage (Restigouche West, L): This minister used his power to give himself and his department money that was supposed to be allocated elsewhere. Mr. Speaker, there are 135 projects that were submitted and rejected under the ETF. How can the Minister of Environment justify awarding his department \$150 000 for “Implementing the Protocol for Determining Groundwater under the Direct Influence of Surface Water”, and another \$86 000 for the “qPCR Bacteria Detection Pilot Project”? Were the ETF’s selection criteria or priorities changed, or is this another slush fund for his department?

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. This is bizarro world. This is from an opposition group that had qualified audits during its time in government. This is from a group that... Do you know what? I actually had to write it down. There is so much that I can’t actually remember it all. That is a group that cut Service New Brunswick offices, cut rural schools, cut visitor information centres, cut the bookmobile, cut customer contact centres, cut teachers, cut food and funding for our seniors, cut care ratios, cut postsecondary education funding in half, cut the New Brunswick Tuition Rebate, and cut the tuition tax cash back credit.

That group thinks it balanced the books, but it was on the backs of New Brunswickers, Mr. Speaker. It raised 10 taxes, including the HST, which this Leader of the Opposition was in full favour of. She was in the paper saying it. She was on the bus. She was part of those decisions, and this is what we have to learn from these guys. It’s a pattern of behaviour. We’re going to be here to make sure that New Brunswickers’ interests are protected. That starts today—

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

(Interjections.)

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

[*Translation*]

EROSION

Mr. Mallet (Shippagan-Lamèque-Miscou, L): Mr. Speaker, since I was elected MLA for Shippagan-Lamèque-Miscou, a home at 23 Paulin Street in Sainte-Marie-Saint-Raphaël, Mr. Guignard’s house, has come to within 21 ft from the shoreline, which is being gradually eroded by the waves.

I would like to know what the government intends to do to help Mr. Guignard before his house falls into the abyss facing it, as his home is no longer insured because it is no longer at the required distance from the shoreline. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.



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[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 very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we are moving along a little bit here. We are talking about coastal erosion.

Mr. Speaker, coastal erosion is something that is caused by climate change. We know that. We are aware of that. For coastal erosion, we are trying to prepare for the effects of climate change. We have been working.

The Department of Environment and Local Government is working with our municipalities. Almost 60% of municipalities have a climate change adaptation plan, including all the most at-risk coastal cities and municipalities, of which the member is part, as well as seven municipalities located in the Lower Saint John River Valley. We will continue to support local governments in updating local climate change adaptation plans through the Environmental Trust Fund.

Further, as outlined in the province's Climate Change Action Plan, the department is currently conducting a province-wide climate change risk assessment to identify risks, set priority areas, and—

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

[Translation]

Mr. Mallet (Shippagan-Lamèque-Miscou, L): Mr. Speaker, there is a pressing urgency since the infamous January 2024 storm that whipped the entire coast from above Dalhousie to Cap-Pelé. This storm destroyed 100-year-old and even older dunes, it flooded the whole area, and it put permanent and seasonal residences at risk. It even affected roads.

Is this government going to wake up and sit down with all groups, community groups, the municipalities, and so on? Instead of pretending, is it going to have real consultations to create a multi-phased action plan to reassure the entire northeastern coast and the eastern coast of our province? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Original]

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Mr. Speaker, we have the climate change adaptation plan. We have had that since 2022. We have been working on this as a government. Previous governments worked on this. At the end of the day, when we work on climate change, we have to work on climate change with the federal government and with our municipal partners. That requires a lot of on-the-ground data collection and work that is being done.



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Part of how that is done is through the groups that receive money from our Environmental Trust Fund. The groups do work. They gather information through a recognized organization, RPC, which we use here in the province, that helps us gather data and set prediction patterns as much as... Climate change is a bit unpredictable because it is not something we get as an exact science, but we are trying to get as close as we can to understanding the patterns, mitigation efforts, and strategies required, but it takes the federal government—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mallet (Shippagan-Lamèque-Miscou, L): Mr. Speaker, as in the justice sector, when a precedent is created, it's easy to follow the same course of action in procedures. Our neighbour, Quebec, has looked for funding from its federal counterparts in order to take action and find solutions to mitigate erosion along the Gaspé coastline.

Is this government going to sit down to analyze the situation and find short-, medium-, and long-term solutions, again, to reassure the people who are in danger and peril with each big storm? As you can see, these storms are a result of substantial climate change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Original*]

Hon. G. Savoie (Saint John East, Minister of Local Government; Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Of course, Mr. Speaker, I talked just a minute ago about the data collection that takes place. Again, we have to try to look at the work that is done every day by the professionals in the Department of Environment and Local Government. These are accredited individuals who have professional designations in their fields of study, and they are out on the ground, every day, working to ensure that they understand what is actually happening to our coastlines. This is something that is happening all across the system.

You know, the member opposite can take it as being funny, but we happen to take climate change very seriously here. We continue to work. The member for Carleton likes to go on because the opposition members can't handle the reality that we are handling things far better than they ever could. They did nothing for coastal erosion. They did nothing to improve the financial position of the people of New Brunswick. New Brunswick was a worst-off place when they were in government, but we're making it better. We're making a difference.

