

December 4, 2014

[Original]

Job Creation

Mr. Fitch: We on this side know the challenge that it is to govern the province. Certainly, we know the difficulties that occur in economically challenging times. We know that it is difficult to meet some commitments, especially when world events, North American events, and financial situations take over economic forecasts and results. As an opposition, we want to help. We do not want to continually beat up on the government over promises that it made either in haste or at four o'clock in the morning by a poor overworked staffer.

Therefore, in light of the latest projection from the Conference Board of Canada that New Brunswick will produce 1 600 new jobs in the next year, we are going to offer the Premier a do-over. Would the Premier like to change the promise that he made in his platform to create 5 000 new jobs in the first year of his mandate?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I am very pleased to be with you today and answer a question from the Leader of the Opposition, for the first time as Premier.

[Original]

It is really an honour and a privilege to be able to stand up on behalf of the government to speak as Premier.

The first question that I asked when I was Leader of the Opposition was: How can I help? Unfortunately, I saw the Leader of the Opposition go down that route but then insert a little bit of sarcasm and ask a question that, again, was a bit condescending, so let's correct the record.

It is very important for the Leader of the Opposition to remember what we promised and what we discussed during the campaign, and we will be very up-front about our promises. First, we promised that job creation would be our priority. With the throne speech, we made that very clear. Second, we said that we have a platform and a plan that are going to create jobs. An independent analysis by an economist told us that the measures that we would instill in our first year would create 5 000 jobs. It was not a promise of a net gain of 5 000 jobs. The mechanisms that we would put in would create those jobs, based on an economist.

Mr. Fitch: It is very disappointing that the Premier could not answer his first question in the Legislature because I recall that he incessantly criticized us for not specifically answering the questions.



Again, they said they want to do things differently. I am giving the Premier an option. I am not sure if I really understood what he was saying because it was net jobs, net 5 000. The platform was very clear. The platform was very direct in saying that he would create 5 000 new jobs in the first year of his mandate.

Again, I will ask him, politely, with the idea of helping because I do not want to beat him up on this platform promise that could have been made in haste. Does the Premier want to have a do-over on that particular platform promise and change the number based on information from the Conference Board of Canada that only 1 600 jobs will be created in the next year? Does the Premier want to change that number and have a do-over?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I have answered the question. The promise that was made was that job creation would be our priority. The promise that was made was that we would lower the small business tax, create a youth employment fund, invest in our infrastructure, and help youth stay in the province and gain the skills that they need to be able to go into the workforce.

[Translation]

We are going to help small and medium-sized businesses, as well as big companies. These were our campaign promises. We asked an economist to analyze the measures we are going to take as part of our job creation plan. We asked him to specify how many jobs these measures would create.

[Original]

It is an independent analysis that told us that 5 000 jobs would be created by the things that we are going to put into place as a government. There was never a promise of a net gain of 5 000 jobs. If the opposition wants to be helpful, first, its members can stop moaning and groaning when I am talking and, second, the opposition members can admit that our party supports the Energy East pipeline, for example. Why would you try to create a division when, two years ago, we joined the government at the time to say that we unanimously supported it? Help us, and we will help the province.

Mr. Speaker: Time, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Fitch: We know that the Premier has been a little shy on the details when it comes to some of the news clips and the clichés that he puts out in trying to address some of the important issues, such as job creation, in New Brunswick. The Conference Board of Canada was created more than 30 years ago, well into the fifties, and its board of directors is made up of 22 very high-profile top executives from across the country. Its executive team has well over a century of experience in finance and business. In its forecast of 1 600 new jobs in the province for next year...



The Premier is saying that he has a plan. Why does the Premier not produce that plan and give it to the Conference Board of Canada? Then, if he does not want to change his number, maybe the Conference Board of Canada will change its number. Is the Premier willing to produce that plan today and give it to the Conference Board of Canada so that it can change its number?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I realize that the Leader of the Opposition does not know what to do with his line of questioning now that I have answered the question. It is not a net gain of 5 000 jobs that was promised. Measures which we put in our platform were independently analyzed by the same economist that the past government used to look at some of its projects, and we were told by an independent analysis that 5 000 jobs would be created, not a net gain to our economy. That was never what we discussed.

