

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**October 25, 2023**

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### GASOLINE PRICES

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about the cost of living, one element comes up time and time again: the price of gas. And that is for good reason, because it has been higher than average ever since July, when the Premier and his government allowed producers to pass on to consumers the cost of the Clean Fuel Regulations. New Brunswickers have been expressing their outrage at this decision for four months now, and they have been paying more all summer. Instead of listening, the Premier launched an advertising campaign on radio, with full-page ads in the newspapers, and online, telling New Brunswickers that they had to bear these costs.

Well, New Brunswickers and our members have been calling on the government to reverse its decision and take the 4¢, 5¢, 6¢, or 7¢ off the price of gas and off of consumers. Two nights ago, it seemed as though the Premier had changed his tune. So I am asking, Why now, Mr. Premier? What has changed for you and your mood today?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in this little discussion on gas prices, we have talked about regulated pricing throughout Atlantic Canada. We know that our prices are very similar to if not a little lower than Nova Scotia's. We also know that they all raised their prices at the same time through their processes, the same as ours with our EUB. You know, we questioned too why ours started at 7¢, but they have now revised it down to 4.5¢. Nova Scotia is also at 4¢. I think that the opportunity exists there: How do we can get an alignment in Atlantic Canada when looking at regulated pricing? And is regulated pricing the best avenue for all of Atlantic Canada in any case?

But I do not think that we should lose sight of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has today reinforced her support for the carbon tax. She has reinforced it. We are not talking about 3¢ or 4¢. We are talking about 14¢, 15¢, or 16¢ on a program that we cannot even justify the value of because its only value is that it is costing every citizen in this province more to do anything—to move, to buy groceries, to do anything, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

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

[Original]

I would like to cite some things that the Premier has said in looking at what is happening with gas prices in New Brunswick. He said that he had no understanding of what the

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number should be but that the whole reason for the EUB was to protect consumer pricing and that it should be on top of it.

Well, we would suggest that he should be on top of it, but for the past four months, while New Brunswickers have been asking to take this price off—something that is within the Premier's power to do—he was distracted by leadership challenges and crises within his caucus. He was not paying attention to the burden New Brunswickers were bearing of his decision. If he cares so much about the price of gas for New Brunswickers, he has in his power the ability to reduce it today. Will you remove the Clean Fuel Regulations from consumers, Mr. Premier?

**Hon. Mr. Flemming, K.C.** (Rothesay, Minister of Justice, Attorney General, PC): I have been quietly listening to this talk of energy and fuel prices, so without the blessings of anyone, I just stood up. I think I am going to answer this.

What is going on with fuel prices is entirely driven by the federal government, and everybody knows it. The 4.5¢ is a result of the province being forced to react to the overwhelming pressure of the federal government. The federal government has put a carbon tax of 14.5¢ per litre on top of the 4.5¢. That is 19¢ per litre. If you want to help anybody, phone Trudeau and tell him to get rid of the 19¢ per litre that his ridiculous policy is putting on. You hurt the poor. You—

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

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that there is some confusion about the difference between the carbon tax and the Clean Fuel Regulations. The Clean Fuel Regulations were designed to be borne by producers and refineries. This government chose to make a special loophole to bypass that so that New Brunswickers would pay instead of the refineries. We think that is a poor decision, and New Brunswickers think that is a poor decision. There is the opportunity to change the loophole and to change what we pay for gas today. If the Premier wants to go and lobby Ottawa, why is he not doing that? Do it now. If he needs my help, then maybe we should change places.

We want to see relief for New Brunswickers today. They have been paying too much all summer. This does not go into effect for refineries until next year. Will you remove today the 8¢ that you are adding to the price of gas in New Brunswick, which is within your power to do?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal math comes out again.

First of all, the province and the people of the province have been paying more than they were for fuel for some time, ever since the carbon tax came into play and then with the

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Clean Fuel Standard added to that. What the Leader of the Opposition seems to be avoiding and avoiding is that Nova Scotia has the same thing, an increase because of the Clean Fuel Standard. So does Prince Edward Island, and so does Newfoundland, as a regulated price market. That seems to escape the Leader of the Opposition, the fact that the same thing happened in the other three regulated provinces. Mr. Speaker, the reason is that their utilities boards looked at it as well and said, We have to do something for the retail association and for the people who are selling on our end.

