

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



June 4, 2024

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HEALTH CARE

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report today was stunning. It lays out a serious failure of oversight on a significant amount of money, \$173 million. This isn't new information. New Brunswickers have been shocked by the size of the travel nurse contracts for many months. The Premier's Office, the clerk, the ministers, and the deputies have been aware of these concerning costs for more than a year.

I'll remind the House that, in July 2022, the Premier fired the health boards and one CEO and took personal responsibility for the governance of the health networks. He remained in charge throughout the time that these contracts were put in place without due diligence or the proper oversight. So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is simple: How did this happen under your eye? How did this happen under your watch?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I'm as disappointed as anyone else in what I've seen in the Auditor General's report. That's why we commissioned that report, to understand how we got there.

Yes, this was during a pandemic. Yes, a lot of decisions were being made. The Leader of the Opposition may not understand how the system works, but she knows that there are a lot of categories of approval throughout the whole exercise of deciding whom to work with, what to do, and when to do it.

Mr. Speaker, we asked for the report. It's very disappointing that we see that, in the case of Vitalité, it hasn't agreed to follow or address the recommendations and concerns in the report. However, Horizon has. My hope is that both health networks will pursue the recommendations, find the solutions to get better oversight and better governance, and find a way to ensure that we continue to get the best value for tax dollars and lower taxes, as we've been doing for every New Brunswicker in this province. Thank you.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Premier has the ultimate responsibility for the responsible use of tax dollars, and it is something that he talks about quite a bit.

Last July, when the Premier took responsibility for the system, the accountabilities were there around signatures by CEOs going to deputies, going to the Premier's oversight. These are expenditures that were known. This is a problem that has been built up over the past year. The Premier did nothing until it was called out by *The Globe and Mail*, and then an Auditor General's report was commissioned. I'd like to know whether the Premier will take responsibility for these failures.

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Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the obligation and any aspect of what happens in the province falls under the responsibility of the government and certainly, in my job as Premier, myself.

Again, I don't think the Leader of the Opposition completely understands the structure and how it was set up. Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, certainly as we got into a situation where we needed to get better and quicker decisions, we did reorganize the health authorities. But it was a temporary measure, with the trustees in motion, to actually work together and work with the CEOs in order to deliver the results that needed to be delivered. That was the structure at that time, and those authorities and those signatories would have followed that process under that organization.

I think the Leader of the Opposition knows full well how that does work. If she thinks that all these invoices show up on my desk, well, they don't. However, Mr. Speaker, I do take responsibility because it's not acceptable. I took responsibility by having the Auditor General do the report and put all the facts on the table. As I said before, both health authorities need to be held accountable and need to deliver on those recommendations.

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly do understand how it works. There's a CEO, the trustee that the Premier puts in place, and they deliver monthly reports on the state of the finances of the health network to the deputy, the minister, and the Premier's Office. So, monthly, as of last summer, we knew that there were major cost overruns here. Did the Premier look into them then?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I think that we learned of the cost overruns maybe at the same time as the Leader of the Opposition, and we questioned how one contract could vary from one to the other. How could Horizon, which will be out of travel nurses in the next few weeks or months, sign one contract that had a short-term arrangement and another actually sign one that's two or three times the cost?

That is a clear indication of how our two health authorities maybe don't collaborate and work with each other on best practices.

We can all learn from each other. That's the purpose of identifying this. That's why I'm pleased with what the Auditor General put forward. He put out very clear facts and made very clear differentiations between the two health networks working in New Brunswick, which should be working together for the best health care for everyone in this province. This is a lesson learned on how we can do better together. It's a lesson learned on how we can not only look at a situation for the moment but also look at getting the best value. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that these contracts that were signed were not the best value for the taxpayers of this—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that he acknowledges that they weren't the best value. I appreciate that he is taking responsibility. I wish he had taken action since the time we knew that these cost overruns were in place.

