

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



November 22, 2024

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[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT FINANCES

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much.

[*Original*]

I'd like to start off this morning, Madam Speaker, by asking the Premier... The Prime Minister has just recently announced that there will be a reduction in the GST, a GST holiday. I just want to ask the Premier this: Will there be any impact on provincial revenues as a result of this federal decision? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question. We are crunching the numbers, and we understand that the cost of this tax holiday will be \$62 million to the province's revenues, but we are in conversations with the federal government right now to ensure that it will cover those costs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you very much again.

[*Original*]

Thank you, Premier, for that response. So that's \$62 million that we are now going to have to try to recoup. It sounds like a rebate program. We're going to have to give this money to the feds and wait to get it back, and there's no guarantee. Can the Premier indicate to us this: Did she have any previous knowledge from her visit with the Prime Minister that this was going to be coming?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[*Original*]

No, this wasn't something that the Prime Minister and I discussed during his visit. How it works is that this is revenue that won't come to us. It's not funds that we send to Ottawa. It's just money that's not going to come. We're talking with the federal government right now about how it's going to fill that \$62-million shortfall for us.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

[*Original*]

In my questions during question period on Wednesday, I mentioned the 0.3% incremental increase in revenue that the Liberal Party anticipated in its platform costing, and I said that there are unanticipated things that can come up. Now, here we are with a \$62-million hit to our revenues that we're not sure whether we're going to get back. The Liberals only gave themselves a \$2-million cushion. When can we expect a response from the Premier to inform the House that they have indeed been successful in getting that \$62 million back or that we're going to have to eat it? What implications will that have on their costing? Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

[*Original*]

I share the concerns of the member opposite. This is something that we just learned about on Wednesday. We learned this morning that it will cost us \$62 million. We are in active conversations with the federal government to ensure that New Brunswickers get the benefit of the tax rebate and not the pain of the hit to our revenues. As soon as we have a firm answer from the federal government, we will share it with the people of New Brunswick.

[*Translation*]

POWER RATES

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you very much again, Madam Speaker.

[*Original*]

Yes, this was exactly the point of what I was trying to say. Now we have a government that has said: Well, we're going to keep all our commitments, and we're going to balance the books. What is the Premier going to have to remove in order to live up to that commitment? She doesn't know right now, so the government will have to start making some plans to change and shift things in order for that to happen.



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Now I want to switch to the provincial tax coming off power bills. It was campaigned that it would come off people's power bills. Then it was found out that it was for April 1, and that doesn't live up to the definition of "immediate". Now, it's going to be a rebate, which, as we all know, is going to be a \$90-million promise that is going to come onto this year's books. But it's going to be a rebate. A rebate means that you have to pay it up front and then you get it back. Can we hear from the Premier on what she thinks "immediate" is and how that is going to work for New Brunswickers?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[*Original*]

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to clarify for all New Brunswickers that this is a benefit they're going to get up front on their bill. There is no paying and waiting for the money to come back. You'll see a line item on your power bill that says: 10% rebate. It will reduce the total cost of your bill. It will be 10% off the cost of your electricity usage. There's no paying first and then waiting for the money to come back. That 10% is being taken off your power usage up front, so you will see that 10% savings in the same way that you would have had the tax been removed. It will be labelled as a rebate on the bill, but New Brunswickers are going to get the benefit of a 10% savings on their power bills sooner than April 1, right at the time that their bills are going up. We're really proud to be able to deliver this relief that people are asking for and desperately need in this province. I appreciate your support.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you very much again.

[*Original*]

I thank the Premier for that clarification. That is important. Now it's a \$90-million program. It's an average of \$192 per month, or 53¢ per day if you do that math. The question I have is... Some people have power bills that are as much as \$7 000 per year. I checked mine. Mine is over \$5 000 per year, so for me, 10% is going to be \$500. Does that mean I will get a \$500 rebate?

