

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**March 25, 2026**

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[*Translation*]

### SENIORS

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

[*Original*]

Madam Speaker, this government is failing New Brunswickers—failing in education, failing in affordability, and failing in health care, which is in crisis. Despite overspending by \$1.4 billion last year and the promise of overspending by an equally large amount in this year's budget, this government is also failing New Brunswickers fiscally. Among the people the Holt government is failing the most, however, are our seniors, particularly seniors in care.

We have a Minister of Health with money allocated to seniors, a Minister of Social Development with money allocated to seniors, and a Minister of Seniors who, despite having to answer for her departmental spending, has no real associated budget. Considering the crisis of seniors occupying ALC beds in our hospitals, the shortage of 500 nursing home beds in this province, and a wait list of 1 000 people waiting for placement, who exactly is looking after our seniors who need care and who need it right now? Thank you.

**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 opposite for the opportunity to talk about the steps our government has taken to demonstrate to seniors the respect they deserve. What is different from the previous government is that we've actually made the Minister of Seniors a full minister who has budget authority. We recognize how important it is to provide integrated services to the people who built and have long served this province.

We are extremely fortunate to have the Minister of Seniors—whom I would love to name—doing this work, because she has travelled this province and visited seniors in more than 100 different care environments. We are very excited that, tomorrow, we will bring forward the plan to improve care for seniors. We look forward to sharing that with everyone because it takes meaningful steps forward that are long overdue.

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Madam Speaker, full minister, partial minister—they're still failing to move the needle for seniors in care. We have seniors who are spending their days in garage bays, closets, and hallways. Those in nursing homes are often in places where shared bathrooms have no doors because they are not wheelchair accessible with the door in place. They are spending hours alone without

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the hours of care that this government promised. Remember, this government also “repurposed” the comfort and care allowance the former government promised to seniors.

One of the most pressing issues is a lack of beds. It has been a year and a half, and there is still no plan from this government to add beds or capacity to our system. Where is your plan? The current strategy is due to end this year. You knew this when you took power 18 months ago, and seniors are still waiting. Premier, why have you failed to act?

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Ms. Holt** (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Madam Speaker, our government has worked tirelessly to do what the previous government couldn’t accomplish. Members of the former government tried unsuccessfully to present a plan in 2022. They tried again in 2023, then in 2024, without success.

Our government then took over the work, but we did it in consultation with the stakeholders. The minister worked with over 80 stakeholders on a review of the entire system. We now have a budget that includes an increase in the number of care hours for seniors. It includes support for home care. It includes an increase in the number of beds and in capacity.

We plan to take action. You saw, during the state of the province address, that we have moved forward in the right direction. The number of occupied hospital beds has decreased. We continue to get the job done so that seniors get the services they need.

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

*[Original]*

We will be talking about their money for seniors.

Madam Speaker, the issue in New Brunswick boils down to two things: availability of beds and hours of care. The previous government added capacity in our system by opening homes in Shediac and Oromocto, added capacity with the Shannex homes, and added capacity with new homes in Saint-Antoine and Bathurst. It has been 18 months since this government took power, and, to date, there has not been one drawing—not one plan. There has been nothing to add capacity to our nursing home system. The result is historic levels of overcapacity in our hospitals, with ALC patients waiting for a bed in a nursing home. This government has been asleep at the switch for 18 months, and our seniors are paying the price. How can this government excuse the 18 lost months with no planning to add capacity to our nursing home care bed system?

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[Translation]

**Hon. Ms. Holt** (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm fully aware, as the Leader of the Official Opposition pointed out, that there is an emergency. It's true. There is an emergency. We are facing a crisis that has been worsening for years. Our government has had to take charge of things, identify priorities, and create a position for a minister who is solely responsible for the file in order to reduce the number of people waiting. In addition, the good news to be announced tomorrow in our new plan will address the concerns raised by the member opposite.

[Original]

I'm really glad that he is as excited as I am for our announcement tomorrow about our plan for seniors and long-term care. I look forward to hearing his feedback on the excellent work that the minister has done to engage the many, many stakeholders—more than 80 stakeholders, Madam Speaker—who participated in the development of this comprehensive plan that is going to finally make a difference for seniors in New Brunswick.

### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Hogan** (Woodstock-Hartland, PC): Madam Speaker, last night, we learned that Premier Holt is trying to give New Brunswick's eHealth business to a company that is teetering on the brink of liquidity. I want to congratulate Theresa Blackburn of the *River Valley Sun* for her excellent investigative reporting.

In December, S&P Global Ratings downgraded Foundever Group to a CCC rating from a previous B- rating. Foundever is only one rating drop away from bankruptcy, and this is the company to which Premier Holt is bound and determined to give a monopoly on all of New Brunswick's eHealth business. Will the Premier tell the people of New Brunswick when she learned that Foundever was downgraded by S&P Global Ratings to ratings that are described as being currently vulnerable and reliant on favourable conditions?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, I am very pleased that we are providing a fluid, continuous virtual health solution. We have had a good health solution for the first four years of this health care provision. We have a good, credible company that will provide a good health solution hereafter. We have a smooth transition plan.

New Brunswickers need not be afraid—they will have virtual care. We are glad that this is one company that will be able to provide a solution to all New Brunswickers. We're very pleased that this will augment the other aspects of primary care that we so proudly deliver in our province. Thank you very much.

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**Mr. Hogan** (Woodstock-Hartland, PC): This is very disturbing, Madam Speaker. Clearly, clearly, the minister had not heard this. I would like to read for my colleagues how S&P Global Ratings defines a company with a CCC rating. This isn't good. It says a company with a CCC rating

*is currently vulnerable to nonpayment and is dependent upon favorable business, financial, and economic conditions for the obligor to meet its financial commitments on the obligation. In the event of adverse business, financial, or economic conditions, the obligor is not likely to have the capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation.*

Does the Premier honestly believe that she is acting in the best interests of New Brunswickers by moving their health care to a company that is one step away from being out of business?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, we had 11 applications for the provision of virtual care in this province. I'm glad that it's a robust business. I'm glad that we can support companies that keep the data here in New Brunswick, employ New Brunswickers, and provide seamless service. Virtual care is a very important part of this. New Brunswickers have come to expect it, and it augments what we are able to do with collaborative care clinics, of which we have announced even more this week. I am glad that you draw attention to the complete package that we are providing New Brunswickers.

**Mr. Hogan** (Woodstock-Hartland, PC): Madam Speaker, it's getting more disturbing. It's looking more and more as though the Premier and the Minister of Health have absolutely no real understanding of business or finance. I bet her former colleagues at the Jobs Board are saying: I told you so.

Madam Speaker, let me share some more words from S&P Global, which, by the way, is infinitely more qualified than the Premier or anyone in her government to offer an opinion on anything related to business or finance. It's like the difference between Warren Buffett and the village idiot. S&P says:

*The negative outlook reflects our view that liquidity will deteriorate over the coming quarters and a debt exchange or restructuring that we view as tantamount to a default is likely within the next 12 months.*

Madam Speaker, through you to the Premier, time's up. Why won't the Premier do the only logical thing and renew the contract with eVisitNB?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, I'm very proud to stand up and speak positively. It's a very fair process. In the RFP process, which is often used, we do not go to providers that don't participate. I'm glad that 11 companies participated.

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We are going with a company that has 28 years of uninterrupted practice in New Brunswick. The company will work with 811 and our clinical information system. It will provide consistency in care. I'm very proud of the choices we've made, and I look forward to providing this service to all New Brunswickers in a continuous, uninterrupted fashion for the years to come. Thank you.

### NURSING HOMES

**Ms. M. Johnson** (Carleton-Victoria, PC): Thank you. In the current Liberal budget, the government has allocated \$2.6 million to increase the hours of care for seniors in our nursing homes.

Here's some context. The national standard for hours of care is 4.1 hours. In Nova Scotia, 96% of nursing home care beds have achieved that 4.1 hours of care standard. In New Brunswick, the hours of care are at 3.1.

For this government to make people believe that a \$2.6-million investment will increase the hours of care does not tell the whole story. For example, a 30-bed nursing home will receive \$14 000 of this \$2.6 million. That doesn't even come close to covering one full-time equivalent person. In other words, this \$14 000 is a negligible amount that will not make a real difference for the seniors in that nursing home.