I can only imagine how the nurses of New Brunswick are feeling upon reading this news. We have a Premier who has refused to spend a penny on retaining or recognizing the nurses of New Brunswick who worked themselves to the bone through the pandemic and have been doing so ever since. We have millions of dollars being spent on unused hotel rooms, executive car rentals, and gift cards, all at a time when we have a government voting against a retention plan for health care workers. We have a government that refuses to provide retention incentives. What does the Premier have to say to the nurses 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. Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We understand that using travel nurses is not ideal. We would prefer to recruit local New Brunswick nurses to fill our vacancies permanently and to ensure we have steady and sustainable care in every facility in our province. Sometimes, that's not the reality. That's why, after the contracts were signed, we invited the Auditor General to review the contract management, what was in the contracts, and how they would be administered so that we could learn and not make the same mistakes again.

I very much appreciate the work the Auditor General has completed. We're going to use the findings to build a better system so that if we encounter a situation such as we did with COVID-19 in the future, we'll be ready and have the systems in place to ensure that these contracts—

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really disappointed and frustrated to see that, when given the opportunity to speak to New Brunswick nurses and nurse practitioners, the Premier doesn't take advantage of it. He let another person do this work.

When the Premier was invited to participate in a debate on the healthcare system, to speak to New Brunswickers and those who work in the system, he decided not to show up and speak to the people who deliver health care to New Brunswickers.

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I can't believe that when asked to speak to the nurses of New Brunswick, who are sitting here frustrated and demoralized when they're reading the findings of the Auditor General, the Premier didn't take the opportunity to address them. He passed it off to another minister, the same way he didn't want to address health care workers in a debate last week. No wonder the nurses of this province are feeling disrespected and leaving the profession. I'm going to give the minister one more chance to speak with the nurses and to tell them how he's taking responsibility for this.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the health debate organized by CUPE does not necessarily recognize or represent all the nurses. The whole point of having a debate on real issues... It's very, very important. We'll do that at any point in time. There will certainly be lots of debates that'll happen over the coming months.

Looking at our whole program around retention and recruitment, we are now hiring more nurses than we ever have. We're educating more nurses than we ever have. We're hiring more nurses than are retired. The net numbers are growing.

We said Horizon is going to be out of travel nurses sometime in the next few months. Unfortunately, the contract with Vitalité is a take-or-pay contract that goes on for two years. That's what I mean when I talk about the differences in contracts.

But, Mr. Speaker, on this discussion around retention, we want to hire, focus, and give bonuses for recruitment. We want to look at special job requirements. We want to find ways to make the hospital working conditions better each and every day. That's what'll make the difference about people staying—

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

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, here we go again. When asked about retention, the Premier goes to recruitment. He talks about recruiting and hiring and the education investments that they're making. He briefly mentioned retention and then said: Actually, that's a bonus for recruitment. It's a simple question, Mr. Premier. What retention incentives are you going to put in place to retain the nurses of New Brunswick today?

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 do not want to leave the impression that this government doesn't appreciate the work that our nurses do in this province. They are incredibly important to the underpinning of the health system and how we administer that for the province.

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I can tell you that I have been dealing with some incredible nurses over the course of my disease that I've been dealing with over the past year. Nurses are appreciated and we need them, Mr. Speaker.

As a government, we have been working very closely with nurses to look at how we can improve their conditions of work, how we can have more nurses working with them, side by side, for support, and how we can ensure that we have young nurses joining the ranks of our senior nurses so that our senior nurses, when they are ready to retire, can retire. Clearly, nurses are incredibly important to this province. We are working diligently to ensure—

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

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier said today that he acknowledges that we didn't get the best value for taxpayers' money with these contracts. But why is the government not taking action? For at least 12 months now, we've known that we've had these exorbitant contracts, contracts that were not properly signed. In some cases, there were no signatures on contracts. We have contracts where payments were made outside the terms of the agreement. We have unsupported expense claims for hotels, cars, and gift cards, as the leader said.