We have already established that there are people who are going to receive no benefit from this. What I'm saying, Madam Speaker, is that there is a reality here that this may not help the people who actually need it the most. We've missed an entire group of people who will not see this benefit because it's included in their power bills. Is there a cap on this? It's

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\$90 million. Some people are going to get it. Some people aren't. What happens when the money runs out or when New Brunswickers find that \$90 million isn't enough to cover the cost of this program?

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the member opposite, I appreciate the example that you gave. That \$500 that you will be saving will come off your bill every month. However much you spend in electricity, 10% of your electricity cost is going to be discounted from your bill every month. Every person who gets a residential power bill is going to see that 10% savings.

We know that, oftentimes, it's actually the people who are lower-income who don't have the money to invest in a new heat pump, insulation, new windows, or new roofs who are paying more money in electricity. I think about the folks who I doorknocked in a minihome community here. They were telling me that they were paying power bills of \$250 per month, every month of the year, and then more at the end of the year when it got reconciled because they don't have the funds to invest in the kind of insulation their minihome needs. We're excited that every person in New Brunswick who receives a power bill is going to see that 10% savings on their electricity consumption.

[Translation]

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you very much again, Madam Speaker.

[Original]

Well, yes. But again, we established that people who have it included in their bills will receive no benefit at all. I guess the point here is this: If it is relief that the Premier wants to give, then maybe it should be targeted toward people who actually need it. Yesterday, I used the example of the Emergency Fuel and Food Benefit to illustrate that point, Madam Speaker. There was no application. Those who needed the relief got it.

If there's a way that we can talk about this here in the House to try to make sure that this promise that the government made is actually going to help the New Brunswickers who need it, well, that's a conversation that we need to have. I would like to hear from the Premier. Will she commit to looking at changing this model so that people who actually need the relief get it? There are thousands of New Brunswickers who don't need this relief, and thousands who do. How do we find this balance to actually help the people who need it the most?

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate this question from the leader

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opposite. It's a great discussion to have about how we target relief and where we give New Brunswickers benefit.

We've heard from a lot of different New Brunswickers who tell us where they're having pain points, from some people who fit into the thresholds of programs and people who fall just outside of the thresholds of programs that exist. We want to have that balanced approach where we have programs for renters, such as a 3% rent cap, programs for people who are struggling with their power bills, such as taking 10% off, an increase in social assistance rates for people who are struggling, and school food programs for families that are having a hard time sending their kids to school with the lunches that they need to thrive in the education system.

We do need to target our supports in thoughtful ways in order to meet the needs of different New Brunswickers. We're trying to do that across the whole province and for all sorts of New Brunswickers who have different challenges in different communities. That's why we have this really comprehensive approach of support in different areas for those essentials that New Brunswickers have to spend on to get by.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you again, Madam Speaker. Again, I asked a question. This has a \$90-million cap. If people continue to use more and more and more electricity because everything is being electrified, where is the incentive to go green? The more they spend on electricity, the more they're going to save. As a government, we were criticized for having programs that would do that for people. I'm asking the current government...

We have a program, the Emergency Fuel and Food Benefit, which will actually give more relief directly to the people who need it, with no application needed. It was a program that actually cost less than this program. Considering what the federal government just pulled and that now the provincial government's going to have to scramble to try to find efficiencies, maybe this is a way. If the government abandons this pledge and puts the money where it's needed, for people who actually need food and fuel, then maybe this is going to be a benefit to the New Brunswickers who actually need it.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[*Original*]

I find it curious that the member opposite is advocating that we abandon a pledge that New Brunswickers elected us on. I don't know whether that's what their instincts are, but we made a commitment to New Brunswickers, and they elected our team in record numbers. We have 31 incredible people sitting here because New Brunswickers appreciated that we