Again, I have to go to the opposition trying to pretend that it wants to help. If the opposition wants to help, then let's ask: Can you admit today that we are in favour of the Energy East pipeline? I went to Houston, Calgary, Toronto, and Quebec. In every single stop, I made it clear that I supported the Energy East pipeline. I went to Grand Falls, Edmundston, Campbellton, Bathurst, Miramichi, Tracadie, Bouctouche, Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton and made it very clear that I support the Energy East pipeline. Could the Leader of the Opposition at least admit and put to bed today that we all support the Energy East pipeline—our government and the opposition? Maybe the third party does not, but we certainly do.

Mr. Fitch: One thing on which our party does agree with the Premier is that he has been very busy. He has been very busy over the last little while, not only here in Canada, but also down in the States.

The Premier is referring to projects under consideration, and some of the reports that he talks about... If he does not have a report that he wants to lay on the table or to give to the Conference Board of Canada to ask it to change its number, we, too, have reports that we commissioned. They mention things like the Energy East pipeline, the Sisson Brook mine, the LNG export terminal, and the Canada oil export terminal, which depends on the Energy East pipeline. This, again, is a report that our party released in June 2014, stating that the average impact per year in terms of jobs was 5 227. Is that the report that he would like to use to send to the council so that it can revise its number and change it? Is this the number that he was using when he came up with the 5 000 jobs?

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I answered the question, and I think I was quite clear. A net gain of 5 000 jobs in the first year of our mandate is not one of our promises. The measures we will undertake as part of our plan will create 5 000 jobs. This number is based on an independent analysis by an economist.



[Original]

With that, hopefully, after the fifth time that I answer the question, we can move on to something else. I think that it is also interesting to hear that the opposition is quoting reports. Do you want to know what our plan is? It is the *Moving New Brunswick forward* platform. If you have the time, take it and read it. That is what we will be focused on over the next few months and years: creating jobs and growing the economy.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about fracking, the Energy East Pipeline project, and the LNG terminal conversion. The members opposite will not admit that the Energy East Pipeline project is something that we support. I do not understand why they would want to waste time on that. Work with us. We all want to see that happen. When it comes to fracking, they have a fixation on this that they just cannot get over. As for the LNG terminal conversion, they did nothing to make it happen, actually. Thank goodness, I went to Houston.

Mr. Fitch: Again, the Premier alluded to his Liberal platform to move New Brunswick forward, and I would remind him again of what was written so that he may again read it himself: "There would be over 5,000 new full-time equivalent jobs created in the first year of a Liberal government". Once again, the Premier is choosing to have selective memory when it comes to his platform.

He has talked about shale gas, and these are some of the barriers that the Liberal government is actually putting in front of job creation. It goes to this question: If jobs and the economy are their number one priority, why are they putting barriers in front of job creation? We can look at some of the actions: changing the One-Job Pledge, changing Economic Development, doing away with Invest NB, and putting a moratorium on natural gas extraction from shale rock.

The Premier was very, very busy, and he alluded to all his travels earlier today. He is controlling the travel budget for the province. Did he talk to the companies...

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I will answer the question for the sixth time. There would be 5 000 jobs created with the measures that we spoke about in our platform, not a net gain. I understand that the opposition members, when they were in government, certainly did not understand the difference. They would get up in this House and talk about the jobs that they created when the economy as a whole kept losing jobs.

It is interesting to see that the Leader of the Opposition is quoting reports, saying that 1 600 jobs are going to be created. Obviously, these reports are based on what we will be doing as a government, and we will be creating 1 600 jobs, as, I believe, the Leader of the Opposition cited. What is interesting is that this criticism is coming from the past Minister of Economic Development of the government that was the only government in 40 years that did not create



jobs, that did not have a net gain of jobs. I can understand why the Leader of the Opposition now does not understand the difference between creating jobs and having a net gain of jobs.

We are very proud that our plan will create 5 000 jobs, and we are very proud that they say that a net gain of 1 600 jobs will be created in our economy.