As my colleague just said, the real problem is in Ottawa. If real changes need to be made, they need to be made to the policies in Ottawa. That is where the Leader of the Opposition needs to focus. Mr. Speaker, we are focused on the problem and the root cause, which is in Ottawa. The Leader of the Opposition should get in the same focus mode.

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier continues to blame and point to other places, and his focus seems to be an obsession with Ottawa. We are focused on New Brunswickers, and the Premier is shirking his responsibility to support them. Other provinces and their EUBs did differently than we did and spread the cost between consumers and others. We pushed the entire cost onto consumers. That could be changed, and the Premier's interview from last night suggests that he is open to changing it. Will you change the Clean Fuel Regulations standards to provide relief immediately to New Brunswickers?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, if I were in the Leader of the Opposition's shoes, I would want to divorce my comments from Ottawa too. I would want to move as far away from Trudeau as I possibly could. I would want to move as far away as I possibly could from the flawed policy that is impacting New Brunswickers right across our entire province. I would not want to talk about them a little bit. Unfortunately, she is tied at the hip with the group in Ottawa that has policies that are putting our province behind in affordability.

Let's talk about the EUB. If the Leader of the Opposition actually knew how it worked. . . The EUB—the EUB—said, We are not sure what this impact is going to be. The EUB said, We will start at 7¢. The utilities board of Nova Scotia said, We are not sure either, but we are going to start at 4¢. What did the EUB here say? They said, Well, if Nova Scotia is at 4¢, then maybe we should be closer to 4¢. Mr. Speaker, they are all kind of wondering what the impact is going to be. The thing that they are not confused about is that it all started in Ottawa with a flawed policy from the federal government.

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): I think that it is really unfortunate that the EUB has put something in place when they really are not sure what the impacts will be. The impacts have not been felt by the refineries yet. It is because of the legislation that this government passed that was supposed to allow industry to make a case for why it might need some support. We skipped over that entirely

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and just let industry pass the cost on entirely to consumers, thanks to this government's legislation. The government refuses to accept responsibility for that.

### BUDGET

I want to go to a different point, because we see that this government's grades from the C.D. Howe Institute on accountability—something lacking in this House—have been sliding lately. It cites that this was due in large part to budgets and estimates coming later and later. The government is not giving the public or MLAs the chance to do their jobs and get informed.

[*Translation*]

We agree and we want budgets to be done in a timely manner.

[*Original*]

We want budgeting that is timely and allows for public analysis. I am hoping that the Premier can tell us: When can we expect the budget in 2024? Will the government strive for better accountability grades and deliver the budget, as C.D. Howe recommends, in February or even January?

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much to the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Do you know what? The C.D. Howe Institute recognizes that New Brunswick is a leader in transparency. It is a leader and a consistent high performer when it comes to government finances.

Yes, I think we have gone from a B+ to a B. But you know what? There are two provinces ahead of us. Alberta is at an A+, Saskatchewan is at an A-, and then we are tied with P.E.I. at B. We are tied for third place out of 10. I would consider that to be pretty good. We are a small province. We are doing the best that we can.

It is important to note that our government processes have not changed. They have stayed the same. We are transparent, and we are looking out for New Brunswickers. They can see exactly where their money is going and exactly what is happening with the finances of New Brunswick.

[*Translation*]

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



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[Original]

What is important here is democracy and the opportunity to put forward a budget that the public and this House get to scrutinize and debate before it is in place. When the budget comes out in March and it comes into effect in April, that leaves no time for the public to understand or to express how they feel. It leaves no time for this House to do its job. This year and the year before that, it was late in March that the budget came out. The government's grades have been sliding because it was previously putting the budget out in February.

I know that it is not a sexy topic, but it is really important for good governance that we have a chance to look at budgets and debate them. So, I will ask again: Can the government commit to when the budget will come out in 2024?

