

December 10, 2014

[Original]

## Jobs

**Mr. Fitch:** Yesterday, we learned from the Premier that his pledge during the election to create 5 000 jobs in the first year of his mandate was really the plan that we had put into place while we were in government. Based on that plan, we saw that he was using the number 5 000 as opposed to net job creation. That was another revelation that the Premier told us yesterday or the other day.

The other day, too, we found out that, when the government members say that jobs and the economy are the number one priority, there has to be an asterisk beside that because they are putting a moratorium in place and clamping down on a business that could create 5 000 to 7 000 jobs.

When we talked about the Conference Board of Canada, the government members focused on the forestry plan that, again, was our plan. I wonder if the 1 600 jobs that were forecast due to the forestry plan are now part of the Premier's plan as well.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** It is obvious that this is a conversation we had yesterday. We have talked about the jobs that we are going to create through mechanisms and various initiatives that we are going to support, bring in, and implement.

We are very proud of the Youth Employment Fund and our plan to invest in infrastructure. We are very proud of our plan to lower the small business tax rate. We are very proud that we will have a strategy that will help the immigration and tourism sectors. The goal is to have a diversified approach to grow the economy.

Our approach will also include the responsible development of our natural resources. We said this very clearly during the election campaign and even earlier, and we continue to express this idea very clearly now that our government is in office.

This means forestry will indeed be part of our approach. However, we will have a plan to build on what the former government has done and to make sure that it is all fairer and more equitable, since all businesses must be given the opportunity to be fully involved. We will be transparent, as we have shown today.



[Original]

**Mr. Fitch:** Again, the Premier's words are not lined up with the reality on the ground. When he says that all companies will participate, he is excluding a number of them that are involved in the shale gas industry. The speech from the throne by the Premier says: "given the constraints that have been imposed", in reference to the forestry plan. I wonder whether the Premier could elaborate on those constraints. As he revisits the forestry plan, is he going to put those jobs in jeopardy, along with the jobs in the shale gas industry in New Brunswick? Could the Premier elaborate on exactly what he means when he plans to revisit the forestry plan and what effect that will have on the jobs that are being created under the forestry plan?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** It means a lot of things. Number one, it means that we are going to be transparent about the forestry plan, something that the previous government did not do. We have ensured that we follow that commitment today, releasing all the documents that we possibly can that would not be confidential in nature.

Unlike the previous government, we are going to ensure that everybody gets to play a role. As many people as possible, I should say, are going to be able to play a role in the forestry sector, which is so crucial to our province. We need to ensure that large businesses help us to grow the economy, and that is in many sectors. Large corporations are important. We will never say the contrary. We need them to help us to create jobs and to grow the economy, but we, unlike the previous government, understand that we also need small and medium-sized businesses to play a role. That is why, with the constraints that were left us by the previous government, we are going to look to ensure that we give a fair shake to all businesses throughout the province to participate in the forestry sector.

**Mr. Fitch:** The Premier is very high on clichés without really having the details on the constraints.

The Premier talks about innovation. He talks about innovation as if he invented the word, but innovation has been around for more than 30 years. A number of innovative products have been created in New Brunswick and are now used worldwide. If the Premier would look at the annual report of the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation, he would see that innovation has been ongoing in the province for the past four years and that a substantial number of jobs have been created by the Innovation Foundation.

Does the Premier plan to change the work that has been going on there, given the fact that it was occurring during our mandate? Are the jobs that have been created in innovation over the years in jeopardy as well, because of the Premier's mandate?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I would not dare say to people that I am the one who invented the word "innovation".



[Original]

I would also add, for the Leader of the Opposition, that innovation has been around a lot longer than the past 30 years. I would think that the first fire started by man was innovation. I would think that the wheel, when it was invented, was innovation. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to make a point, where we both support innovation in this province.

It is funny that a few months ago, probably about a year and a half now, the former Premier spoke about his three priorities, and I thought that it was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the different types of politics. We had three things: the Energy East Pipeline project, innovation, and shale gas. As Leader of the Opposition, I said that we supported the Energy East Pipeline project. We had suggestions on how to do it. We supported innovation. We did not think that you were going about it the right way, but we supported that agenda. When it came to fracking, we had something different. This government can only focus on the differences that we have. Let's focus on what we can work on together.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, Premier.