Mr. Fitch: I am glad that the Premier admitted that his plan is really only going to create 1 600 net jobs. He talked about the travels and what he is doing, but did he go to Corridor Resources, did he go to the Potash Corporation, and did he talk to SWN? Did he ask them, specifically, what the effect would be if we put a moratorium on the extraction of natural gas from shale rock? What effect would there be to the economy and on job creation if we put on a moratorium? In the Premier's travels, hither and yon, did he take the time to meet with companies here in New Brunswick, which are dependent upon natural gas for their creation of jobs, for their expansion, or for their expansion into the economy? Did he take the time to meet personally with those companies and ask them this: What would the effect of a moratorium be on your company?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: In the past two years, yes.

Mr. Fitch: Again, the Premier is being very, very cute with his sound bites and clichés.

When he was Premier and was moving forward with a moratorium, did he meet with these companies and ask them this: What is the effect going to be on your bottom line with respect to employees, to profit, and to the expansion of jobs and the economy in New Brunswick?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Between our office and our team, the answer is yes, yet again. In the past few months and the past few weeks, we have. I have met them personally. Every single business that you named, I met with personally over the past two years. I hope that we can move on to the next question.

Since I answered the question and I had to answer it again, I will take a bit of time to talk about some of the things on which we will be focused.

The Jobs Board is going to help coordinate and measure our successes and even failures when it comes to job creation. Opportunities New Brunswick is going to be client-focused and will surely grow the economy. We are lowering the small business tax to help small businesses play a role. We have the Youth Employment Fund, helping people ages 18 to 29 to stay in the province and get the skills they need. We are investing in infrastructure, saving money, creating jobs in the short term, setting up economic prosperity in the long term, and developing a skilled workforce. We have a 10-year plan, a plan for literacy. We are going to have a strategy for tourism. We, unlike the previous government, which did things for political reasons, are going to work with our partners to have the LNG terminal converted. This will mean billions of dollars invested in this province.



Mr. Fitch: The Premier has said that it is tough for him to ask the difficult questions. We have seen that on some of the issues that have been put forward to him. He has neglected to ask difficult questions of his ministers. Obviously, he has not asked difficult questions of the companies with which he has met personally since he has been Premier. Have those companies told you exactly what the impact of a moratorium would be for their business?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I am not going to discuss private conversations that I have had or private conversations that the team has had.

(Interjections.)

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I will finish the answer, if that is okay. I know that it is going to be very important for the opposition to realize that we have done our due diligence. We have looked at all angles—something that the members on the opposite side never did when they were in government. They did not look at the impact that fracking can have on our health, our environment, and our water.

You can be certain that we are going to be introducing legislation to have a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing. You can also be certain that, as the Leader of the Opposition cited, our plan is going to create jobs. We have the Conference Board of Canada saying that our plan is going to create jobs—something that the opposition members were not able to do when they were in government. That is without fracking because we have a diversified approach, a skilled workforce, investment in infrastructure, LNG terminal conversion, and the Youth Employment Fund. We have a plan to create jobs, and we are going to get it done.

Mr. Fitch: I wonder if the comment the Premier made about private conversations extends to his Cabinet ministers as well.

Again, to fill in the blank that the Premier left so glaringly in the throne speech, where he left the word “moratorium” out of the throne speech entirely... I am sure it was some staffer working late at night who left that out, or perhaps somebody thought about it just as we went through the mover, and he never mentioned it. Then, we went through the seconder, the member for Miramichi Bay-Neguac. Someone must have sent in a note: You had better mention the moratorium.

Do you know what? That is the biggest opportunity the province has had in a generation—the shale gas industry. We are going to put a moratorium on it, so you might want to mention that. We say that jobs and the economy are our number one priority, yet we are turning our back on an industry that could create thousands of jobs, billions of dollars in GDP, and substantial growth here in the province. The Liberal government is saying no...

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.