(Interjections.)

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

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MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, it's well known that students in our public schools are struggling with their mental health, and there is a crisis of care in the school system, particularly in the Anglophone education system. Anglophone North, for example, has no school psychologists—zero—and 6 vacancies. Anglophone East has 1 school psychologist and 8 vacancies. Anglophone South has 1 school psychologist and a part-timer, with 9 vacancies. Anglophone West has 1 school psychologist and a part-timer, with 13 vacancies. Meanwhile, the number of students in Grades 6 to 12 reporting anxiety or depression has climbed to between 46% and 69%, a half to two thirds of students, depending on the community we're talking about. For nonbinary students, it has climbed to 85%. This is a crisis of care, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services tell us what she's doing to ensure young people have access—

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

Hon. S. Wilson (Moncton Southwest, Minister responsible for Women's Equality; Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health Services, PC): Well, I'd really like to thank the member opposite for that question because we certainly recognize that supporting our students in schools and all our youth in the province is extremely important. They are our future, Mr. Speaker. That's why we have four sites this year. Actually, there are six, three this year and three next year. We are developing Planet Youth, the Icelandic model. It's a youth hub to help children. We have added the 988 line. We have also added another suicide support line, 211. So, a lot of work has been done to support our youth in the province.

But do you know what the great thing is? We actually have funding now because we've been financially responsible, so we can help with these important—important—initiatives and take these on. When we were in opposition on that side of House... I mean, there was the asset grab—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, the students are going to ask why—why—there is no support for students beyond their teachers and guidance counsellors. Where are the nurses who specialize in mental health and the social workers with counselling skills? Where is the school psychologist recruitment plan? Where are the treatment rooms in schools? Where are the initiatives to promote mental health for children and their families? The youth of our province, their teachers, and their guidance counsellors are crying out for help, Mr. Speaker, but this minister is sleeping during this care crisis. If she is not ready to take this question seriously, is she going to resign and ask the Premier to appoint someone who will do it?

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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): Thank you. Well, I will say that we also have the mobile crisis units. We're doing a number of initiatives to help our youth and anyone who is dealing with mental health issues. Also, Mr. Speaker, we do have the 211 line, and we have the 988 line for support for students, for any youth, for anyone, really. We have intervention workers. We have put 59.5 additional people in the emergency rooms to support anyone coming in in a mental health crisis. So, a lot of work is being done. We're not going to stop. We're there to address these issues. We know that mental health is on the rise in New Brunswick, and that's why this important work is getting done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we watched the Premier release an infomercial on his social media channels, and then it came out on the GNB channels.

This six-minute video was unusual for a government video in terms of its length, its style, and its message. The video contained the exact same style of headlines that we have come to expect from the PCNB campaign manager Steve Outhouse. This video is clearly campaign material paid for by the unsuspecting taxpayers of New Brunswick. We'd like to know how much this Outhouse infomercial cost us and when this government will stop abusing its power and our taxpayer dollars.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the truth hurts, doesn't it? You know, this is putting the message out about what's happening in our province, whether it be the increase in population, the increase in health services, the MyHealthNB app, the new people who are coming to our province from all over, or the different folks who are coming and saying: Wow, what a place New Brunswick is. Everywhere, in every part of this province, we are seeing growth. People want to know what's happening in New Brunswick.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we haven't been as outgoing as we should be, I guess, in terms of telling our story. We are very proud of what's being accomplished by our government and all the departments within, very proud. Record—record—numbers of people are coming here for tourism. There have been record improvements in the health care system with hip and knee surgery, cataract surgery, and access to primary care in different ways. As the Leader of the Opposition knows full well, health care is going to be delivered differently in the future because that's the way—

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

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Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, we have record—record—numbers of lawsuits against this government because of its failed legislation. We have record numbers of people waiting to get primary care. Record numbers of people do not have a home in this province. Record numbers of people are waiting to get subsidized housing, and we have a Premier who won't even deny that he used political staff and taxpayer dollars to put out campaign material under the government of New Brunswick's brand. It is completely irresponsible and inappropriate for this government to start campaigning using taxpayer dollars. There is even the same footage in the GNB ad as you'll find in the PCNB attack ad because the same person is doing the editing. When will the government members admit that they are using taxpayer dollars to campaign, which is exactly what we knew they were going to do when they brought Outhouse in?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is no stranger to the role of the principal secretary. It is a political role. It always has been. The difference now is that we have one person filling that role and they had four. That's the difference. I would suggest that, at one point, the Leader of the Opposition was like one of them, in that same salary bracket. It's no secret that, with less, we can do a whole lot more than the Liberals could even think about doing.

However, in terms of telling the story about what the departments are achieving in this province, we are proud for every department to talk about how well it is actually doing and how many things it is improving in the lives of New Brunswickers. We know that things have changed now. We know that people aren't reading long dissertations in the paper. They aren't reading long stories of opinions. One would like to think that all the news is being shared. Mr. Speaker, a campaign telling about the successes of New Brunswick is not an unusual focus. We're proud of the government. We're proud of—

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, Premier. Question period is done.