**Mr. Fitch:** When it comes to innovation, the Premier forgot to mention some of the great innovations that were created here in New Brunswick, such as the snowblower and scuba tanks. Anyway, we will not get into some of the parallels there.

When we talk about some of the opportunities in New Brunswick, the members opposite stand up and say: Yes, we agree on innovation. Yes, we agree on the west-east pipeline, but, no, we do not agree on shale gas and exploration in the province. Again, we are suggesting to the Premier that, if he really wants to make jobs and the economy his number one priority, then he needs to consider the opportunity in the shale gas industry. We can work together on this.

We have talked about the new book that was released last week and some of the opportunities that exist there. We agree with the author and some of the people who have contributed to that book in that they are credible in some of their projections. This could mean 5 000 to 7 000 jobs, with over \$1 billion in GDP. Why is the Premier being so stubborn and not looking at that opportunity?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Since I was the one who mentioned shale gas and hydraulic fracturing, it is my fault, and I will take the blame for it. Obviously, I mentioned it because I find it unfortunate that, in the House, we cannot talk about initiatives we agree on, and how we could make sure they are undertaken. I would like to emphasize that job creation is a priority for our government and our province, and the same is true for the Energy East Pipeline project and our other initiatives.



[Original]

Unfortunately, I mentioned things that we supported and then mentioned that one, when trying to make the point that it is unfortunate that it is the only thing we speak about here because of the opposition. It is hydraulic fracturing. That opened the door for those members to speak about hydraulic fracturing again.

We obviously do not agree. We want to ensure that there is a moratorium until we fully understand the risks to our water, our health, and our environment. Meanwhile, we have a diversified approach to grow the economy through infrastructure, reducing the small business tax, the Youth Employment Fund, the immigration strategy, the tourism strategy, and ensuring that we have a proactive economic development agency. I can assure you that we will get results.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, Mr. Premier.

**Mr. Fitch:** The Premier talks about the discussion here in the House, yet he is trying to control and change the rules to favour his side, his slim majority.

When we talk about some of the things that have been successful, we look at Invest NB and the Export Strategy. The other day, I drew up a list of all the jobs that were created by Invest NB, and I filled almost a page and a half. A number of companies have been brought from outside into New Brunswick. This is where the Premier has to have a discussion regarding why he is going to destroy a private sector, matrix-driven company and replace it with the same thing, a Crown corporation with a private sector board.

The only reason that he is doing that is because his Liberal platform is his priority. It is not jobs and the economy but the Liberal platform. We see that in what the Premier has done in a number of cases in the province. Why does the Premier not tell the people what the truth is, that, really, his priority is to implement his Liberal agenda, his Liberal platform?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, member.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I think it is very important that we always encourage people to participate in our democracy. One of the reasons why is that elections matter. I can certainly tell you, from listening to the Leader of the Opposition, that the past election mattered.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I hear the Leader of the Opposition, when he is on his feet, argue that the status quo was doing well and that we should have continued with it. It was a status quo where we saw a stagnant growth of our GDP, a status quo in which we saw the first government in



history—in the last 40 years—not have a net gain in job creation, a status quo where we saw thousands of people having to leave our province because they could not find work, a status quo where we unfortunately found ourselves with high unemployment rates and, in fact, the highest unemployment that the province has seen since Statistics Canada has been looking at unemployment rates.

We can guarantee you that this side of the Legislature does not believe that the status quo is okay. Job creation is our priority, and we will deliver results.

**Mr. Fitch:** Again, that goes right to my point. The Premier, when he was on this side, talked about net jobs. Then, during the election, he changed the math and went to jobs created. He said to the people that he would create 5 000 jobs. He did not talk about net jobs. He talked about 5 000 jobs.

When he was over here, he and the new Minister of Finance and Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure railed about net jobs. Let's make sure that we are comparing the same math and the same numbers. Right now, the Premier is down 1 900 jobs. That means that, to fulfill his promise, he has to create 6 900 jobs, and we are two months into the year. That is why we are suggesting to him ways to help.

Do not be so set on implementing your platform, which says that you are going to put a moratorium on the shale gas industry, which is worse than the status quo. It is going backward. You know that it is going to shed jobs and hurt companies in New Brunswick. Why do we not have the discussion on the issues before the Premier puts in a moratorium and kills more jobs in the province?