With a budget supposedly focused on health care, why did this Premier and her government not put more money into increasing the hours of care for seniors? Senior care is health care.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Ms. Boudreau** (Champdoré-Irishtown, Minister of Seniors; Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, L): Madam Speaker, official opposition member, thank you for the question this morning. As you noted, we have considerably increased the hours of care provided by the staff who work very closely with our seniors in New Brunswick. We want to recognize the enormous job done by the staff who work diligently to improve the health, safety, and well-being of our seniors.

This really is progress, a step in the right direction. As the Premier mentioned earlier, we are looking forward to announcing the plan tomorrow. More details will be provided in the plan. We are taking this opportunity to invite the public to join us tomorrow for this wonderful announcement.

**Ms. M. Johnson** (Carleton-Victoria, PC): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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[Original]

New Brunswickers should be questioning the priorities of this government. Madam Speaker, \$2.6 million to increase the hours of care in our nursing homes is not really moving the needle. Increasing the hours of care by 0.2 hours, from the current 3.1 hours to 3.3 hours, would require about 200 more workers. That equates to approximately \$20 million more, or about 10 times what this government is allocating. Clearly, there is no plan to adequately increase the hours of care and no plan to add new beds to the system. Can the government members please explain this to the seniors of New Brunswick who are waiting for placement in nursing care and explain it to their families as well?

[Translation]

**Hon. Ms. Boudreau** (Champdoré-Irishtown, Minister of Seniors; Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thanks again to the opposition member for this very important question. I have travelled throughout the province. I have visited an incredible number of nursing homes throughout the province. I have heard staff talk about the tremendous amount of work they do. As I mentioned, we are really taking a step in the right direction.

We will, of course, continue meeting and talking with care workers as well as working with all our partners so that seniors get the best possible care in the best conditions. Again, I invite the public and opposition members to join us tomorrow for the announcement. More details on this will be provided tomorrow. Thank you very much.

[Original]

**Ms. M. Johnson** (Carleton-Victoria, PC): Well, I'm thrilled that the minister is speaking to workers, because I think we can all recognize that they are the people in the trenches. They know best what's required to provide services to seniors.

My last question is a quickie. It's a quickie. If it takes \$20 million to increase the hours of care for our seniors by 0.2 hours, can someone do the math and tell New Brunswickers how many hours of care, in decimal form, this \$2.6 million provides?

Well, do you know what? I did a little bit of math. You know I'm not good at it, but here's my try. This \$2.6 million is the equivalent of 0.02 hours of care. In minutes, that means 1.2 minutes more. How does that fraction of time truly help the seniors of our province?

[Translation]

**Hon. Ms. Boudreau** (Champdoré-Irishtown, Minister of Seniors; Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, L): Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the opposition member for the question. We did the math on our side. We didn't make any decisions without closely examining all the relevant aspects.

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As I mentioned, the staff currently working in nursing homes do an exceptional job. We're able to recognize this work from our many discussions and meetings with different partners and the people who work with our seniors. We really want seniors to get the best care in the best possible conditions with staff who are well supported in their positions.

As I mentioned, we did the math. We will also continue with our discussions. We will look at the situation taking both the present and the future into account. Again, we invite you to attend the announcement of the plan tomorrow. The plan will provide more specifics on the different possibilities and care that we can provide to our seniors. Thank you.

[Original]

### ENERGY

**Ms. Mitton** (Tantramar, G): Madam Speaker, the role of artificial intelligence, or AI, in our lives, our economy, and even our tourism strategy is accelerating. Canadians are worried about misinformation, job losses, and the amount of energy being used for data centres. NB Power said it hasn't even accounted for AI data centre energy use in its forecasting. We need to put up guardrails around AI data centres to protect New Brunswickers from even higher power rates driven by data centres coming online and sucking up huge amounts of water and energy. Two years ago, the New Brunswick government banned NB Power from selling electricity to crypto mines, recognizing the negative impact that more would have on our grid. Will the Minister of Energy place a moratorium on any further development of AI data centres until he has a plan in place that takes residents, industry, our environment, and power rates into account?

**Hon. Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst, Deputy Premier; Minister of Finance and Treasury Board; Minister of Energy; Minister responsible for the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the member opposite for asking the question. The reality is that not all data centres are equal. The reason NB Power has not put it into its planning is that most of the data centres we're looking at are behind-the-meter data centres. They're going to provide their own backup energy, which means they won't impact peak times. That's a very important distinction to look at because we have excess energy outside peak times in New Brunswick that we can use, sell, and build on. Data sovereignty in this country is going to become a bigger and bigger issue. We already have the data. Where do we want it to be stored? That is a real question that we will have to look at. We will have to have it, so you're going to look at—

(Interjections.)