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Yes, the budget will come out on, I think, March 21 or thereabouts. The capital budget is scheduled to come out on November 28. We will do that first, and then we will get to the ordinary budget as well.

I find it rather odd that this is coming from a member of a former government. She was a staff member in the Brian Gallant government, which surprised us with a wonderful, qualified audit during its time here. The Auditor General qualified its numbers. So, I do not know. We do as much as we can to make it sexy, but I guess it is not.

Anyway, we are doing well with our reports from the C.D. Howe Institute. We do well with our rankings from the banks as well. New Brunswick is in fine shape, absolutely.

## LABOUR

**Mr. M. LeBlanc** (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): As we are all aware, a critical barrier to the progress in the housing sector is a shortage of skilled labour. The *Housing for All* strategy highlights the widespread struggle among developers in finding skilled trades workers, which has not only hampered the pace of development but also led to project cancellation. Rural New Brunswick is particularly hard hit by this challenge.

Could the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour share with this Assembly what this government's plan is to tackle the labour shortage across all regions of New Brunswick? What concrete measures are being undertaken to ensure the resolution of this significant issue?

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Minister of Indigenous Affairs; Minister responsible for Immigration, PC): Thank you to the member opposite for the question, through the Speaker. I am very privileged to rise today and actually answer my first question as the Minister of Post-Secondary

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Education, Training and Labour. So, thank you for this opportunity. I am even more delighted because I spent 32 years of my life in the skilled trades. I probably know it better than anybody in this House. I am really happy to rise and talk about it.

There are a couple of things that I would say. Three years ago, PETL came in with my predecessor, the MLA for Portland-Simonds, and we had a discussion about how they were actually going to tackle the skilled trades shortage. One of the things that really impressed me, and I talked about this yesterday, was that they did not talk about numbers. They did not talk about ratios. They talked about making sure that we took marginalized groups and gave them an opportunity to enter the skilled trades.

I can tell you that I spent three years in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador managing three projects over there for the building trades. The key to success around skilled trades is not to talk about numbers. It is to talk about bringing people to the table who never had the opportunity—

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

**Mr. M. LeBlanc** (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that she talks about a strategy that was put in place three years ago, but we still have not seen any results when it comes to skilled labour in the housing industry. The report *Housing for All* also talks about going to India—specifically India—to recruit 10 000 skilled trade workers to come to work in the housing industry. Let's not forget that in 2021-22, New Brunswick welcomed about 8 000 newcomers, who are primarily working in the sector of health care. We have limits when it comes to how many newcomers we can welcome every year. If we are talking about having 10 000 people come from one specific country without any timeline, I am just wondering where this will go. At the end of the day, if we are talking about 10 000 newcomers coming to New Brunswick to work on building houses and in the trades to improve our province, where are they going to live? There is no housing. What is the plan when it comes to the skilled workforce?

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Minister of Indigenous Affairs; Minister responsible for Immigration, PC): Thank you again to the member opposite for the question. Once again, I am pleased to rise to talk about this. We are actually beating the national average when it comes to women in the trades. For women in the trades, it is usually about 3% across the country. For us here in our province, it is 7%. We are also beating the national average with respect to Indigenous persons in the trades. Right now, we have over 100 apprentices who are Indigenous, which is typically uncalled for in the province. And I will tell you that three years ago, we looked at increasing the target by 7%, but we have already surpassed it. We are not at 21%. We are 24.2%.

The other thing I want to make very clear is that these 10 000 people that we are talking about are newcomers. We are going to set up an international office. We have to be very,



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very, very diligent with respect to where we do that. We need to look at those skills qualifications. We need to make sure that they are aligned, and we will select a country and a location that is very aligned with us so that we can prequalify those individuals so that when they get here, they will be ready to go to work. Thank you.

[Translation]

### SENIORS

**Mr. Gauvin** (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The subject I am going to talk about is one that is very close to my heart and that is difficult to accept. More and more seniors in the province have to part with their homes, their houses, because they can no longer afford them. It is not because they are no longer physically able or because they have mental health challenges, but simply because they no longer have the financial means to keep their homes. Mr. Speaker, these seniors do not have any way to increase their incomes. I have asked my colleagues about this and can confirm that this situation is occurring more and more in many areas in New Brunswick.