Hon. Mr. Gallant: We can talk about hydraulic fracturing if the Leader of the Opposition likes. It was actually under the previous government that there was a de facto moratorium because the regulations that were in place made it so that the fracked wastewater had nowhere to go. In fact, we had businesses that we met with that were wondering, and that was one of their complaints. They said that we had had a de facto moratorium for quite some time under the previous government. On top of that, there is no certainty that the industry will even be able to find deposits in different parts of the province. There is talk of this being a saviour.

It is really unfortunate, and it shows why we are in the situation we are in as a province. We had a past government that was fixated on fracking. Yet we have a diverse plan—one that is going to create jobs, one that the Leader of the Opposition is citing. Independent analysis is saying that it is going to create jobs, and they cannot get over it. They cannot understand how we are going to create jobs with a diversified approach that does not include hydraulic fracturing.

Mr. Fitch: Again, I point to the document that was released by the same consultant that the Liberals have quoted many times. That document showed a diversified approach. It showed a number of approaches that would create those jobs into the future—long-term, sustainable jobs. This has been the song sheet that the Premier has picked up and started reading. Suspiciously, since he became Premier, he has become a real advocate of many of these projects—except for shale gas exploration and production, which, again, could be a game changer.

The certainty that the Premier talks about... Putting on a moratorium will certainly kill it. Putting on a moratorium will certainly say no to jobs, no to economic growth, and no to the billions of dollars of revenue that it could produce. It is a diversified economy that we have talked about when we have talked about some of the things in the past. Again, will the Premier admit that he has no new ideas for job creation in New Brunswick?

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I will do no such thing, because we have many ideas. A Jobs Board, Opportunities New Brunswick, the small business tax being reduced, a Youth Employment Fund, investing in infrastructure, developing a skilled workforce, a strategy for tourism, the LNG terminal, the Energy East Pipeline project, and the Sisson Brook mine are all things that we support.

I really do hope that the opposition is going to take its job seriously. I certainly did, and the group that has come over to this side, from the previous sitting of the Legislature, took it seriously as well. To waste time talking about the Energy East Pipeline project as if we do not support it... Why are we not working together on that project? The Sisson Brook mine, the conversion of the LNG terminal... We certainly support it. If there is anybody who should be questioned on whether or not they support it, it is the previous government. Industry told us



that this was not even pursued by the previous government because it would undercut its argument that we needed a domestic supply of shale gas.

Will the Leader of the Opposition, with the same report that he just quoted and held up, lift it up again and say that we support every project in there except for one and he cannot stop being fixated on that one?

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Mr. Fitch: It is obvious what the Premier is doing here today. Again, when the Premier and all his Cabinet ministers, caucus, and supporters stand up and say: Jobs and the economy are our number one priority... He has listed the same ones that we were pursuing in the past, save for one. That one could create 5 000 jobs over the next number of years. It could create hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of spin-off, revenue, and royalties.

All I want the Premier to do is admit that this opportunity is lost to the province of New Brunswick because of the actions of this government. He is turning his back on the opportunity of a lifetime. Any time he or his Cabinet says that jobs and the economy are the number one priority, we will know, the public will know, and he will know that this is not the case at all. It is just window dressing for him.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition does not want to admit that we agree with him about several projects. These include the Energy East Pipeline project and the Sisson Brook mine project. Moreover, we support the potential conversion of the Canaport LNG terminal in Saint John to an export facility. We have ideas about creating Opportunities New Brunswick and providing assistance with a youth employment fund. We want to lower the small business tax, and we want to invest more in infrastructure. We want to develop a tourism strategy and a skilled workforce and have a 10-year education plan. We also have a literacy strategy. As you can see, we have a diversified plan.

Today, the Leader of the Opposition is telling us exactly what is already known: All of this will create jobs. Independent analyses and reports tell us that all of our initiatives will create jobs—this is something we already knew.

The unfortunate thing is that we could work with the opposition to find other ways to create jobs. Working together is possible, but the opposition only thinks about fracking, and that is why we are in this situation today.

Vitalité Health Network

Ms. Dubé: Recently, the Minister of Health sent a letter to Vitalité Health Network stating that, because of its lack of cooperation, the network was indeed putting people at risk in the event of an Ebola virus infection in New Brunswick.



So here is my question to the minister: Can he specify whether Vitalité Health Network is ready for such an infection or whether people are at risk given its lack of preparation?