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were conscious of the costs that families were experiencing, such as the rising costs of power and the burden of those bills. They elected us because they want us to follow through on this promise. I'm sorry that I can't say that we're interested in moving away from or abandoning a commitment that we made to the people of New Brunswick. I'm a little surprised that we're being encouraged to do so when so many New Brunswickers—every household in the province that gets a power bill—are going to benefit from this. Over here, we stick to our word. We're going to deliver that 10% saving for New Brunswickers.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, you know, what I'm actually trying to do is work collaboratively with the government on a place where we don't agree, which is what I committed to in the throne speech debate yesterday. I know that the government was elected on a mandate. I know that it was elected on a commitment, but government members also said that they got elected on evidence-based decision-making. We have evidence here that the federal government has kind of pulled the rug from underneath them a little bit and put them in a little bit of an unstable position. We've also recognized that this program will not help a whole bunch of New Brunswickers who could use it because their electricity is included.

I haven't been able to get a commitment that the government is going to stick to the Emergency Fuel and Food Benefit program. I haven't gotten a straight answer on that. Now, it's saying: Well, do you know what? We're just going to do politics the same way. We said we were going to do evidence-based decision-making, but now we're just going to doggedly stick to what we said because, well, that's what we're going to do. We're trying to give some options. Will the Premier commit to sticking to the Emergency Fuel and Food Benefit?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm grateful to the opposition member for his proposal to work collaboratively. We want to work on opportunities that will really help New Brunswickers overcome their challenges.

Everyone who receives a power bill will be entitled to this assistance. For people who don't receive power bills because they are tenants, we will put a rent cap in place to ensure stability.

When it comes to developers, we want to see more and more housing construction in our province to put pressure on rent costs.

We are going to carry out property tax reform. We are going to eliminate the provincial tax on multi-unit builds. We are open to various options and new ideas regarding ways to help New Brunswickers.

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I would be very grateful if the opposition member would propose new programs and new ways to help New Brunswickers with the cost of living. I am confident that the federal government will be a good partner when the time comes to ensure that we do not suffer the impact of this...

[Original]

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess I've made my point. My point is that, for the government, this is more about saying: Well, you know what, we made a commitment. We are not going to listen to anything else.

The members opposite are not going to be thoughtful and considerate about the idea that this Emergency Fuel and Food Benefit program had no application process. If you were under a certain threshold and it was clearly identified, you got it. So, now, what I'm seeing is—I talked about this yesterday—they redefining things in their own image rather than doing things through evidence-based decision-making. That's the concern here.

RENT BANK

Now, I will turn to the Rent Bank. The Rent Bank is another fantastic program, with \$2 750 available to people who actually need it. These are people who could use it for back rent. They could use it for damage deposits. They could use it for utility bills that they are behind on. Will the government commit to keeping that program in place?

Hon. Mr. Hickey (Saint John Harbour, Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This government recognizes the priority of a housing crisis. That's why we've stepped up with a rent cap. As one of our first pieces of legislation, we are making sure that New Brunswickers have safety, stability, and affordability in their places they call home. That's the priority of this government. That's what we're going to do to make sure that every New Brunswicker has a safe and affordable place to call home. A Rent Bank is an important part of that. That is part of the long-term strategy. We are going to make sure it continues to be part of this government's holistic approach to housing.

But we are prioritizing the housing crisis by making sure we're stepping up with a 3% rent cap so that renters in New Brunswick have dependability in the places they call home. They can count on the affordability measures that this government is putting in place.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. What I'm hearing is that the Rent Bank is going to continue. I'm glad to hear that from the Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation. But, considering the actions of the minister, he selectively edited his media post. If there is a filtering of information here, I'd like to have the minister verify for the House that he

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understands that this is something he should not have done and should apologize to New Brunswickers for. Maybe he should get on his feet and explain why he did that, because people need to have veracity and faith, trust, and confidence in what this minister says. There is an opportunity for him to do it.

Hon. Mr. Hickey (Saint John Harbour, Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm eager to share the opportunity, because the clip I shared was an important one. I was talking about a neighbour whose door I had knocked on in the South End, a neighbour whose rent, under the last government, went up by \$600. In August, she got a notice from her landlord that her heat and lights were no longer going to be included in her rent. In September, she got a notice that her rent was going up by \$600 in February.