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Let's speak of the previous government's record on the net loss or gain of jobs. When the Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Economic Development and I would ask whether they were proud of their job-creation record, he would get up and say: Yes, we are. We created 100 jobs with this, 50 jobs with this, 150 jobs with that. That was while the province as a whole had a net loss of jobs.

The Leader of the Opposition very much understands, when we promise that our mechanisms, the projects that we support, and the things that we are going to implement are going to create jobs, that we are talking about what those things will create directly in terms of jobs. It was not a discussion of the net gain or the economic gain for the province as a whole. Of course, by creating jobs, we are going to get the ball rolling. We are going to get things moving in the right direction.

I am very proud that the Conference Board of Canada and APEC have talked about there being projected growth, based on our plan and based on our commitment to making job creation the number one priority of our government.



**Mr. Fitch:** Again, we see that the Premier continues to change his story, because he talked about net jobs when he was in opposition. Now, he wants to talk about jobs created. We have set the stage. We know now that the Premier will be graded on net jobs created in the province.

When we talk about net jobs, he has to take into consideration that, through attrition, we reduced the civil service by about 2 300 people. That was some of the expansion that had occurred under the Shawn Graham Liberal government. We are wondering, again: Is this government going to continue along the path of the old ways of the Liberals? We saw it in the fiscal policies of the nineties and the job-hiring policy of the sixties.

Again, we have established here today that the Premier will be graded on net jobs. Again, it goes back to the question: If you are putting in jeopardy forestry jobs, if you are putting in jeopardy jobs that Invest NB brings to the province, and if you are putting in jeopardy all the things from the One-Job Pledge, again, why do you not consider looking—at least, looking—at the shale gas industry, because it could create thousands...

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I think we have discussed job creation quite extensively in terms of net gain and job creation that will result from mechanisms and programs we are going to implement, so I am going to move on to another topic.

*[Original]*

The Leader of the Opposition talks about a few things that we actually do support, and that is good. I will answer the question.

We do want to have an attrition program as well. These are tough times, and tough decisions are ahead. We recognize that. The civil service recognizes that. New Brunswickers recognize that as well. This is hard. It is not easy. It is not a fun conversation to have, but it is one that we have to have. We have made it very clear across the province that we are going to be making those tough decisions, but what we will do a little bit differently from the past government is that we will make them together. We are going to listen to New Brunswickers and to the civil service, to their ideas on how we can be more efficient, how we can save money, and how we can still ensure that we have a strong social fabric while we rein in our finances, all the while prioritizing job creation. We will work with all New Brunswickers to accomplish that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.





[Translation]

## Vitalité Health Network

**Ms. Dubé:** Today, I want to draw the attention of the House again to the fact that the Minister of Health practically insulted Vitalité Health Network and all health professionals by telling them they were not prepared in the event of an Ebola virus crisis in our province.

My question, today, is directed first to the Premier: Was the Premier aware that the Minister of Health was going to send such a letter to Vitalité Health Network, and does he support this minister's comments that health professionals are somehow unprofessional?

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** I think we have dealt with this question many times, and I want to note that we cannot discuss the content of this letter.

What we can discuss is the commitment we made yesterday, as a government, by tabling a bill in the House to fix the New Brunswick Drug Plan.

We have committed to reviewing this plan to make sure it treats individuals and our small and medium-sized businesses fairly and equitably. That is why this bill tabled yesterday will eliminate, as of April 1, 2015, the requirement for everyone to enrol in the plan, whether they wish to or not.

**Ms. Dubé:** The minister has stated publicly that the Vitalité Health Network professionals—we know them, and we know they are working hard—have not acted professionally and have even put people at risk.

My question was for the Premier. Was he aware that his Minister of Health was going to send this letter to Vitalité Health Network? Does he support his Minister of Health and his comments that health professionals are unprofessional and are putting our people at risk?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** Once again, this is an issue that we cannot discuss on the floor of the Legislature or outside.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** I am going to continue to talk about some of the stuff that we can talk about. As I just mentioned earlier, we are very proud that, yesterday, we were able to table a piece of legislation in this House that kept another commitment in our platform during the last



election, and that was to review the New Brunswick Drug Plan. Although it is a temporary measure following a more comprehensive review, two of the issues that were very important to deal with right away were to take out the mandatory phase for New Brunswickers as well as the mandatory piece of it for small and medium-sized businesses. They were going to be forced, as of April 1, 2015, under the plan of the former government, to participate whether they wanted to or not. This is another commitment that we have kept, and there are many more commitments that we are going to be keeping, moving forward, in the Department of Health.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Dubé:** The Premier's silence speaks volumes. The Minister of Health has accused health professionals of being unprofessional.