These are houses that these people built and where they brought up their families, or that their parents built. They have to part with them. They cannot increase their incomes. Some collect pensions; some worked at good jobs their entire lives. I even know that some government members know people who had to sell their homes in Dieppe to move to apartments in Barachois. To continue doing things this way would make no sense. What action will this government take to ensure that seniors keep their homes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Yes, this is coming from the people who invented the tax grab for seniors. Remember that, the seniors' asset grab? I think that it was referred to as the seniors' asset grab. It was a wonderful, well-thought-out piece of legislation, that was.

Do you know what? Yes, we are helping seniors. In this session, the Low-Income Seniors' Benefit will be increased, absolutely. As well, on the compassionate side, the percentage of household income that is required to fund residential care for a spouse or a partner is being reduced to allow more of the income to stay with the individual who is still living at home. That 60-40 split is now going to be 40-60. That is great news for seniors, especially if one of the seniors is in nursing care.

We do all sorts of tax credits. We help seniors in a number of ways. Tax reductions are in place. There is improved affordability. Approximately 68 000 residential and nonresidential properties have benefited through our tax—

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

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[Translation]

**Mr. Gauvin** (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Listen, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy that government members find my comments amusing, but there are seniors selling their homes right now. It is happening at this very moment. There is no debate to be had. We are not debating the issue right now. It is happening right now. I am happy to see the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board entertaining himself by making jokes about this and having meaningless discussions to hide a lack of compassion. However, one thing remains certain, Mr. Speaker: Some seniors will have to sell their homes before Christmas.

That being said, the government said it would take action. We have been hearing it since this morning: We are going to take action; we are going to take action; we are going to take action. So, give us a date so we know when it will be done. In the meantime, we do not want a single senior to have to sell their home to move into an apartment, especially when they are in good health and physically able to stay in their home. It costs more to keep a senior in a nursing home than to keep them in their home. Be responsible and think of seniors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I would like to comment on this because many years ago, we put in a program called the tax deferral system. Now, we never had any idea that it would have the impact that it has today to keep seniors in their home, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the many benefits that have increased and will be increased for seniors living in their home, the tax deferral program means that you do not have to sell your home because of increased assessments or increased taxes, because those taxes can be deferred until you do want to sell. Maybe at this time many seniors are thinking that the home is worth a whole lot and it would be a good time for them to sell. To the member opposite, I would say that the tax deferral program means that you will never need to sell your home because of a tax increase because the program allows it to be protected.

## HOMELESSNESS

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, the city of Moncton, like other cities, has been experiencing a homelessness crisis that keeps on getting worse, and all we are seeing from this government are band-aid solutions. The Mayor of Moncton recently wrote to government members and copied me, saying:

*While our municipal teams and community groups continue their important work on the ground, it is not enough to address the ever-worsening situation and these initiatives are short term (band aid) solutions. We require long-term housing and treatment (addictions and mental health) solutions to these issues. Our Council has made your government aware of the*

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*supports our community requires to succeed on numerous occasions and yet we see very little progress*

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health explain why there has been little progress in providing significant increases to mental health and addiction services such as outreach services, shelter, housing supports, therapists, social workers, caseworkers, timely access to detox and rehabilitation—all of this? Can the minister give us an update on where the department is in providing these needs for Moncton and other cities? Thank you.

**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 homelessness issue that we have here in this province is a very large problem. We all recognize it, and Moncton is the centre of where some of the issues are going on. Again, with an issue like this, we have an all-of-government approach. With the team at Social Development, we have some very dedicated individuals that have put their hands up and said, I will be the focus of this, and our team will lead the effort to address the homeless issues in New Brunswick. So first of all, thank you to the team at Social Development. But also, Justice and Public Safety is involved, Treasury Board is involved, Health is involved, mental health and addictions is involved, and we are all working together to solve the homeless issues that we have, primarily in our larger cities. There is a lot of work ongoing. I am going to run out of time so I cannot start telling you all the things that we are doing, but ask me another question, and I will keep going.