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: The member opposite asked a question related to a matter that she knows full well I cannot talk about publicly on the floor of the House.

This human resource issue is confidential and personal, and the answer I have been giving to the media for the last few weeks is the same one I will keep giving here in the House. Thank you.

Ms. Dubé: This is really unacceptable, because the letter I mentioned was not sent to just one person; it was sent to Vitalité Health Network. Therefore, this letter affects the entire health network, its Board of Directors, nurses, physicians, and all health professionals. This letter was even published.

My question is very simple. The minister signed the letter. In it, he said that Vitalité Health Network was not ready and, as a result, was putting New Brunswickers at risk. We might be missing some information. This letter created insecurity and anxiety. The minister signed the letter, which was sent to Vitalité Health Network. So we are not just talking about one person in particular here.

Therefore, I ask the Minister of Health to clarify the situation. Is Vitalité Health Network ready to serve the people should the province ever face an Ebola virus infection? My question is very simple.

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: Journalists also tried to get a different answer from me over and over again by asking me the same question several times. I will keep giving the same answer. This is a human resource issue, and a personal and confidential matter. Therefore, I cannot discuss it on the floor of the House. I cannot discuss the content of the letter publicly. I hope the member opposite understands and accepts this answer.

Ms. Dubé: I cannot accept this answer on behalf of all New Brunswickers. Since when is Vitalité Health Network considered a single person? Vitalité Health Network is the same as Horizon Health Network. There are various hospitals across the province, and many health professionals are working very, very hard every day to make sure people get quality services.

The minister is trying to hide behind one person. He signed the letter, so he must know that it was indeed sent to Vitalité Health Network. He signed this letter because he was worried. I will repeat my question for the minister: Are you able to say today whether Vitalité Health Network is ready to serve the people should there be an Ebola virus infection in New Brunswick? Yes or no? My question is very simple, and the minister signed the letter.



Hon. Mr. Boudreau: This question has been asked for the third time, and the member will get the same answer once again. This question is about a personal and confidential matter. This is a human resource issue. I am not able to discuss this publicly, either inside or outside the House.

[Original]

Energy Conservation

Mr. Coon: We know that many New Brunswick families and small businesses struggle with their heating costs every winter, and we know that many people in this province need jobs. A recent study by Canmac Economics, a consulting firm in Nova Scotia, found that investment in energy efficiency is building a local industry that will grow more than five times faster than the provincial economy in that province over the next five years. It is already creating over 1 200 jobs, and not one of those jobs required fracking a single drop of shale gas. That is 1 200 jobs in that province. These results are comparable to what we achieved in New Brunswick early on with investments through Efficiency NB before its budget was reduced.

My question is for the Premier: Will the Premier set a target for the percentage of households...

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: I have been very clear. Our past has shown that we believe in energy efficiency programs. Even within our platform, we said that we will reinstate the home energy retrofit program. We believe in what that will do for residents across New Brunswick. At the same time, we do believe that it will create economic activity that we greatly need in this province. We did make some changes to how we deliver energy efficiency programs in New Brunswick, and those details will come out in the very near future.

Rest assured, the Liberal Party and the Liberal government under Premier Gallant do believe in energy efficiency programs, and that will be shown in our actions.

Mr. Coon: My question is for the Premier. Will the Premier set a target for the percentage of households that will be retrofitted through the home retrofit program his government has committed to reinstate so that our energy efficiency service sector can ramp up its capacity to employ new people and expand their businesses to meet the potential as a result of these investments in energy efficiency?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: Again, the Liberal government believes in energy efficiency programs for our homes and the people who live in them. We know power rates families and businesses in the province pay continue to increase. We have always said that the most effective way to reduce power bills is to use less power. This is why past Liberal governments, as well as the one we see now and will be seeing in the future, invest in energy efficiency programs.



I can assure the member opposite that we will continue to demonstrate the benefits of energy efficiency programs in New Brunswick. As we outlined in our campaign platform, we will reinstate the home energy retrofit program. The program will continue, and investments will follow. We are certain that will generate economic activity in the province.