**Hon. Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst, Deputy Premier; Minister of Finance and Treasury Board; Minister of Energy; Minister responsible for the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, L): It's alright. We'll leave it.

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It is a good question. There will have to be a plan, but we're going to have to be part of the solution. We can't let everybody else fix our situations.

**Ms. Mitton** (Tantramar, G): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think we could have a separate conversation about the American companies that are often involved in that data and how the data is crossing borders.

However, the Lorneville project is a problem. That project is looking to get a lot of energy from NB Power. New Brunswickers aren't even aware of what demands are being put on our electricity system. We do know that Opportunities New Brunswick has been involved in a plan to build an AI data centre on land owned by the government's Regional Development Corporation in Lorneville. This data centre will require 190 MW of energy from NB Power in addition to the 190 MW it intends to purchase from a gas plant built by VoltaGrid, a Texas-based company owned by a Trump supporter.

Will the Minister of Energy publish a large-load registry so that New Brunswickers can see what major new electricity demands are being pursued in the province?

**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, member opposite, for the question, through the Speaker. New Brunswick succeeds when our businesses succeed. Every successful business in this province strengthens the services our families rely on, the services the member opposite asks us to increase every single day in this House. This project is worth over \$2 billion for Saint John. It is collaborating with the Minister of Energy and NB Power. A behind the fence solution that will benefit New Brunswick ratepayers has been developed.

I'm confident in the Minister of Energy. I'm confident in my team at ONB. I'm confident they will bring economic development to this province. I'm confident they will move our GDP per capita in North America from last place, which is what the previous government left us with, toward the front of the pack in this government's mandate and the next one to come. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Mitton** (Tantramar, G): Madam Speaker, I'd still like an answer to my previous question.

[*Translation*]

In June, the government of Quebec passed an Act requiring government authorization for every new charge of at least 5 MW. The minister's authorization must take into account the technical feasibility, economic benefits, and social and environmental impacts of the requested connection. This measure aims to ensure that projects are consistent with the

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objectives of the energy and industrial policy of the province while preserving the reliability of the grid.

Without a plan or a moratorium, will the minister at least establish a basic contract to manage the development of artificial intelligence data centres before this becomes a runaway train?

**Hon. Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst, Deputy Premier; Minister of Finance and Treasury Board; Minister of Energy; Minister responsible for the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I thank the member opposite for the question. Essentially, we have other monitoring systems in the province. The New Brunswick Energy and Utilities Board does this work. So action is being taken to protect the future of energy.

We know that a comprehensive study of energy in New Brunswick will be released in the coming days. It will actually focus on everything to come concerning our development, our utilities, and our energy consumption. So I'm looking forward to the three people who were tasked with the study presenting their results next week. We will then have the opportunity to discuss them in detail.

[Original]

## TOURISM

**Ms. M. Wilson** (Oromocto-Sunbury, PC): Madam Speaker, the Holt government is closing provincially owned museums and heritage sites with fewer than 5 000 visitors, including the newly renovated Antique Automobile Museum in Edmundston, a decision that could impact over 100 sites across New Brunswick. I spoke with members of Association Heritage New Brunswick, who made it clear that this puts tens of thousands of artifacts and hundreds of student summer jobs and full-time positions at risk. Madam Speaker, these sites are critical to rural tourism and local economies.

My question, Madam Speaker, is for the Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, but, based on the circus taxpayers had to witness on December 12, last week, and again yesterday, we will see who stands up. Will it be the Minister of Agriculture, will it be the Housing Minister, or will it be the Minister of Public Safety? These are my questions: How does eliminating these sites support rural New Brunswick? Will the minister commit today to reversing this decision before people in rural communities lose both their history and their livelihoods?

[Translation]

**Hon. Ms. Thériault** (Caraquet, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the opposition member for the question. She addressed several



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subjects, but, in my answer, I'm going to talk about heritage. Of course, heritage is important to our government. I want to make one thing clear. Nothing concerning museums and their funding has been affected at all. No changes have been made to historic sites in the province, of which there are hundreds.