## HOSPITALS

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The long-awaited new surgical wing that has been under construction for some time at the Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital in Fredericton is nearing completion. It has been built to include a hybrid surgical suite, which combines medical imaging and a conventional surgical suite into one treatment space. This allows surgeons to perform imaging, diagnosis, and surgery all in the same room and removes the need to move the patient between an imaging suite and an operating room. It is particularly important for the success of life-saving vascular surgery in the case of, say, aneurisms. However, the Premier has thus far not given his blessing to allow the hybrid surgical suite to be utilized for this purpose at the Chalmers. Why?

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, this government has invested heavily, not just in the Chalmers hospital but also in hospital institutions right across the province. We believe in a province-wide approach to health care. We continue to make those investments, and not just at the DECH. We also do it in Sackville, we do it in Moncton, we do it in Saint John, we do it in Bathurst, we do it in Edmundston, and we do it in Campbellton. The investments continue to make sure that people have access to surgery,

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access to primary care, and access to treatment for mental health and addictions, with a connected health care system that is also connected when it comes to seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I have met with surgeons at the DECH to talk about the OR. I have met with my colleagues to talk about the OR. I have met with the interim CEO too to try to talk about this.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that we continue to work on. When looking at the capital budget, we say, Look, no is not forever when it comes to various options.

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

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, without their Premier's go-ahead to outfit the hybrid surgical suite with the relevant medical equipment, which will be paid for by funds raised by the incredible Chalmers Foundation, it will be impossible to recruit a new vascular surgeon to Fredericton as our current surgeon retires. Vascular surgical services will be lost, not only in Fredericton but also in western and central New Brunswick, because this is a hub for them.

This is a dire situation, Mr. Speaker. What would have been a one- or two-hour emergency ambulance trip from communities in the Upper Saint John River Valley to Fredericton for a life-saving vascular surgery will be too long to save some people's lives. What would be a 1-hour-and-45-minute drive from Perth-Andover for a life-saving surgery will turn into a trip of close to 3 hours to get to Saint John.

The hybrid surgical suite is already built. We do not want it turned into a storage room, Mr. Speaker. We want it turned into a hybrid surgical suite. Why is the Premier not allowing this to proceed?

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, the sensationalism coming from the Green Party here this morning is just unbelievable. Day in and day out, we have good people on the front line who are saving people's lives, preventing people from getting into trouble, and performing excellent surgery here in the province, and I want to commend them for the work that they do.

Now, the member opposite seems to be a self-appointed triage medical professional, which I did not know was on his resume. But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, in the conversation that we had with the folks from the DECH, we did not say no. We said: Not now.

This equipment is very specialized. It is very technical. Even to order it, it takes years for it to be purchased, built, and put in place. So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the number of things going on in the hospitals in Saint John and with respect to the various surgeries that

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are performed in Saint John, Moncton, Fredericton, Bathurst, and Campbellton, we can see that we have a provincial approach to—

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

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, I know that the medical staff across all departments, including department chiefs, surgeons, hospitalists, nurses, technologists, are all deeply concerned that without the hybrid surgical suite, vascular surgical services will disappear from the Chalmers hospital and from this part of the province.

This will have cascading effects, with the subsequent loss of up to two anesthesiologists and loss of other medical staff, ultimately perhaps leading to the downgrading of the Chalmers hospital as a tertiary care hospital. That is coming from those medical professionals, Mr. Speaker, not from me.

No other hospital has yet to build an operating room to host a hybrid surgical suite in this province. That has happened in the new surgical wing at the Chalmers hospital. It is waiting, and professionals are waiting for the go-ahead to outfit it with the required technology, which, as I said, is to be paid for by the funds raised by the Chalmers Foundation.

It is not the minister who is standing in the way. It is the Premier. Why is the Premier standing in the way of this decision?