[Original]

Mr. Coon: The job creation potential of New Brunswick's energy efficiency service sector for our tradespeople—insulating contractors, heating contractors, ventilation contractors, architects, and engineers—is massive if energy efficiency retrofits are focused on businesses, commercial buildings, and industry as well as households. Can the Premier assure the House that our government's investments in creating jobs in the energy efficiency sector will be made across all classes of energy users and will include households and businesses that heat with natural gas, oil, propane, or wood?

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: The official opposition could learn from the member from Fredericton. He has ideas, and we both have the same common sense. We believe in home energy programs, not only for the benefits they will bring the residents of New Brunswick, but also for the economic activity in the whole province. I do intend to work with you.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: You do have great ideas. We both believe in home energy retrofit programs, and that is going to continue under the leadership of Premier Gallant.

Pipeline

Mr. Stewart: The Premier has taken great pride in his sightseeing trips, his back-in-the-world tour, and his signing of many government travel permission slips. We know that his first trip was to Alberta. He told the people of New Brunswick that he went there to show his support for the Energy East Pipeline project and to ask the Premier of Alberta what he could do to help.

This is what I would like to know today. My question is for the Premier. As soon as they met, did the Premier of Alberta tell the Premier of New Brunswick to go meet with Ontario and Quebec and to step right out and agree on their unconstitutional conditions, which would be great impediments to the significance of the Energy East Pipeline project?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I thank the member opposite for pointing out that we went to Calgary. The first trip that, as Premier, I took outside the province was to show our support for the Energy East Pipeline project.



[Translation]

This project will generate many opportunities for job creation here in the province and grow our economy. We have been supporting this project for over two years now, I think.

We would like to work on this project with the opposition members who, I think, also support it. I do not understand why they are saying we are against it.

[Original]

Obviously, there are things that we agree on and can work on, and the Energy East Pipeline project should be one of them. Yes, I did meet with the Premier of Quebec and the Premier of Ontario. I think that many of their conditions and principles are reasonable and very achievable. That does not mean that I agree with every single one of them and that we would institute that here, but consultation, ensuring that everyone benefits, and making sure that there is emergency capacity are all things that we agree with. We support the project, and we hope the opposition...

Mr. Speaker: Time, Premier.

Mr. Stewart: I will take that as not answering the question. We know that the Premier agreed to the Ontario and Quebec conditions before he even knew what they were. I want to point out that we have seen evidence of this. Alberta's Premier Prentice had to go meet with the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec to put to rest any notion that upstream emissions would be included in the regulatory review, so we saw Premier Prentice step in to save the day. This is my question today: Knowing that the Premier initially agreed with these conditions before even seeing them, has he changed his mind as well, now that Ontario and Quebec have sided and agreed with the Western Premiers on this project?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: We—everyone in this Legislature—can really have an opportunity before us to raise the discourse, to raise the level of debate. I just answered the question, and I just said that I did not agree with all the conditions. However, I said to my counterparts across the country that I understand and that the conditions are reasonable and achievable. I actually met with them to, again, say in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec that we support the project. I went to Ontario and Quebec to talk about the benefits for our whole country from seeing the Energy East pipeline make its way to New Brunswick and to Saint John.

Again, for the seventh time, I really hope the opposition members are going to work with us on projects that we agree on, not try to take even things that we agree on and find ways to be divisive. There are other things that we can argue about and debate, but there are some things that we agree upon. Therefore, why do we not work together? The Energy East pipeline is something that I support, that we support. The Premier of Quebec and I spoke about it at length over the past few weeks. I spoke to the Premier of Ontario and reiterated our support, and I would like to think that it had an impact on their being as supportive as they are.



Mr. Speaker: Time.

Mr. Stewart: I do not know if I should take that as not answering the question, or... Hold on. We have been in here for about an hour and 40 minutes, and he has already agreed that he has changed his... He has flip-flopped on a file of national importance. We are lucky Premier Prentice stepped in and saved the day by getting people back on track, but our Premier has agreed to help them build unconstitutional roadblocks. Now, he does not like the question.