On October 31, the department released a list of initiatives that were taken to show people the department was prepared. The Department of Health even designated two hospitals in New Brunswick, namely Dr. Georges L. Dumont Hospital and the Saint John Regional Hospital, to show it was ready to serve the public.

Despite all of that, the Minister of Health accused Vitalité Health Network of not being prepared, not being professional, and not cooperating. The doctors have come out publicly to say it is not true and that they are ready to serve the public.

Since the Premier likes to talk about transparency, I ask him to be transparent and to answer our questions. Was he aware that such a letter would be sent to Vitalité Health Network? I believe he was, since a mandate letter was given to the Minister of Health...

[*Original*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, member.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** I want to clarify a few things for the member opposite.

Firstly, I did not make any public statement, nor did my department. It was a confidential and personal letter, and I cannot discuss its content. Secondly, the member opposite should know that neither the Premier nor I, as minister, can discuss the content of this letter.

That being said, there are a lot of files we are prepared to discuss in the Legislative Assembly. Why did the member not ask questions about the bill we tabled yesterday regarding the New Brunswick Drug Plan? We are proud to talk about it, because we fixed detrimental measures that the former government put in place by making the plan mandatory. We have also addressed the concerns of low-income New Brunswickers, something the former government had promised to do, but had not done.





If the minister wants to talk about these files, I am prepared to discuss them; she must, however, understand the rules of the game.

[Original]

## Climate Change

**Mr. Coon:** My question is for the Premier. On Monday of this week, Quebec, together with Ontario and British Columbia, issued a joint statement demonstrating leadership on climate change. They joined federal Green Party Leader Elizabeth May in Peru this week at the final UN meeting before a new global treaty on climate action is signed next year in Paris. Their joint statement identifies climate change as a serious threat to our economy and recognizes the opportunity to create a new low-carbon economy that will drive job creation in our country and in our provinces if we act now. Immediate action means investing in people, building new public infrastructures, such as transit, and creating a business environment that will cultivate a greener and fairer economy. Will the Premier join his colleagues in Quebec and Ontario and be seen supporting this joint statement on climate change?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I appreciate the question very much. This is something that is very important to our province, to our country, and across the globe. In fact, I did have a chance to speak to Premier Couillard when I was with him at the Sommet de la Francophonie recently. Also, when I met with him in Quebec, we had a chance to speak about many, many subjects, including climate change.

[Translation]

I would like to mention a very good initiative that Premier Couillard wants to establish. Indeed, he is organizing a summit for all First Ministers, a national summit, that will take place next April, to discuss climate change. Our government will attend, and we will also table a plan to make sure we are doing our part with regard to climate change.

[Original]

There was a report and recommendation document that was done by the previous government in June of this year, but we are going to work with all New Brunswickers to beef that up, because this is an important issue.

**Mr. Coon:** That is good to hear. With the moratorium, for sure, we have an opportunity to build a new low-carbon economy in this province to drive green job creation. However, the Premier's championing of the Energy East Pipeline project contradicts this approach. The Alberta-based Pembina Institute estimates that the expansion in tar sands mining necessary to feed the pipeline is equivalent to adding 32 million tonnes of carbon pollution to our atmosphere every year. That is like building 10 Belledune-sized coal-fired power plants.



John Van der Put, the vice-president of marketing for TransCanada Pipelines, was in my office last week, and he provided me with documentation that suggests that we will see only 78 permanent direct jobs from this pipeline. Will the Premier commit to building a new low-carbon economy to drive the creation of thousands of green jobs rather than the handful of jobs that come with the Energy East Pipeline project?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** In our action plan that we will develop... I certainly hope that the member opposite will provide his ideas and suggestions—I have no doubt that he will—on how we can beef up the plan that was presented by the previous government in June pertaining to climate change. Of course, one part of that discussion is how to build on green jobs here in the province. I think that is an opportunity, and it is something that we will want to explore as much as possible.

[*Translation*]

Furthermore, we know that NB power is working very hard on renewable energy, which could be part of the energy generated in this province.