Mr. Speaker, why is the government just sitting here doing nothing and saying that it can't do anything when we have these contracts that have gone unchecked? The Premier blew up health care governance when these contracts were being signed, and we missed the checks and balances on these contracts. Some of them didn't even go through a legal review process. I would like to know whether the Attorney General is reviewing these contracts and what we can do to get out of these contracts and get better value for the taxpayers 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. During main estimates, on behalf of Social Development, I answered a lot of questions about our contracts with the travel nurses. Social Development had two contracts at a value of just under \$3 million. Those contracts ended in 2022. The member opposite is referring to the contracts that our health authorities signed with some of the same travel nurse agencies. Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the contracts that are still in place, and we are working with our partners in the Attorney General's Office to look at how those contracts can be severed in a legal way. We're relying on our team at the Attorney General's Office to help us with those contracts, but we are already learning from the lessons the Auditor General has shared with us related to the contracts. We're making the changes internally, as we speak. Thank you very much.

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Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, we have to wait until the Auditor General does a review to find out the negligence of this government. It's gross negligence that this government has sat on its hands for the past 12 or more months, knowing that it has been paying exorbitant expenses for housing, gift cards, and those kinds of things. The CEO owns these buildings and then he's charging for hotel rooms and evicting seniors from their homes. It's completely unacceptable. Government sat on its hands, doing nothing. Now, oh, we're going to review. The Attorney General's Office is reviewing these contracts to see what we can do to get out of them. Why is it taking so long to get action on this file? Meanwhile, we continue to waste taxpayers' money and we're neglecting to take care of our own workers here in New Brunswick who have been working day in and day out, giving their hearts and souls for New Brunswickers. Why is this government standing still?

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 was some passion in that question. I appreciate it very much, and I appreciate that the member opposite is working hard for New Brunswickers, just as everybody on this side of the room is.

As I had answered the question in main estimates, we talked intricately about the contracts and what was involved in the contracts. I can assure you that the Minister of Health is doing the very same thing with his executive team. I can assure you that he is working closely with the health authorities to encourage them to share the information they have and to also work diligently with our Attorney General's Office on how we can extricate ourselves from these contracts. I appreciate the cooperation of the health authorities, especially Horizon Health Network. It has worked very closely with the Auditor General and has provided information.

Mr. Speaker, we take this very seriously. We take the value for New Brunswickers very seriously. We will continue to work on this.

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

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Losier (Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning, I had the pleasure of attending the tabling of the most recent *Report of the Auditor General of New Brunswick*, and I have only one thing to say: Oh, wow. It wasn't great.

I'm not going to talk about nurses, because that's not my file. Instead, I'm going to talk about housing. Last fall, here, in this House, I repeatedly asked the minister questions on the action plan, timelines, and so on. I even referred to the report that had been tabled,

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which was very weak, in my opinion. I have worked, in the past, with various groups and organizations, and we had solid plans.

In light of what I just said, the Auditor General tabled a report that repeats what I had mentioned last fall. So, is the government going to take the housing crisis seriously and start taking immediate action? What are the plans for the future?

[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. In this case in particular, I really, truly thank the Auditor General for the work that he did. He and I had a nice discussion when he first indicated that he would like to do a review of how the *Housing for All* strategy was developed and of the criteria and key performance indicators we had around it. He suggested it would be a great time for his team to get in and make recommendations on the front end of a big strategy like *Housing for All* so their recommendations could be implemented as we roll out the next version of the strategy.

I can tell you the review that was completed was in-depth and thorough. We appreciate the recommendations. The timing is fantastic, Mr. Speaker, because we're almost exactly a year into the rollout of the *Housing for All* strategy. We are actually reviewing the entire program and making sure that there are no changes that need to be made. We will take those recommendations—

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

[Translation]

Mr. Losier (Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Original]

As we know, we are lagging behind in new affordable housing in New Brunswick versus our sister provinces nearby, such as Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, for example. Yesterday, the Premier went down as apparently saying that he's unwilling to forgive the PST on new multiunit builds. That is quite surprising, because the minister said that everything was on the table, but we've already made that decision. Can the minister please tell New Brunswickers why all those taxpayer dollars are sitting there? What will be done to get some more housing built, including more affordable housing, which is a crisis in this province?

