

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**May 8, 2026**

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[*Translation*]

### JOBS / EMPLOIS

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

[*Original*]

Madam Speaker, welcome to the week that was. This week, we dealt with several issues of great importance to New Brunswickers. Let's review what we learned this past week. This Premier and her ministers are unaware and uninformed, and New Brunswickers are unimpressed. I asked the Premier over 30 questions, and she got up twice—no accepting responsibility, no transparency, no respect for New Brunswickers. I asked whether she would reveal the Agropur contract. The response? Nothing from her nor from her minister. I will give the Premier a chance to redeem herself. Will the Premier be radically transparent, as she promised, and reveal the complete and unredacted Agropur contract, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. D'Amours** (Edmundston—Vallée-des-Rivières, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister responsible for Immigration; Minister responsible for Military Affairs; Minister responsible for the Research and Productivity Council, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The cat is finally out of the bag. On March 24, the Leader of the Official Opposition had the brilliant idea of cutting \$3 million from the budget of the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour when he mentioned the funds allocated to the Strategic Infrastructure program. I thought that he made a mistake and didn't fully understand the situation. The estimates were considered, and the Leader of the Official Opposition didn't ask any questions on the subject.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Official Opposition again suggested cutting the budget by \$3 million. Madam Speaker, \$3 million is allocated to Mount Allison University. Madam Speaker, I wonder about that. If the Leader of the Official Opposition had done his job and asked questions during consideration of the estimates, he would have understood the nature of this budget item. He blames others, but he never asked questions.

Madam Speaker, \$3 million is allocated to Mount Allison University. Did he consult the people in charge of Mount Allison University to find out if they agreed? Did he ask people in Sackville that question?

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[Original]

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): If you can't say it well, say it loud, Madam Speaker.

Apparently, the Minister of PETL doesn't care about 60 jobs being lost any more than his Premier does. In the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, it has been known for over two years that Agropur was going to reorganize its workforce. It's past time for the Premier to admit she either didn't do her due diligence or didn't care about the 60 people losing their jobs in Sussex.

Neither option is good. Which one is it, Premier? She didn't answer last time. Will she double down and not answer again?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. D'Amours** (Edmundston—Vallée-des-Rivières, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs; Minister responsible for Immigration; Minister responsible for Military Affairs; Minister responsible for the Research and Productivity Council, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the Leader of the Official Opposition should explain why he wants to reduce funding for a university by \$3 million when it is creating knowledge and training future employees. You know, Madam Speaker, when the Conservatives and the Leader of the Official Opposition resort to attacking universities, I ask myself: What do they want to do?

[Original]

What does he want to do with UNB? How many dollars does he want to cut from UNB? How many dollars does he want to cut from NBCC? How much does he want to cut from St. Thomas University? How much does he want to cut from NBCCD?

[Translation]

How much does the Leader of the Official Opposition want to cut from the Université de Moncton? How much does he want to cut from CCNB? Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is thinking of his own interests, but he is certainly not thinking of protecting post-secondary institutions in New Brunswick. I wonder when he last had a conversation with representatives of post-secondary institutions in New Brunswick and whether he told them that he was prepared to reduce their funding. When did that discussion happen?

[Original]

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Well, Madam Speaker, we didn't have students protesting on our lawn because of cuts we were trying to make. So, there is that.



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The announcement about the \$2.4 million to Agropur was made in February. On April 24, the Premier said this:

*“There’s not going to be a net loss of jobs,” Holt said. “There’s actually going to be more jobs with Agropur at the end of the day.”*

Yet, on April 27, she said the decision was made “on its own merits” and is good for the Miramichi area. This would indicate that the Premier did know that there would be job losses in Sussex. To the Premier: Only one of these quotes is correct. Which one is it?

**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, Minister responsible for the *Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act*, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about Agropur and the opportunities that are available in Sussex. It’s also good to hear the reinforcement that the members opposite also knew that Agropur was assessing different scenarios in the Maritimes and understood that this could include operational changes. Their response was to hope for a rejig. Our response was to commit to a \$20-million investment in Miramichi, establishing a secure place in Agropur’s long-term plans, ensuring that our farmers have a place to process their products that is close to home here in New Brunswick, and generating significant GDP gains totalling \$63.5 million over five years. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): That is completely disconnected from reality, Madam Speaker. We didn’t give \$2.4 million to a company with \$9 billion in revenues to cut 60 jobs. Here’s another April 27 quote from the Premier: “And the idea of whether we could have done anything for Sussex, from my understanding with Agropur, there’s no further conversation to have there”.

