

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



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NURSES

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

[*Original*]

Getting right into the nursing retention bonus, I have an email from a retired registered nurse (RN) who returned to work as a casual employee because she was told how badly she was needed by her former managers. Her email takes issue with the permanent part-time employees who are hired for a 0.4, 0.5, or 0.6 position who then take casual hours over and above their position. This person goes on to explain that these part-time nurses who are also working casual hours are getting bonuses based not only on their position but also on their casual hours.

The Premier has confirmed that the permanent part-time employees are getting a bonus that is based not only on their permanent part-time position, but also including their casual hours. The Premier talks about fairness and respect. Does the Premier think this is fair and respectful to casual nurses who do exactly the same job and, in many cases, work far more hours? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[*Translation*]

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

[*Original*]

Thank you for the question. We are certainly getting lots of questions from nurses about their very specific situations and whether both sets of hours are included when they work this part-time job and that part-time job or when they work at this classification for a certain number of hours and at that classification for another number of hours. There are lots of unique, individual circumstances that we've been working through to get the retention bonus just right for everyone.

We are trying to stabilize the health care system, and we are trying to attract and retain in the system the people who are prepared to commit in a permanent way, where we can put them on the schedule, put them in the shifts, and make sure that those difficult shifts in the evenings and on the weekends are covered. That's why the retention bonuses are currently available to our permanent employees in the system and, I will add, in nursing homes.

I know that there was some question and some citation of nurses, and nurses in nursing homes are eligible for these bonuses. The member opposite will get their Christmas wish.

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Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Madam Speaker, I'm not sure whether the government wants to know what my Christmas wishes really are.

The Premier got exactly the same email that I'm quoting, Madam Speaker. In her email, the nurse went on to say: I'm not impressed. You are giving bonuses to permanent, part-time nurses based on what they have worked in the past year and not what they were hired for. Why are you not doing this for all? If you want to give them a bonus based on what they were hired to do, fine, but you should not be paying a bonus based on hours worked over and above what they were hired for, as these are casual hours. If you pay a bonus for one casual hour, you must pay for all casual hours. I know of different retired RNs who are working as casuals, helping out in any way they can. I feel so disrespected, and I can speak for them as well—they do too. I will not be renewing my registration in November 2025.

The Premier has stated that we cannot afford to lose a single nurse. This is clear evidence that this is exactly what is going to happen because of the way this situation has been handled. Will she make this right and fulfill the promise to all nurses?

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. As we mentioned during the previous two days, we are looking at all those hours that are being worked by casual nurses. Quite a number of hours are being worked, day in and day out, year after year, which suggests that those hours should be made permanent. So, we're looking to recognize those hours as permanent in order to increase the head count to reflect the number of FTEs needed based on all the hours of work that are being contributed. As we're able to convert those casual hours to permanent hours and convert those casual workers to permanent workers, we'll be able to ensure they receive their retention bonuses.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the answer, but it's clearly not going to work. These are not positions that are being opened for these workers. There are casual workers who can't get full-time work. This has already been established through the process of question period here in the House. We already know this.

This is a retired nurse who has worked 40 years already and is not interested in coming back as a full-time employee, yet they are being penalized, in a sense, because they are never going to get access to this bonus. We're not saying that the government is wrong in what it's trying to do, in trying to respect nurses. There are a lot of other workers who need to be respected too. However, the original promise was to give this bonus to all nurses. Government clearly cannot do this, in this situation and in many more like it. I would argue that there are many retired nurses who are coming back and doing this. Has the government figured out who these people are? Does it have these numbers? Is it going to find a way to include them in "all"?

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Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate the emphasis. I have certainly heard from a number of retired nurses who are contributing hours to the system and who are helping out because they see the stress and the pressure their colleagues are under, working short-handed and under really challenging circumstances.

Actually, the bonuses worked in some of the ways that we had hoped. A number of those retired nurses have committed to permanent employment for the next two years. They see the attraction, realizing: Do you know what? I can do two more years. I know I've been retired. I've put in 35 or 40 years, but I see the struggle, I see the opportunity, and I'm prepared to make that commitment.

In a way, the retention bonus is helping us to stabilize the nursing workforce across the province, as it was designed to do. We're really grateful to those retired nurses who are helping to care for New Brunswickers at a time when we desperately need them.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm sorry, but the Premier is going to have to do a little bit better than that. We are seeing evidence here that the exact opposite is happening, and that is what we predicted.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL AGREEMENTS

I'm going to move on to the federal tax holiday, which will impact New Brunswick's provincial revenues by \$70 million, according to the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO). One of my first questions to the Premier on this topic was: What are you going to do to recoup this money?