However, let's look at another Ontario and Quebec condition of great significance. What exactly is the Premier's stance on the condition imposed by Ontario and Quebec that would see new infrastructure for natural gas customers in Ontario and Quebec? They are worried that they would be negatively impacted by the repurposing of the existing gas line. We would like to know if it means the project becomes... We believe this project will become uneconomical. Does the Premier honestly believe that building a new gas pipeline from the west to replace one that is so underutilized that it is being repurposed for Energy East is a reasonable suggestion?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Yes, I do. In fact, we are going to look at every opportunity to try to get natural gas to the Canaport LNG station so it can be converted. The previous government did not want to do that. We are talking about billions of dollars that can be invested in our province to have the conversion of the LNG terminal.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: When their government was in office, opposition members did not want to consider importing natural gas from the United States or even western Canada. Why is that? Because they wanted to tell the public it was absolutely necessary to resort to hydraulic fracturing here in New Brunswick.

[*Original*]

I went to Houston, and I went to Calgary. Nobody really cared what we did with our domestic supply. They wanted to know about the infrastructure that we could get to the LNG terminal so it could be converted. Unfortunately, because conversion to the LNG terminal without a supply of natural gas here undercut the opposition members' narrative of the campaign, they did not pursue it. That is unfortunate because we need to deliver results when it comes to job creation. That government could not, but this government will.

Job Creation

Mr. Steeves: It is an honour to rise and to ask my first question as Social Development Critic. I will have all sorts of questions over the coming months regarding policy and procedure and



concerns presented to me by the people of New Brunswick. Since we are focused today on jobs and every department has been tasked with job creation, I would like to take this opportunity to ask the Minister of Social Development what has been communicated to her regarding the plan to create these 5 000 jobs in the first year of the government mandate, and what her role is in the plan.

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I hope the opposition members will raise the level of discourse. You asked the question early on. The Leader of the Opposition asked it seven times. I explained seven times.

We promised initiatives in our platform and in our job creation plan that will create jobs. We asked an economist to do an analysis of it, an independent one at that. The economist who worked with the previous government said that the measures that we support and will enact will create 5 000 jobs. It was not 5 000 net gain jobs. I can say it for an eighth time. I will be pleased to say it again during the next question period. However, I certainly hope that we can move on and ask other questions of importance. When it comes to developing jobs, yes, absolutely every department will be asked to have a lens in which job creation is considered.

[Translation]

Each minister will check on whether there are any new opportunities for job creation within their departmental operations, or, when making a decision, of course, will consider what the impact will be, not only on families and finances, but also on the economy of the province.

My answer is: Yes, of course, the departments will do this work.

[Original]

Jobs

Mr. Steeves: Perhaps the Minister of Social Development will be able to answer the next question. We have read the minister's mandate letter, which is available for all New Brunswickers to read online. We have read that clause, which says:

The Office of the Premier plays a critical role in moving the government agenda forward, coordinating activities, monitoring performance and managing critical issues. We work as a team and, as such, you are expected to:

-
- *consult on decisions regarding the staffing of positions and Ministerial appointments;*

That clause, to me, reads as though every government job has to go through the Premier's Office. I would like to ask the Minister of Social Development to explain how this works. If there



is a job available, does the Premier's Office send a list of candidates over to the department for it to select a name, does the department send a list of candidates to the Premier's Office so that it may select a name, or does the Premier unilaterally decide, without any consultation?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: Again, I really hope that the opposition will raise the level of discourse. We are continuing a policy that was enacted by the previous government, the one on attrition. We are not going to be rehiring people within the civil service unless it is essential or unless we deem that it is very necessary. That is why any job that is going to be filled within the government, within the civil service, for the time being—until the policy is changed or revised—will go through the office. This is just to ensure that nobody within the civil service, and maybe some ministers who are new, would think that they should hire someone because there is a vacancy. This is actually a policy that was enacted by the previous government. It is something that we want to continue as we address the finances of the province.

[Translation]

Our priorities are very clear: improving the economy, creating jobs, getting our fiscal house in order, and providing more assistance to our families. So, if we are to get our fiscal house in order, the civil service must, of course, play a role.