So, they did talk about that. They did talk about whether Sussex could keep those jobs. On the one hand, they’re saying they didn’t know, and on the other hand, they’re saying it’s the company’s decision. What is it? When did the Premier learn this? Was it before or after her comments on April 24, when she said there would be more jobs? One of those things is true, and the other is not. To the Premier: Which one is true? She didn’t answer last time. Stand up, Premier, and unburden yourself to New Brunswickers. You’ll feel better.

**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, Minister responsible for the *Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act*, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for once again allowing me to talk about this opportunity for New Brunswickers to be part of a long-term plan, to ensure that farmers have processing capability, and to ensure that this co-operative is able to continue in this province.

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Decisions about closures are made by companies based on their own operations and ability to be competitive. Our role as a government is to make sure New Brunswickers are supported through that change and that our province is positioned to secure and grow investment.

I want to highlight that this deal establishes processing capabilities for farmers in New Brunswick. This co-op will be able to continue in the province, will continue to be more productive, and will continue to provide well-paying jobs for New Brunswickers. Over 95 jobs will be established in Miramichi. I'm really pleased to be able to ensure that Agropur can continue in this province.

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): The minister is right. This has no impact on farmers. It has an impact on 60 people in Sussex who are going to lose their jobs.

We learned from the Premier's silence when I asked her whether she thought it was acceptable for her minister to advise that her government's transparency can be found on a website. Does she stand by her silence? Can the Premier stand up to confirm that? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**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, Minister responsible for the *Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act*, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. We know that gradually closing operations in Sussex in the coming years will impact the entire community. Our government is focused on supporting employees and their families. However, it's also important to remember that our government's support in Miramichi will ensure that dairy processing capability remains and grows in this province, even as companies make broader operational decisions across their networks.

We are not hoping for a rejig, Madam Speaker. We are ensuring that New Brunswick has a place at the table, that our agricultural industry has a place to process its products, and that we're working with this co-operative to be able to ensure long-term growth in the agricultural sector. We do not hope for a rejig. We put out plans to develop the economy. We have a commitment to 10% GDP growth by 2030. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Obviously, we know this government does absolutely no due diligence. The 60 people losing their jobs in Sussex know that as well. Farmers have been clear, Madam Speaker. They had one meeting with this government, and that was all it took for them to realize that the Holt government was not being transparent and was just wasting their time—one meeting.

Here are some of the comments from the Agricultural Alliance's press release:

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*DAAF brought no new information forward, provided no clear or transparent rationale for its decision, and did not seek meaningful input from the committee. This does not reflect genuine consultation.*

*No clear or honest explanation has been provided for the decision to phase out provincially delivered veterinary and laboratory services.*

*Unclear Timeline: A 10-month timeline has been proposed with no framework, no defined milestones, and no detailed implementation plan in place.*

Does the Premier agree with what the Agricultural Alliance has said? Yes, or no?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Finnigan** (Kent North, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Original]

Madam Speaker, the department remains committed to providing regular updates and will work with all industry stakeholders who come to the table. As late as last Friday, we sat down and had a constructive conversation. That was the statement I made and the organization made as we met with the media. Our door is always open. We have a scheduled meeting. We have a timeline. We've listened to the Agricultural Alliance. We've adjusted some of the timelines to make sure everything goes smoothly. We're always open for conversation with anybody from the sector, and we'll get this done before March 31. Thank you.

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Agricultural Alliance put out a statement. It already has this government figured out. It's done. It knows that this government has absolutely no intention of listening to its concerns. That's why it's saying: We don't have anything more to say to this government.