We now know that, according to the PBO, everything over a 1% revenue loss must be paid back to the provinces unless they waive repayment. Can the Premier clearly tell this House, and by extension, all of New Brunswick, that she is willing to waive the federal responsibility to pay back the \$70 million in revenues that we are going to lose as a result of the temporary tax holiday? Is she going to waive this, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I very much appreciate the question because we are focused on making sure that New Brunswick is kept whole. We have not agreed to waive that. We are looking to make sure that New Brunswickers receive the benefit of the program and that we are kept financially whole with respect to our budgets, so that waiver has not been given.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Well, we all know that the federal Minister of Finance has certainly asked the Premier to waive repayment, and other Premiers have done it. I'm glad to hear that she's not doing it, but we're going to find

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out here in a minute. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance accused me of playing politics, but on December 2, the *Telegraph-Journal* quoted the Premier in reference to the federal Liberal government:

They're really keen to come to New Brunswick these days and to come and try to get photo shoots with every member of my team and make announcements

How's that for playing politics? Is the Premier really willing to trade \$70 million in foregone tax revenue for photo ops with Justin Trudeau?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think I have already answered this question.

[*Original*]

We are not waiving our right to that \$70 million.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): There's a real concern here, Madam Speaker. The Premier has already said that New Brunswick cannot afford to take this kind of hit on our finances. We have a federal government that has a history of overpromising and not delivering. Does the Premier really think that the federal government is going to give us \$70 million in funds with no strings attached and not require equivalent provincial investment? That's the issue here, Madam Speaker.

I know that the Premier is saying: We're not going to waive that; we're not going to waive that. I think that they are hedging until they can try to get some announcements that are equivalent to that \$70 million, but it's not going to happen.

This is a bad deal. It's a bad risk. There are only two outcomes here. One is that the federal government tries to do something with a 50-cent dollar scenario. That still costs us money, and we don't know whether those projects are going to actually be helpful to New Brunswick or whether they'll be within the focus of the government. Two is that it's going to be 100-cent dollars that may not equal \$70 million. Which is it, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will reiterate that New Brunswick has not waived its commitment to participate in that program. If the member opposite understood the agreement that is in place, he would understand that the federal government will be responsible for keeping us whole and delivering us that \$70 million—not through another deal, not through another program, but directly, as per the CITCA, the consolidated interprovincial tax collection agreement.

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Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. We're not even in the deep end of the pool here yet on this. The Premier is brief in answering this stuff, and there is a good reason. It's because she doesn't know exactly what she's going to do yet. Here is a case in point. Prince Edward Island is losing \$14 million in revenue and is only receiving funding for a program to the tune of \$7 million. So, Prince Edward Island has said: We're going to waive this. It is losing \$14 million in HST revenue. The federal government has said: We're going to do a program with you, and it's going to be \$7 million. Prince Edward Island is losing \$7 million based on the fact that it has done this, so this is a real concern, Madam Speaker.

The Premier has said very clearly that we can't afford to lose these revenues, but in the photo ops comment and other comments like it, she has been suggesting that, well, maybe there is a deal to be made here. I am saying that any deal she makes with the federal government on this is a bad deal. We want our \$70 million. We want her to stand up and not waive the right to keep the \$70 million. I want that commitment here on the floor this morning.

[*Translation*]

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

[*Original*]

I will try to say this again, for the fourth time. New Brunswick has not waived this agreement. New Brunswick will be receiving, as per the CITCA, our \$70 million. This isn't based on photo ops, and it isn't based on what Prince Edward Island has done. Our team is standing up for New Brunswickers, making sure that we're going to be kept whole, and making sure that our budgets are protected while New Brunswickers receive the benefits of the tax holiday. I'll say it a third, fourth, and fifth time: We have not waived and will not be waiving our participation in this agreement.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): That's great news, Madam Speaker, because I'll tell you this: It has been the Liberals' habit to repeat things. They reannounce and reannounce something over and over and over again, making six announcements for the same thing. I wanted to make sure that the Premier said things enough times that we can actually feel as though this is actually going to take place.

Yesterday, the Minister responsible for Opportunities NB told the House how much he appreciated his first question, but I must say, Madam Speaker, the small business people of our province must not have appreciated what we learned about this government. Somehow, either through inattention, unawareness, or just not paying attention and not doing what they're supposed to be doing, these government members did not ask their Liberal cousins to make the WorkSafeNB rebate non-taxable. The minister said that he

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would take the question under advisement. Today, I ask the minister to tell the House what he's learned about making the WorkSafeNB rebate non-taxable. Is it too late? Did the Liberals fail our small business people, or has he learned anything at all since yesterday?