[Original]

This is why we will continue the attrition policy. This is why we will keep an eye out and ensure that we have checks and balances and that there will be no hires that will bloat the civil service.

Mr. Steeves: Once again, I have another question for the Minister of Social Development. Staying with jobs, once again, would the minister tell us of any conversations that she has had with mayors regarding jobs and the economy? Would she tell us what they said?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: If the member opposite is a bit annoyed that I am taking his questions, I am sure that, at one point, he will be asking me questions and it will be ministers... Maybe he can take the time to enjoy this.

As to the question, I am sorry, but we are going to have to swat this one down. I do not know what the member opposite is trying to get at or what types of mayors he is talking about—some general question.

What I think is important for us maybe, hopefully, to agree on, on both sides of the Legislature, is that we really need to create jobs in this province. We need to get our finances in order. We need to ensure that we help families that are struggling.

The opposition members have an important role to play to keep us to account—absolutely—but they can also play a role when we agree on certain projects. I would like to think that both sides of this Legislature agree that job creation should be a priority. I hope that they will come



up with ideas other than fracking, because we have talked about that at length for the last couple of years and we are not on the same page. However, there are some things on which we are. I hope the opposition will come with ideas on how we can save money, how we can ensure that the cuts that will happen will help us save money but not hurt families in this province. I hope the opposition will heed this call.

Mr. Speaker: Time, Mr. Premier.

Job Creation

Mr. Holder: What my colleague from Moncton was getting at is that we need to understand, in these early days, the perspective of the individual ministers when it comes to job creation. I think we in this House all agree that the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour plays a very significant role in that development and in that growth of the economy.

My question for the minister is this: What specific instructions did you receive from the Premier with respect to the plan to create 5 000 jobs?

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I could not pass up the opportunity to answer the question again, for the eighth time, I think.

It is 5 000 jobs that would be created...

(Interjection.)

Hon. Mr. Gallant: We are at nine.

There would be 5 000 jobs created, ensuring that the opposition understands that this is not a net gain. We have made that very clear. We are very happy, however—as the Leader of the Opposition has cited—that there are reports that say that there will be a net gain under our plan. We are going to work very hard to make sure that those results happen.

Again, I will give the opposition members this: They have read the fact that we are going to ensure that every department plays a role in creating jobs and growing the economy. They are absolutely right when they say that.

[*Translation*]

Our plan will include all ministers—Cabinet members—and even our caucus will play a role by giving us ideas and suggestions to create jobs. I can tell you that the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will put a lot of effort into the Youth Employment Fund, which will help us develop a skilled workforce. She will play an integral role in the 10-year education plan to help build our economy, and, of course, she will be part of the New Brunswick Jobs Board, in order to help us.



[Original]

Jobs

Mr. Holder: What is very clear here today from the fact that the ministers will not answer these questions is that they have not received any mandate from the Premier or any direction in terms of how these 5 000 jobs will be created. I am going to quote from the mandate letter once again: “consult on decisions regarding the staffing of positions and Ministerial appointments”.

My question, again, is for the minister. At any time, did you get direction from the Premier about staffing? Did that also include “unstaffing”? Does that mean that you can get direction from the Premier’s Office on firing or letting somebody go as well?

[Translation]

Hon. Mr. Gallant: I want to tell the opposition very clearly that, when it comes to job creation, I will play a major role as Premier.

[Original]

I am going to be playing a very large role when it comes to creating jobs because that is the focus of our government. That is why I am very happy to be chairing the innovation board. I am the Minister responsible for Innovation. That is why I am very happy to be chairing the New Brunswick Jobs Board as well.

I cannot help but say it again: I really hope the opposition is going to help us raise the discourse and the public debate. To say in one sentence that, as Premier, I have not given any mandate to the ministers and then, in the next sentence, to quote the mandate letter which I sent out to the ministers, and which I made public, is quite ironic. It is a bit unfortunate that we are wasting important time here, when we could be discussing projects of great importance to our province.

Very clearly, as the member opposite saw, letters went out to all ministers, giving them a mandate, making it very clear that job creation is our priority.

Mr. Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