That's why we stepped up. We stepped up with a February 1 date for a rent cap to protect renters like her. That's what we're going to do. That's what we're going to keep doing so that we can protect affordability and renters in this province.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): That's twice, Madam Speaker, that they've been on their feet cutting into opposition time. They know better.

You know, this is the minister of non-answers. He took out... He got criticized on an element of his explanation for the rent cap. He didn't like it, and he pulled it out. I gave him a very simple opportunity here to explain why he did that.

We all know that in today's day and age, getting out full facts is very important, but he pulled some things out that he didn't like, Madam Speaker. I think that's going to upset New Brunswickers' confidence in this minister. I'm just giving him an opportunity to explain his actions and whether he's going to ever do that again so that he can hopefully rebuild the trust and confidence in people and they can actually believe what he says when he stands in this House.

Hon. Mr. Hickey (Saint John Harbour, Minister responsible for the New Brunswick Housing Corporation, L): Madam Speaker, I'm glad we're putting the focus on housing today. This is an important conversation. We know New Brunswick is facing a housing crisis. I wanted to take the opportunity to share an important story from what all of us have heard on the campaign trail about the importance of a rent cap and the real and personal stories New Brunswickers are feeling. Over the past six years, New Brunswickers have faced rental rate increases of 38%. There's a holistic approach to this. That's why we're focused on a long-term housing strategy, but we're after the immediate starts in this moment of a month in government. That's why we're pushing as fast as we can on a 3% rent cap to deliver stability and affordability for New Brunswickers.



[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Monahan (Arcadia-Butternut Valley-Maple Hills, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to congratulate you on your appointment. I am delighted to be a member on this side of the House today, where I have the honour of asking my very first question.

During the election campaign, among the 100 promises made in her platform, the Liberal Party Leader clearly and ambitiously committed to resolving the matter of Indigenous land claims by the end of November. These claims have long been a crucial issue. It's an important issue for Indigenous communities, for our province, and for overall peace-making efforts.

Madam Speaker, could the Minister of Finance provide a detailed explanation of the steps, negotiations, and specific actions being undertaken to keep this promise within the announced time frame? Also, how does the minister plan to ensure that the resolutions are meaningful and equitable and that they respect peace-making principles as well as the rights of Indigenous peoples and New Brunswick taxpayers? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much. Thank you very much to the member for his question. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly. I now have the opportunity to answer your first question. I am delighted to do so, because we are prioritizing rebuilding relations with Indigenous communities.

We recognize that New Brunswick First Nations had very difficult relations with the former government, which ended their tax agreement with the province. It appealed to the courts to have legal discussions, when we should have been at the table to find a way to move forward.

We respect New Brunswick First Nations and we honour the history of our beautiful province. This history includes the 13 First Nations throughout our province.

We want to work with these communities. Meetings have already begun. We have had meetings with MTI and with the Wolastoqey nation. There have already been meetings with the chiefs. There are two newly elected chiefs, including Chief Polchies. We are going to do our work to ensure that New Brunswickers and First Nations find...

[*Original*]

Mr. Monahan (Arcadia-Butternut Valley-Maple Hills, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Premier for the response. It seems very ambitious to resolve in 10 days a claim that represents a critical and long-standing issue with significant implications for

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Indigenous communities, our province, and reconciliation efforts as a whole. In their platform, the Liberals' exact wording is this:

Commit to rebuilding relationships with First Nations based on a nation-to-nation relationship that establishes trust and a shared understanding of treaty obligations. We will renegotiate tax agreements to ensure all parties have a fair deal.

Madam Speaker, just for the purposes of clarity and understanding, will the Finance Minister please explain to the House what parties make up all parties and who defines what a "fair deal" really looks like? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Legacy (Bathurst, Deputy Premier; Minister of Finance and Treasury Board; Minister responsible for Energy; Minister responsible for the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the member. Welcome. I am glad to hear the first questions.