Hon. Mr. Randall (Fredericton North, Minister responsible for Opportunities NB; Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business; Minister responsible for NB Liquor and Cannabis NB, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, member opposite. The question was taken under advisement and will be answered in the House later in the question period.

TAXATION

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Okay, well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It was actually the Finance Minister who told the House that this government somehow, either through inattention, unawareness, or just good old-fashioned Liberal incompetence, did not think to ask Ottawa to make the WorkSafeNB rebate non-taxable. Surely the government members were aware of this once-in-a-lifetime \$180-million rebate for our small business people. I hope that they didn't ignore it out of spite because it was a success story for our government.

I would like to ask the Finance Minister a tax question. You know how the Liberals love their taxes, so I expect he knows the answer. How much will this government take in in taxes from the \$180-million rebate? If he doesn't know, will he promise to come to this House tomorrow with the answer?

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. Wow, there was so much rhetoric in that question that I don't know where to go with it. We have already said that it has been taken under advisement. We'll get the answer to you in time when the information comes in. I don't know what else the member opposite wants to hear, but the information will come, and it's going to come from the minister. That's all I can say.

CARBON TAX

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I love it when the Minister of Finance gets up and talks about rhetoric because yesterday, he accused me of playing politics and all these kinds of things when it came to the cost of carbon adjustor. He said that because of the actions of the former government, we never had time to debate it. Well, I'm informing the minister that that bill came in two years ago. Their member, the member for Tracadie-Sheila, asked hours of questions. The Premier asked questions in question period about what it would mean to put that cost of carbon adjustor in the way that we did. We explained to the

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Liberals that it was going to be 4.5¢/l that retailers would lose if we didn't do it that way. They knew it two years ago, and yet they still campaigned on it and made this promise. Now they're doing the flip-flop.

Madam Speaker, if you want to talk about rhetoric and want to talk about a minister who was talking about sucking and blowing and all that weird stuff yesterday, will he get up and apologize for what he said yesterday that was out of order?

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. You know, I think the member opposite said something yesterday about him living rent-free in my head. I mean, oh my goodness, I don't need that much room in yours. I don't think the member opposite can see the forest for the trees.

We are a government that is working to make life more affordable for New Brunswickers. We are still working on this bill. We just moved the time. We announced yesterday... To prove that we're affordable—there's no discussion about this—we have eliminated the PST on electricity bills as of January, as opposed to April 1 as we had campaigned.

Apparently, he really studied our platform. The Conservatives had no platform, so he had to have something to read. We will eliminate the PST as of January 1. Things are going to become more affordable for New Brunswickers. We're getting things done exactly as we want to. Things are going to become more affordable in New Brunswick.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Repeating my lines to him from yesterday must be a very sincere form of flattery. I appreciate that from the member opposite.

Yesterday, he said to the media: Well, we heard from retailers that this cost of carbon adjustor is going to cause problems for them. I've mentioned many times that the Liberals didn't do their homework for this, but I've just revealed to the House that they had lots of time. I'm going to do some research. The current minister might have even spoken about this bill two years ago. I'm still doing that research. The point is that he's saying: Well, we didn't know; the retailers are telling us now, so we're backing off.

There's a question. Either the Liberals didn't do their research when they were doing their platform commitment or they didn't do their jobs when they were in the opposition. They could have talked to the retail folks back then. The retailers would have told them. Our government clearly told the Liberals that if we do it this way, it's going to cause problems for retail business owners. Will the minister get up and admit he was wrong in what he said, apologize to New Brunswickers, and make this right?

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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. Once again, this bill is still in the process. We are going to committee. We are going to have discussions about this. To respond to the member's requests, I will say that we listened to the industry. We went and talked to retailers, and there was a problem that could have caused some hurtful measures in the short term.

We can work through this and still get affordability and do what we do in this House, which is debate the bills through all the processes we have available to us. That's exactly what we're doing. The previous government always brought stuff to law amendments. What did the member say in the news yesterday? That's where the previous government members sent bills to die. We're not going to do that. We're actually going to bring in industry retailers to have a discussion and show what they can do.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Well, I have to correct the minister once again. That was the leader of the third party, not me, Madam Speaker. You know, the Premier was on a newscast yesterday saying the opposition has spent hours and hours, so much time, and has had so many arguments about this. This has been at second reading for about 90 minutes. We've spoken about this for about an hour. This government leapt before it looked—fire, ready, aim—to try to do something so fast. It had years. The minister knows this government had years. The government members were told. The Premier herself asked questions in question period years ago. The government members know that this 4.5¢ per litre had to be done the way it was done in order to protect these retailers.