What is this Premier going to do to restart meetings with the Agricultural Alliance? Does she think she can blame it for walking out like she blames Agropur for not telling her it would cut 60 jobs in Sussex? She has broken trust with farmers. Will the Premier back away from the elimination of the provincial vet services and the provincial vet lab today?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Finnigan** (Kent North, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The department remains committed to providing regular updates and working with all stakeholders, whether they are in the dairy, poultry, or livestock sector. We will continue to have conversations with them.

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We're working with civil servants and their union, too. We're having meetings with them. Let's be clear: The transition of veterinary services will be completed by March 31. Madam Speaker, we understand that this change is difficult; however, we are continuing to foster ongoing and constructive dialogue to support a sustainable veterinary model for the agricultural sector in New Brunswick, Madam Speaker. Our door is always open, and the process is ongoing. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Original]*

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Again, this government is completely disconnected from reality, Madam Speaker. The vets had no idea they were getting laid off until two hours before the government members made the announcement. The labs didn't know. Farmers didn't know. What consultation? What communication? There was none.

Will the Premier admit that the plan to cut the provincial vet and lab services was purely a panicked decision made because of her own overspending? Here's a hint: Based on everything we've ever seen from this Premier and her government, she won't. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Mr. Finnigan** (Kent North, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Original]*

We understand that this change is difficult. It's not easy, and change is never easy. However, we continue to encourage ongoing, productive dialogue and support a sustainable veterinary model for New Brunswick's agriculture sector. As we know, except for Newfoundland, New Brunswick is the only province that still has a public service system.

We all know that public businesses are much more agile. I was in business myself. When I was in business, making decisions was a lot easier than it is now because we, as a government, have to be responsible to the public. I am very confident that the model that will come out of this process will be much better and will serve the province in every area because we will continue to support these services.

*[Translation]*

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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[Original]

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): This decision isn't difficult. It's devastating, Madam Speaker. When this minister was in business, he was against getting rid of the provincial vet service. If this was such a great idea, why didn't the government members try selling it to the vets and farmers before they made the decision? They engaged nobody, Madam Speaker—nobody. There was zero consultation, zero transparency, and zero plan.

We're giving the government the opportunity to back away from this. Farmers are not going to back down. They are going to keep fighting for these services until they know that they will be supported. They don't believe in this government. What is it going to do to restore farmers' trust? The only way to do it is by backing away from this decision. Will the Premier and the minister reverse this decision today?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Finnigan** (Kent North, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to clarify that the laboratory will not be closing. Any change to laboratory service delivery will be based on the study results. There is no predetermined conclusion, Madam Speaker.

The feasibility study is designed to assess the capacity of the New Brunswick Research and Productivity Council and determine whether the council can provide laboratory services. Madam Speaker, the council currently provides services with respect to water, aquaculture—it studies diseases, since it can already do those tests—and fluid milk services. This work isn't new for the council.

The feasibility study on laboratory services is being conducted by the department and is drawing on the expertise provided by key staff members involved in daily operations, including our Chief Veterinary Officer, who will remain in that role, Madam Speaker. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Original]

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. There's an old saying: When you're explaining, you're losing. The government members are losing. They had an opportunity to engage farmers right from the get-go. Instead, they sat in that Cabinet room up there in Chancery Place, trying to figure out ways, in a panic, to say: Oh, we have to look as though we're being responsible.

The Minister of Natural Resources, who is the Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries' seatmate, said that this is a rounding error and that it's going to cause "a lot of grief." I agree.

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Farmers are going to come back to the Legislative Assembly, and they are going to protest like you've never seen before, Madam Speaker. I keep giving this government an opportunity to reflect, yet, every time, it keeps doubling down. It is making the situation worse. It is endangering our food security. We are going to lose farms. Will this minister try to talk sense to his Premier and stop this cut?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Finnigan** (Kent North, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Original]

Madam Speaker, the department remains committed to providing regular updates and will work with industry stakeholders that come to the table. Our doors are open. We have a scheduled meeting every month to update stakeholders. We are also working with impacted government employees and their union. We are also having regular meetings with them. We need to be clear: The vet service will transition on March 31, even though we understand that this is a difficult decision. We continue to encourage productive dialogue to support a sustainable veterinary model for New Brunswick's agriculture sector that is like others across the country.

[Translation]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Original]

(Interjections.)