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question and for

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giving us a chance to remind New Brunswickers that yes, there were 750 housing starts in the first quarter of 2024. That's an all-time high in our data going back to 1948. This government is doing it.

You know, the opposition members talk about eliminating the PST. That is a \$175-million cost to the taxpayers of New Brunswick. That would be on top of things that we have already done for the owners of rental properties in the province. Do you know what? We got rid of a rent cap. We got rid of the double taxation. We're speeding up the reduction. We put in the SPM... I can't think of it.

(Interjections.)

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you. That's the spike protection mechanism. Thank you to the people behind me. We've done that as well. It continues, Mr. Speaker, with the tax breaks that we've given them. There's eliminating the rent cap. We could go on and on and on. These are a number of things that we have done to help out the renters in New Brunswick, the apartment owners in New Brunswick—

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

SCHOOL BUSES

Ms. Landry (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): Mr. Speaker, the portion of today's Auditor General's report on pupil transportation is incredibly concerning. The Higgs government has been touting its record on keeping children safe while failing to fulfill the most basic requirements for doing so.

New Brunswick students deserve safe transportation. Can the minister tell us what has been done to improve oversight and compliance in the past six years?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I'd like to start off by saying that we appreciate the work of the Auditor General. We take the transportation of students to and from school and home extremely seriously. There were a number of important findings in the Auditor General's report.

You know, we work together with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure to ensure that we have safe buses. Clearly, there is some work to be done in that area in making sure that they are inspected on time and seeing whether buses without current inspections were actually being operated. I certainly hope that they weren't being operated. We are going to continue to work with school districts to ensure that school bus drivers are kept up to date and that they have all their required documentation by fall 2024. This is an extremely important topic—



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

Ms. Landry (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): Exactly—thanks to the Auditor General, Mr. Speaker. If my children were transported by the public pupil transportation system and I learned that 45% of commercial vehicle enforcement bus inspection reports noted deficiencies, I would be very worried. Could the minister please tell this House what he will commit to doing today to ensure the safety of New Brunswick students?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you to the member opposite. That is a very important question, and I too agree that the safe transportation of pupils in the province is extremely important. We don't take lightly the fact that there are some issues around school buses, logbooks, and the condition of the school buses. We want safe transportation for all our children.

A minimum standard for annual school bus driver refresher courses will be established before the program commences in August 2024 for the next school year. This will include a review of the responsibilities of school bus drivers as prescribed in the *Education Act*, the *Pupil Transportation Regulation*, Policy 504, and Policy 508. The department will also work with school districts to ensure that regular performance appraisals of school bus drivers are completed. These things are extremely important. I agree that we want our children transported safely to and from school.

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

Ms. Landry (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): Mr. Speaker, the numbers noted by the Auditor General in relation to bus drivers are shocking: 46% without proper licensing, 37% without bus driver training, and 20% with no criminal record check. The safety of our students is being put at risk by the Higgs government's mismanagement. Can the minister explain how it is that our bus drivers can be unqualified, given that they can only drive after they go through the province's training?

Hon. Mr. Hogan (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): You know, Mr. Speaker, I agree a little bit with what the member opposite says. I agree we need to ensure that the school bus drivers are properly trained, that we have that training in place, and that we continue to do that. The department will work with school districts because some of this goes to school districts. It falls under the department. Ultimately, we have the oversight for that, along with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. But we're going to ensure that we're doing regular performance appraisals of school bus drivers. We're going to do a review around the school districts to ensure that all school bus drivers aged 65 and older are deemed medically fit to work. This will be completed by August 2024, because this isn't something that we want to hold off on.



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EECD will work with other government departments to ensure that identified gaps in the legislative processes are closed going forward. So, we're not going to sit on our hands and just wait for—

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

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, more than 200 New Brunswickers are suffering from unexplained debilitating neurological decline. In emails leaked to *The Guardian*, Dr. Michael Coulhart, who currently heads the Canadian Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease Surveillance System, wrote: All I will say is that, in my scientific opinion, something real is happening in New Brunswick that absolutely cannot be explained by the personal agenda of an individual neurologist.