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, thank you very much. Once again, I think that the message from this side is clear. When we had those meetings with the individuals whom the member across the way mentions—we have had them, the acting CEO has had them, and the local members have had them—we were clear. One of the toughest things to say when it comes to medical procedures, new technology, or equipment is either no or not now. That is the message that we gave the surgeons in Fredericton. The answer is not, No. It is just not now. There is a procedure.

Look at Saint John and what is going on there. The opportunity for a hybrid OR in Saint John is another thing to be considered as well. We look at the province-wide needs when it comes to equipment, when it comes to upgrades, and when it comes to capital improvement. We will be having our capital budget here in the fall. Again, we look at record investments right across the province when it comes to capital and equipment purchasing. So I look forward to that capital budget and more discussion on this topic.

## MENTAL HEALTH

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will come back to that letter from the Mayor of Moncton. She highlighted the need for support for community groups that are doing important work. She highlighted the Humanity Project and its JOSH Project,



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where it has 20 units of housing. But it needs the mental health and addiction supports to go hand in hand with that project.

She calls for help for Ensemble Services Greater-Grand Moncton, a harm-reduction agency that is bursting at the seams. There are situations where dozens of people are hanging out on the porches and, on cold nights, lighting fires. It is a danger. They need support to beef that up.

Now we have the Salvus Clinic and the 4 000 patients that it serves. It not only provides for their mental health and addiction needs but also their primary care. A lot of the patients who are accessing those services are the most vulnerable of society. The clinic had to close its door because it cannot find a new home.

I want to know what this government is doing to address those pressing needs for Moncton and address the homelessness crisis that we are facing, which is only getting worse. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Ms. Green** (Fredericton North, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was starting to talk about in my last answer, this is an all-of-government and all-of-stakeholders approach that we are putting toward the homelessness crisis in Moncton. I do not use the word “crisis” lightly, Mr. Speaker. We had all hands on deck last year. There were big changes made. There were big improvements. But we can do better, Mr. Speaker.

So, we have been working with all the stakeholder groups and meeting with them. Social Development has committed to putting in homelessness hubs in our three major centres. As part of those hubs, there will be services provided. They will act as an out-of-the-cold shelter for people to stop in and get services.

For example, the one in Moncton now has a name. It is called bridge to housing. We are working very closely to get mental health and addictions services in there. We are working with all eight teams on the ground. We have met with the stakeholders, and we are looking forward to having this open shortly, Mr. Speaker.

## COST OF LIVING

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think if I could characterize today’s session of question period, it is “not now”. Our question is: If not now, when?

We keep hearing: We will, we might, someday, tomorrow, not now for RSV vaccines, but maybe later. We will do these things on labour creation, but we have not. We have been in

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power for five years, and we have known about the housing crisis for as long. The government stands here today and says: We are going to pick a country in the future. We will do things tomorrow. It reminds me of the Minister of Finance who yesterday said: We have affordability measures. We have property tax measures. They are coming.

It seems to me that the relief that the government is providing leaves out the little guys. It is focused on the big guys and the entities. We want to know what is going to impact New Brunswickers today. We have made suggestions that impact all New Brunswickers. What are you doing to help the little guy who needs relief today, Mr. Premier?

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Minister of Indigenous Affairs; Minister responsible for Immigration, PC): Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Once again, I do not know whether you folks were listening yesterday or not, but three years ago, this government actually decided on a target for skilled trades. It was 7%. We have surpassed that percentage. We have beat it. It is already done.

(Interjections.)

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

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Minister of Indigenous Affairs; Minister responsible for Immigration, PC): So, when you stand up in the House and you talk about this government saying that we are going to do things in the future, that is a fallacy. People need to understand that. It is very important for the electorate to understand that.

We actually have over 5 000 apprentices right now, as of today. That has never been heard of before in the history of this province. As I said to you already, we are beating national averages when it comes to women in trades and when it comes to marginalized groups. These things are very important.

In terms of my comments with respect to designating a country and finding that particular niche that will supply our labour needs, that is really, really critical because we have to make sure that this country has similar skill sets and similar credentials.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Bill Oliver): Thank you, minister. Question period is over.