**Madam Speaker** (Hon. Ms. Landry): Member.

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. What the minister actually just said is this: Come to the table. We'll tell you what we're going to do, and that will be the end of it. That's what farmers heard when they took the opportunity to try to share time with this minister and this Premier.

Madam Speaker, this is not working. Farmers know better. They've learned. They are not going to come back to this government until they know that this service will be restored. The Holt government is raking in at least \$84 million due to the rise in gas prices. This windfall belongs in the pockets of New Brunswickers. Will the Premier commit to restoring the \$4 million needed to continue the provincial vet lab and the employment of veterinarians? Yes or no?

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[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Finnigan** (Kent North, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[*Original*]

Madam Speaker, the laboratory feasibility study is being led by the department, with expertise being provided by key staff who are involved in the day-to-day operations. This includes our Chief Veterinary Officer, who is staying in place.

This feasibility study is meant to assess this opportunity and the capability of the Research and Productivity Council to deliver the laboratory service. Currently, the RPC is already providing services for aquaculture and for fluid milk, so it's not strange for it to increase its testing capacity. Just to be clear, we are not closing the lab. Any changes in the delivery of the laboratory's service will be determined upon completion of the study, and there is no predetermined outcome.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

[*Original*]

## FOOD BANKS

**Ms. M. Johnson** (Carleton-Victoria, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. It has become very clear to me that the Minister of Social Development has had great media training, so I'm going to give her another opportunity to flex that training. On Wednesday, I attempted to learn from the minister and her government how much profit government made from the sale of U.S. liquor. I just wanted a dollar figure. With 48 hours behind them, one would think that this minister, some member of Cabinet, or the Premier has taken a little bit of time to find out what that dollar figure is. Can the minister provide the House today with a dollar figure of the Holt government's profits from the sale of U.S. liquor? Yes or no?

**Hon. Ms. Miles** (Hanwell-New Maryland, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, L): Madam Speaker, through you to the member opposite, first, thank you for thinking that I've had great media training. Some days I wonder whether I... It doesn't always feel that way, but thank you.

I'm not quite sure where the question is going. I think it is about food banks. That's where I'm going to go because that is what the question was about originally. FeedNB, Madam Speaker, has been struggling with predictable multi-year funding. That is why we as a government have stepped up. We have worked with FeedNB over the past number of months to develop a long-term funding model that works for it.



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Madam Speaker, food banks and community kitchens provide more than just food. They provide community.

They provide a place to gather, and they provide a place of dignity. One-off funding is not what they're looking for. They're looking for that predictable, multi-year funding. That is what this government is going to do. We're going to step up and deliver that. We look forward to delivering...

**Ms. M. Johnson** (Carleton-Victoria, PC): I appreciate that food banks are looking for a regular income to make sure they have funds, but I wouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth. Our sisters and brothers in the other Atlantic Provinces have taken the opportunity to take this money and apply it where it's most needed. I just don't understand why we can't come up with a dollar figure as to how much U.S. liquor we sell.

Anyway, according to Food Banks Canada, food banks are seeing 50 000 visits per month across the province, compared to 32 000 in 2025. On Wednesday, when confronted with usage statistics and the need for urgent funding, the minister instead spoke about affordability frameworks. I remind the minister that there is zero nutrition in word salad. New Brunswickers are struggling like never before, which means food banks are struggling like never before. The Holt government's record will forever stand. With 48 hours to research and reflect, will the minister agree this morning that—

**Hon. Ms. Miles** (Hanwell-New Maryland, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, L): Madam Speaker, through you to the member opposite, there were a lot of comments in that, so I'm going to respond to the word I heard the most, which was "affordability". Affordability is a priority for this government. That's why we have prioritized measures like the rent cap and the school breakfast program, which are putting an average of \$800 back into the pockets of families. It's why we have increased funding to support young folks transitioning to adulthood and are delivering an affordable framework to look at how programs affect each other and what the impact is on people's lives with respect to affordability. There has never been an affordability framework before. It is important because we know that New Brunswickers want the opportunity to have money back in their pockets and to thrive. We want to do all we can to provide those opportunities for them. We want to make sure that this type of funding... I'll tack on FeedNB. FeedNB—predictable multi-year funding.