The fair deal is exactly what we are working toward. The minister responsible for dealing with First Nations is actually meeting with a group today to continue discussions on that. With First Nations, the point has always been relations, and relations have been badly damaged over the past few years. We need time to just get back to the table and have discussions. First Nations are open to working nation to nation. That is exactly... I really enjoy the definition that you provided because it is very important to talk nation to nation. We cannot be paternalistic, as we have seen in the past. We need to fix those relations, and we are working on it right now.

When the deal comes around, we will present it to this House. I think it will be responsible and beneficial to both sides, to both nations, and to all nations involved.

POWER RATES

Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have had a lot of discussion this morning in relation to electricity, prices, and the Liberal government's commitment to that 10% reduction, but I would like some clarity around that. My understanding is that a 10% rebate or tax break, whatever you want to call it, applies only to electricity consumption. For those of us that have electricity bills, we have service charges, some of us have rentals for hot water heaters, we have outdoor lighting, and we have different elements of our electricity bill that don't relate to electricity consumption.

My question is this: Does this rebate apply only to electricity consumption, or does it apply to the total bill, as the Premier just stated? Which is it? On top of that, in relation to the rebate that is given, I would also like to know what happens once it hits \$90 million. What then? Is government going to keep it going, or will it end it? Thank you, Madam Speaker.



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Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to talk more about the 10% that we are going to take off the cost of electricity consumption for New Brunswickers. There are different providers of electricity in New Brunswick. There are different bills that you will see from Saint John Energy, Edmundston, and NB Power. There are different partnerships with organizations, such as Greenfoot and others, and that means that bills have lots of different charges depending on where you live.

To your example, this will cover your Christmas lights. This will cover your electricity usage. As people consume power, that 10% discount is going to be applied to their power consumption. It will not apply to the service charge, to water heater rentals, or to other pieces on bills that are coming from other utilities.

CARBON TAX

Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the clarity from the Premier on that. It is important that New Brunswickers understand the pledge, the commitment, and how it actually rolls out in real, practical terms.

I will switch gears a little bit in relation to the carbon adjustor pricing. On June 13, 2023, the EUB had a hearing in which the current Minister of Natural Resources was one of three board members who approved the carbon price adjustor that his government is now removing. Section 27 of that EUB hearing relates to an independent analysis by Grant Thornton, which states that “a three-step cost of carbon adjustor formula mechanism should be adopted”. It goes on to say that “No party, including the Public Intervener, took issue with these recommendations”. Indeed, they were endorsed by the former member of that board.

My question is for the Minister responsible for Energy. With many rural communities only having one gas station, how many of them have to close before government realizes that this is a bad move?

Hon. Mr. Legacy (Bathurst, Deputy Premier; Minister of Finance and Treasury Board; Minister responsible for Energy; Minister responsible for the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, L): I thank the member for Fredericton-Grand Lake for the question. Again, we will be discussing it in the next few days as the bill goes through, but it is great to have the question brought forward this morning. I want to remind people that this is about affordability. We want to provide relief to New Brunswickers as soon as possible—as soon as possible—and that is what we are doing. There are mechanisms that exist right now in the system with the EUB where we will be dealing with industry and small retailers. This tax has been passed on to the consumer for too long. We have been discussing this for three years. There is not any surprise here. We have said that we want it off. The previous government did not. We are providing relief.

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We will start discussing with industry how to fix this situation, but we are going to do it while people are getting relief now. They need it now. They have waited too long. Thank you.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Ames (Carleton-York, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today, an iconic small business has closed its doors until further notice because of crime located right in the Premier's own backyard, in her own riding. Williams Seafood has been in continuous operation for over 50 years. I'm sure that the Premier has already contacted her constituent about this directly, but I want to bring this to the attention of the Minister of Public Safety.