All I'm asking is for the minister to stand up and admit to New Brunswickers not only that he doesn't know the difference between me and the leader of the third party but also that he didn't know what he was doing when he was part of this promise and that he is going to retract it.

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. I'm not sure where the member wants us to go with this. Do you want us to retract the potential to remove the 4.5¢ per litre adjustor? We are trying to make things more affordable.

Through discussion and through the process, there was the potential that we would remove this adjustor and within a couple of months there would be another adjustor. What we're doing is adding regulation, and then we're adding adjustors. We're just making it more complicated. What is happening here—and it has gotten really interesting—is that, potentially, we can deregulate, make this simpler, and just be like the rest of Canada. I think that's a discussion that is worth having. We are here to make good policy. Let's join up and get it done.

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[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Coon (Fredericton Lincoln, Leader, G): Thank you, Madam Speaker. In 2021, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Health informed the medical community of the existence of a group of cases of rapidly progressive atypical dementia of unknown cause. She indicated that Public Health was working with national groups and experts to discover what was making these people sick. Inexplicably, on May 6, 2021, following a Cabinet meeting, this collaboration with the national scientific community came to an end.

In an email, one of the scientists, Dr. Michael Coulthart, wrote that he was essentially cut off from working on the file for reasons he could only discern to be political.

Will the Premier release the documents explaining why the Higgs Cabinet made the political decision to put an end to the national investigation in 2021?

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much to the member opposite for his question, because we know this is an issue that worries a significant number of New Brunswickers and their families. Many people are asking a lot of questions.

We have asked about the decisions of the former government, because there was no transparency at the time. The federal government had offered financial assistance, but the former government of our province did not want to come forward and share the data.

We have asked a lot of questions to try to determine why these decisions were made. Our goal is to discover what is making some New Brunswickers sick. We want to get help from the federal government and experts on this file to find answers. We really want to act together urgently to understand what this mystery illness is. We want answers for New Brunswickers.

[*Original*]

Mr. Coon (Fredericton Lincoln, Leader, G): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll take that as a no.

On November 19 of this year, in an interview with CBC's *As It Happens*, the Premier said she wanted to know what's causing people to develop the atypical neurological syndrome and where it's coming from. She described it as scary and painful, which it is, and she wanted to get to the bottom of it to prevent any more New Brunswickers from getting sick. A month ago, the Premier said there are now about 400 cases, noting that 40 people have died. Will the Premier reassemble the national team of experts, including Dr. Michael Coulthart of the Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease Surveillance System, Dr. Samuel Weiss of the Canadian Institutes



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for Health Research, and Dr. Neil Cashman from the Faculty of Medicine at UBC, to help get to the bottom of what's causing New Brunswickers to develop this atypical and rapidly progressive neurological syndrome?

Hon. Ms. Holt (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for specifying. We are bringing together federal experts with New Brunswick's Public Health team to dig into this. The participation of the three specific individuals you mentioned is something we can look into and see if they'd be willing and whether they'd fit into the team that's being assembled to make sure we have all the right people, including folks like Dr. Marrero and the families and patients who have been exposed to this disease and are helping us tackle this. I will take Neil, Michael, and Sam, I believe you said, under advisement and see if they can be included in the work we're doing to get to the bottom of this mysterious illness.

EDUCATION

Mr. Lee (Fundy-The Isles-Saint John Lorneville, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm going to move on to education. The New Brunswick Teachers' Association gave a press release last week and the week before that encourages the government to act quickly on priorities through focused collaboration on recruitment, retention, and addressing preventative measures needed in the classroom. The release used phrases such as "act quickly", "act rapidly", "urgent initiatives", "seeking timely action", "immediate focus", and "action-oriented".

It is apparent that there's great distress and concern with retaining educators, recruiting new individuals into the profession, and addressing supportive learning environments. In June of this year, the New Brunswick Teachers' Association did a survey, and 64% of the respondents have considered leaving the classroom. There's a difference between platform commitments and practical and empirical results. Madam Speaker, my question to the honourable minister is this: What is the plan for retaining educators already in the field, those already in the practice, to help mitigate and resolve this systemic, ongoing issue—

Hon. C. Johnson (Moncton South, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, L): Thank you for the question. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, there is a lot of urgency in our school system to retain teachers. Yes, we're hearing a lot about it. We're in discussions with the NBTA right now and are looking at classroom composition, at workload, and at putting teams together to respond to the needs of students right now. We're working on it right now.