Mr. Speaker, there is an ongoing cover-up, and the Premier is sacrificing New Brunswickers' health as a result. What is the Premier hiding from us?

[*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. The insinuation that there is a cover-up is very concerning. An extensive investigation into this neurological symptom with unknown causes was done in 2021. A team of independent neurologists and epidemiologists was asked to investigate the situation. An oversight committee found no evidence that a neurological syndrome of unknown cause exists in New Brunswick, and its report has been made available online. We had national experts in disease surveillance, zoonotic disease, special pathogens, food safety, industrial hygiene, environment, veterinary pathology, environmental health, and public health. As well, experts from the Canadian Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease Surveillance System, the national medical laboratory, and the Public Health Agency of Canada were all consulted.

Mr. Speaker, there was no evidence—

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

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, *The Guardian* reports that Dr. Coulhart, in a leaked email, wrote that he believes an environmental exposure, or a combination of exposures, is triggering and/or accelerating a variety of neurodegenerative syndromes with people susceptible to ailments such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Those afflicted, their families, and all New Brunswickers deserve to know what this Premier knows. Dr. Coulhart wrote in an email that "the complexity of the issue has given



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politicians a ‘loophole’ to conclude ‘nothing coherent’ is going on”, and that is what this Premier has seized upon. Dr. Coulthart went on to say that “the truth will assert itself in time”.

Mr. Speaker, we need the truth now from this Premier. With the truth, perhaps measures can be taken to protect people from being afflicted by this heartbreaking neurological decline. What does the Premier know, and why is he covering it up?

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. Public Health New Brunswick, in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Vitalité Health Network, continues to deploy resources to support this doctor and the work being done. We can’t comment on the hypothesis until we receive more information from the neurologist. To date, we haven’t received any other similar notifications from any other physicians.

Mr. Speaker, if we get more information, we will continue to review it. I gave the list of the professionals involved in the 2021 evaluation. I thank the doctor who is reaching out with concerns. Our team will review the information shared, and hopefully, if more information is requested, we will receive that information. Our medical professionals in New Brunswick are required to notify provincial authorities in cases where they see persons with notifiable diseases. We will continue to monitor that.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Holt (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. New Brunswickers are extremely frustrated to see \$174 million spent on an out-of-province corporation with no value to the New Brunswick taxpayers, as per the Auditor General. We see a government making no efforts to retain the hardworking nurses we have in the province today. We see the Premier having a knee-jerk reaction to a tragic death in the ER and firing the health boards and the CEO of Horizon. Then, the Premier started to micromanage and mismanage our health care system. Now we have the worst contracts the Auditor General has ever seen, with no controls, no legal review, and massive holes that our taxpayer money is falling through all happening on the Premier’s watch.

Will the Premier apologize to the taxpayers of New Brunswick for this waste of their money?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I guess I’ll start out by clarifying who brought CHL to the government. Brian Macdonald was not representing CHL to us. Jordan O’Brien was, so I think it was the former chief of staff of the Gallant government, who is now the lobbyist bringing forward

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people like this and taking advantage of what we have here in our province in trying to deliver better health care. Mr. Speaker, that sets the record straight on that issue.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): The other record to set straight is that 80 000 new people are in our province now, and they are all wanting better health care. If you look across the health care delivery network, you will see that a lot of major gains have been made and that challenges exist. We have more doctors now than we've ever had, but we have fewer doctors seeing more patients because the work-life balance is different. We have a whole new system with MyHealthNB. We have a reduction in hip and knee surgeries. We have cataract surgeries.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we have access to primary care in a different way, and we are meeting those challenges in—

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

Members, I'm able to hear the questions from the opposition side, but sometimes, I'm not able to hear the responses because of the back and forth. I really don't appreciate that. I'd like to be able to hear so that you can get a ruling if you ask me for one. Now, today, I was a bit concerned by the language that was being used. There were suggestions of a cover-up and the truth not being told. We're treading very closely to the line, so I would suggest that members be very careful with the language they use in the future. We'll be watching for that very carefully.

Question period is over.