Crimes of drugs, theft, and damage to property are among the most important public safety priorities for the people of New Brunswick. Madam Speaker, the only item in the mandate from the Premier is for the Minister of Public Safety to take the lead on reviewing and updating an emergency preparedness plan. If the mandate of the Minister of Public Safety is to tackle crimes of drugs, theft, and damage to property, it's clearly not a priority. Would the minister kindly explain? Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, Minister of Public Safety; Minister responsible for La Francophonie, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am very pleased to rise in the House for the first time as Minister of Public Safety to answer a question. I would also like to thank the Premier for putting her trust in me by appointing me to this position, which involves great responsibilities, including dealing with crime in New Brunswick.

I am glad the question has been asked, and I can assure you that we are taking the issue of crime very seriously. Last evening, I attended an awards ceremony for women in police forces throughout the Atlantic region. I want to tell you that I intend to put the same effort into my work as these people do; they demonstrate real dedication.

We are aware of the crimes that were committed in the places mentioned. You may rest assured that we are monitoring the situation and that we will succeed in solving the problem. We have an extraordinary team at the Department of Public Safety. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Original]

Point of Order

Madam Speaker (Hon. Ms. Landry): State your point of order.



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Mr. M. LeBlanc (Belle-Baie-Belledune, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I understand that we're at the beginning of a new Legislative Assembly session, but the member for Fredericton-Grand Lake has been here for a fair amount of time. When we look at Standing Rule 41(5), we see that it says:

41(5) A Member asking a question shall be allowed two supplementary questions on the same subject matter.

The two questions from the member for Fredericton-Grand Lake today were clearly on two different subjects. I think that I would like for you to maybe just make that clear for everyone so that we don't have that issue again. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. M. Johnson (Carleton-Victoria, PC): I don't actually believe that is a point of order. I believe it's a point of procedure. So, we will make sure that we pay closer attention to that in the future. Thank you for bringing it to our attention.

Madam Speaker (Hon. Ms. Landry): As my first ruling, I would like to remind members that the supplementary questions have to be related to the first one. That applies to anybody. I am just reminding the members.

I also want to remind members to be respectful. You know, it's Friday, and we're all a little bit heated up to go back home, but let's be respectful. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

[*Original*]

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SCHOOLS

Hon. C. Chiasson (Grand Falls—Vallée-des-Rivières—Saint-Quentin, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, the member for Kings Centre had a question related to DTI. With your permission, Madam Speaker, I have the answer today.

Madam Speaker (Hon. Ms. Landry): I recognize the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. C. Chiasson (Grand Falls—Vallée-des-Rivières—Saint-Quentin, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, L): The question was about the renovations that are being done to the school.



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The original tender for that project was to replace the windows and the siding. However, when that was ongoing, there was deterioration found in the exterior walls. It was to the degree that there were sections of walls that would need to be replaced. It was affecting the actual structural integrity of the building. Now, the planning and preconstruction are ongoing. The project is expected to be completed some time in the spring of 2025.

Mr. Oliver (Kings Centre, PC): Thank you to the minister, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the facts that you have given me. However, there are some problems. There was a specific date mentioned early on. That has been extended, yet the repairs to be undertaken are still the same. I'm just wondering why the date had to be moved out further.

Secondly, I understand that access to the school premises is not allowed. However, the playground area has been restricted. It's a community playground, so I just wondered whether we could allow the community to have access to it.

Hon. C. Chiasson (Grand Falls—Vallée-des-Rivières—Saint-Quentin, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, L): Thank you for that question. The scope of the job was changed, so there's more work to be done. It's ongoing. It is still being assessed. The date that was given was for the original project. Now, with the scope changes, we don't have a firm handle on exactly what that all entails. We're anticipating opening in the spring.

As for your second question, that point has been brought to my attention. I have the department looking into that now. I think it may be something related to EECD and liability on a construction site, but I am looking into that with the Department of Education.