As I mentioned before, I love the thought of working on retention first, making sure that teachers feel respected and well-supported in the classrooms right now. When we do that and do it well, that becomes a very powerful recruitment tool to encourage other people to



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join this beautiful profession and work with our teachers in our New Brunswick schools. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Lee (Fundy-The Isles-Saint John Lorneville, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Continuing with the theme of teacher retention and student success, in its education platform concerning thriving classrooms, the government stated that it will:

Ensure schools have adequate staffing, spaces, and resources to provide classroom support in literacy, numeracy, and learning behaviours, which will provide students with more small group or one-on-one practice.

Currently, the class composition averages in New Brunswick schools are as follows: for Grades K to 2, 21 students per class; for Grade 3, 21 students per class; and for Grades 4 to 12, 29 students per class.

If staffing resources and spaces are allocated, what is the government going to do to ensure that students are provided with small group or one-on-one practice? How will government decide where these resources will go? Are these resources going to be distributed equitably around the province?

Hon. C. Johnson (Moncton South, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question, to the member opposite. As we mentioned yesterday in our capital budget speech, we are investing in infrastructure in New Brunswick schools now. We're building new schools, and we're adding additions. We are investing where the needs are. So, yes, we are doing that in an equitable way and in an evidence-based way.

Now, when we invest in infrastructure to match population growth, we're modernizing the spaces where students are learning. Some of the classes will be bigger, and some of the classes will be smaller. We're modernizing and making spaces flexible to be able to quickly respond to the needs of students and teachers who are working really well in our classrooms. It's all about infrastructure investment in an equitable, evidence-based way. So, yes—I will respond to the question with this: Yes.

SNOW REMOVAL

Mr. Oliver (Kings Centre, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today, I feel as though I'm the ghost of Christmas past or, I should say, question period past. It's not too distant. We're only going back to November 27.

The Minister of Transportation may recall my question regarding DTI's readiness to deal with another New Brunswick winter. I will remind him of his words. The minister said:

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DTI is as ready as it has ever been...We know that there are going to be issues with equipment. We know that there are going to be issues with manpower. We're working on solving all those issues.

I can assure the member opposite that it will do as good a job as it has always done.

Madam Speaker, two days ago, we learned that the Chipman garage had two trucks in service and two trucks broken down, with no mechanics to fix them. Is the minister aware of the situation? If so, can he tell us what has been done to fix the issue?

Hon. C. Chiasson (Grand Falls—Vallée-des-Rivières—Saint-Quentin, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, L): Thank you very much for the question. Yes, we have, as you say, been as ready as we have ever been. I'm sure you had the same answer when you were minister. We do the best we can with the equipment that we have and the manpower that we have, obviously.

Now, there are some problems with equipment, and there are some problems with skilled labour shortages. We're working around those, and I can assure the member opposite that we're doing everything we can to alleviate that situation.

Mr. Oliver (Kings Centre, PC): Okay. Thank you again, Madam Speaker. I thank the minister for that response. To the minister's point about equipment issues, if a person travels up College Hill Road, there appears to be new equipment to be dispersed. It doesn't seem to make any sense to have new equipment sitting idle less than an hour away from equipment that is broken down and not serving the taxpayers of the province. Can the minister tell the House what this new equipment is doing sitting idle while our roads remain unplowed and unsafe for New Brunswick motorists? Is that equipment ready to go into service now? Can he tell us how many other examples he is aware of that are similar to the Chipman situation? Thank you.

Hon. C. Chiasson (Grand Falls—Vallée-des-Rivières—Saint-Quentin, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, L): Again, I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. It is of the utmost importance that we do our best to clear the roads and to keep the travelling public moving safely and efficiently throughout the province.

As to the possibility of new equipment sitting idle, I'm not sure what state that equipment is in, whether it's ready to be distributed out in the field or whether there are modifications or anything that has to be done to it. I will get that information, and I will come back to the member opposite. Basically, I'll take that under advisement, and I'll let you know what is being done with that new equipment.

Madam Speaker (Hon. Ms. Landry): Question period has expired.



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I heard the word “incompetence” from the Leader of the Official Opposition. I would like to remind members that this is an unparliamentary word. Also, I would like all members to refrain from using that word.

Mr. Savoie (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did not realize that that was an unparliamentary word, despite my long history with the work and the business of the House. I do apologize, and I do retract.

Madam Speaker (Hon. Ms. Landry): Well, maybe it is unparliamentary under me, being the Speaker. I would like you to not choose that word. Thank you.