What we have done is review the heritage sites that belong to the province. In the 80s, the province acquired five heritage sites. Four of them have welcomed between 300 and 3 000 visitors. We want to transfer these sites back to communities, as was done with all the other heritage sites. We're starting discussions with municipalities, stakeholders, and local organizations to determine how we can support them in this process.

*[Original]*

**Ms. M. Wilson** (Oromocto-Sunbury, PC): Madam Speaker, Anchorage Provincial Park on Grand Manan is set to open this season, yet it is on the government's list to be shut down simply because it sees fewer than 5 000 visitors. Anchorage is operated by the Boys and Girls Club of Grand Manan and features the island's only accessible boardwalk. Let that sink in for a moment. It doesn't stop there. North Lake, Val-Comeau, Oak Bay, and Cape Enrage are also on the chopping block despite their importance to both residents and visitors. These sites are economic drivers for rural New Brunswick, supporting local businesses, accommodations, and jobs.

Just last week, the minister announced her physical activity strategy, yet now this government is targeting the very outdoor spaces where families gather, children play, and communities connect. Again, this question is for the Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture. Will the minister reverse this short-sighted decision, or will she stand by a plan that strips rural New Brunswick of jobs, tourism, and access to the very spaces—

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Ms. Thériault** (Caraquet, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question, which may enable me to talk about another subject: provincial parks. I will explain what I mean. The province has 59 provincial parks. They are divided about equally between the Department of Natural Resources, for conservation, and the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, for development and other things.

Of the 25 parks owned by the department, four are already operated by third parties, meaning local organizations and leaders. Since they're already operated by other parties, we want to have discussions with the operators or the municipalities. A process is also underway through First Nations to find a way that we can transfer responsibility for these parks to communities or private operators. This is a continuation of the management that local leaders already do.

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[Original]

**Ms. M. Wilson** (Oromocto-Sunbury, PC): Madam Speaker, whether it's museums, heritage sites, provincial parks, or, as we learned in the media this morning, cozying up to another American company, this government is failing to serve New Brunswickers. This is the same pattern of cuts and mismanagement that hit rural New Brunswick hardest. Again, this question is for the Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture. I will ask again: Will the minister reverse these decisions? Yes, or no?

[Translation]

**Hon. Ms. Thériault** (Caraquet, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Tourism is important for our province. I think that, given the tourism season we had last year, the strategy we have launched and the new investments in tourism are proof of our commitment.

Heritage is important. We are trying to support museums and historic sites as well as we can. Now, I don't know if you know this expression: Don't bite off more than you can chew. So we must focus on the best ways to promote tourism and get the best return for the province.

We obviously have difficult choices to make, but, when the transition is done, we will have improved operations at our parks, our museums, and our heritage sites, and we will have promoted the province. We will put our efforts where they're needed. We are making investments, and the funding for our department has increased, which shows we care deeply about the development of tourism, heritage, and culture in our province. Thank you.

[Original]

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

[Translation]

## SENIORS

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

[Original]

That is 18 months—18 months—lost with no planning. There have been no shovels in the ground and nothing to start the process for a new nursing home in this province. This government has failed to act. In the state of the province address, the government literally stated its goal to keep the number the same, with no metrics on how it is going to achieve even that low bar.

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Remember, we're talking about 1 000 seniors, people who built this province. It takes at least two years, from planning to building to doors being opened, to accept residents. Everyone knows that additional beds are needed. Why is this Premier letting our seniors suffer in ALC beds in hospitals when they should be in nursing homes? Why are you refusing to add capacity to our nursing home system? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Ms. Holt** (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate the tee up that the member opposite is doing for tomorrow's announcement that we will make at the Fredericton YMCA. We expect to see people from all over the province come out to see the results of the hard work the team has done by engaging with partners all over, because there was catch-up to be done.

In their six years in government, the opposition members raised the hours of care per resident by only 0.2 hours—0.2 hours in six years. In the year ahead, our government will move the hours of care per resident from 3.3 to 3.4 hours. We have the money budgeted to start that work in January 2027. To make sure that the labour is in place, we had to first fix the labour mess that this government left by putting forward respectful contracts with our nursing home workers and making sure people were paid a fair wage in this province. Now that we have a strengthened workforce, we can move forward with the kind of beds that have seen us move the needle from 1 088—

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