**Ms. M. Johnson** (Carleton-Victoria, PC): We have to give credit, Madam Speaker. These women know how to pack in a few words in a short time. I'm thinking that the minister's colleague sitting adjacent to her is a good number cruncher and probably knows these numbers right up front. It would be nice if he shared them with her.

Anyway, I'm curious to learn how the transcript of the minister's remarks today will compare with her remarks on Wednesday. You'll note that I employed the word "remarks", not "answers", which I did for obvious reasons.



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It was just about a year ago that more than a dozen contracts with local farmers had to be paused because the government cut food bank funding by \$1 million in its first budget. This government has a poor record on social programs, and its failure to follow the lead of the other Atlantic Provinces with regard to profits from U.S. liquor is just another strike against it. What's it going to take for this government to do what is right for the people needing our food banks?

**Hon. Ms. Miles** (Hanwell-New Maryland, Minister of Social Development; Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, L): Madam Speaker, through you to the member opposite, thank you once again for the opportunity to make very clear that FeedNB has been looking for sustainable, multi-year funding. That is what this government is stepping up to deliver. We are working with FeedNB to deliver that type of agreement. I also want to be very clear that every community kitchen and every food bank received the funding they asked for. We also provided \$2.5 million in emergency funding support for food banks last year.

This is a priority for us. Affordability for New Brunswickers is a priority. Food security for New Brunswickers is a priority for this government. That's why we're working with FeedNB to provide multi-year, sustainable funding. We're working with our partners because we know how critical and important it is for communities. Thank you.

### HOSPITALS

**Mr. Hogan** (Woodstock-Hartland, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a couple of questions for the Minister of Health regarding staffing at Upper River Valley Hospital. In particular, I'm going to start with the frequent closures of obstetrics and labour and delivery. In April, we had two mothers who were diverted to the Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital (DECH). One mother delivered her baby on the side of the highway. The other mother delivered her baby on the sidewalk in front of the emergency department at the DECH. I want to know what this minister is doing to improve the situation in Waterville.

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about what we are doing in the Upper River Valley. Certainly, having a baby born on the road or outside a hospital is not a good thing. We have seen this throughout the past decade, certainly in our time and in the previous government's time. This is not acceptable. We are working hard to develop sustainable solutions, not band-aid solutions. To this end, we have applied recruiters to this area to bring in more family doctors as well as experts and specialists to provide obstetrical care. This includes surgeons, obstetricians who can do C-sections at times, as well as anaesthesia care.

We are speaking to people this week. We have people who are looking at coming to this community to provide some stability and care. Stability is what Woodstock wants. People don't want to see weekends when we shut down services and direct people to other areas.



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This is not what this community wants, it is not what this community deserves, and we are doing better.

**Mr. Hogan** (Woodstock-Hartland, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I respect the minister, but for months, I've been hearing: We are recruiting, we are recruiting, and we are going to... That is just discouraging to all the people who live in the Upper River Valley and use that hospital.

I want to ask about the medical imaging technologists at the Upper River Valley Hospital in particular, where there are nine full-time technologists and one part-time technologist, and they rotate through the various modalities. The hospital has 1.5 vacant temporary positions that have been posted and taken down several times in the past eight months with no applicants. I would like to know why that is. There is one full-time vacant position due to a technologist moving into another position. There is a 0.5 position vacant due to a technologist being taken to a position in another facility. Now, we have technologists who have to work overtime and who are not getting vacation, and we have Vitalité paying bonuses to get some. What is the minister doing to fix this problem?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, I am glad to have an opportunity to move on. The members opposite and the community recognize that we are doing good work to help with the delivery of obstetrical care in this community. Thank you for moving on.

The provision of medical services and personnel is difficult across this country, across this province, and certainly in the Upper River Valley. Medical technologists and X-ray technologists are very valuable members of our team, but they are difficult to hold, and there are not enough of them. We are looking at ways of training more people to work in this field so that we can provide adequate care both in the Upper River Valley and in other areas with Vitalité. This is an open file for us. We are looking at providing some stability there as well. Thank you very much for raising the issue.

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