[*Original*]

We know that, with the smart grid of NB Power, much is being done to try to ensure that we have renewable energy that is on the grid. We will continue to reach out to everyone and anyone who has ideas on how to address climate change, all the while ensuring that we fulfill our first priority of job creation. The Energy East Pipeline project is something that we support. We want to do it right. We want to make sure that we benefit, and we want to make sure that we protect the environment. We are sure that we can get it done.

**Mr. Coon:** We in this province have a commitment to cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 10% over the next five years, so it is good to hear the Premier say that he is going to beef up the plan for climate action, as promised, because it needs to be beefed up. In that vein, transportation accounts for 6 million tonnes—fully one third—of New Brunswick's greenhouse gas emissions every year. Achieving our target will require action on transportation-related emissions. Aside from Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick is the only province in the country that does not invest directly in our public transit systems, and, as a result, they are shrinking. They are having difficulty serving the public.

My question for the Premier is this: Will he commit, as part of this plan, to beefing up the plan to invest infrastructure money in improving and expanding public transit in our province?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Arseneault:** I thank the member for his question. As the Premier has mentioned many times, we must do more to fight climate change. However, it should be noted that Brian



Gallant's Liberal government is bringing back certain programs. For example, the other day, reference was made to the Residential Energy Efficiency Program.

[Original]

The other day, I heard the Leader of the Opposition say how he believed in the home retrofit program, but he was sitting around the Cabinet table when they cut that program. Since 2006, we invested \$50 million in the home energy retrofit program, and that created \$286 million in economic activity in New Brunswick, through contractors and purchases of equipment and building material. That reduced, on average, for 31 000 homes in New Brunswick, 23% of their energy costs. Thus, we do believe in an energy renewal project. It is too bad that the Leader of the Opposition does not.

### Vitalité Health Network

**Mr. Jody Carr:** On the health authority saga here in New Brunswick, the silence of the Premier is speaking volumes. It is commonly known that all hirings and firings go through the Premier for approval. He confirmed this last week. The mandate letter from the Premier to his Minister of Health says the minister will “consult on decisions regarding... Ministerial appointments”. The hiring and firing of the CEO is a ministerial appointment. We certainly do not dispute the minister's authority for the appointment, but what is being disputed are the reasons that have been given by this government, that the dismissal letter... In a letter made public, it says that Vitalité health professionals are not improving health results, and that the health authority is mismanaged, is not prepared for Ebola, and is not collaborative on provincial committees. In fact, today, Dr. Hubert Dupuis, in the English newspapers, said: “It couldn't be further from the truth, what was written in the health minister's letter”.

Can the Premier confirm that he and his office were, in fact, aware of the reasons for the CEO's dismissal and that he and his office approved the wrongful dismissal that will cost taxpayers unnecessarily, according...

**Mr. Speaker:** Time, member.

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** I think I have said all there is to say on that issue, but I do want to continue talking about the prescription drug plan, because I do think that it is a commitment...

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** ...that we kept by tabling legislation yesterday. By doing that, we are going to create two new premium levels for low-income New Brunswickers. We are also going to be adjusting the co-pay, based on income. We are going to...



(Interjection.)

**Mr. Speaker:** The member for Fredericton West-Hanwell will come to order. Carry on, minister.

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** I believe that I have answered the question numerous times. Unfortunately, the opposition does not want to listen to the answers. We want to look at engaging stakeholders on a longer-term approach to this. We also want to look at engaging the Maritime Provinces and the Atlantic Provinces as well, to look at possibilities for even greater collaboration among the provinces. Those are all things that we are going to do moving forward, so we are very proud of the commitment that we were able to keep by tabling that legislation in the House yesterday.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time. Time, minister. Time. Final question.

**Mr. Jody Carr:** Again, the silence of the Premier is speaking volumes on this unravelling saga.

Our concern is that, if the Gallant government can make up reasons to fire someone like this, using reasons that someone's own coworkers say are not true, according to quotes in today's *Telegraph-Journal*, and if the government gets away with it, we are simply giving the Gallant government a free pass to fire others in this way. It is costing taxpayers money that we do not have. More importantly, it is costing the reputation of our province's doctors and nurses.

Why is the Premier satisfied with the reasons given for this wrongful dismissal that hurts the reputation of New Brunswick's doctors and nurses, that doctors and nurses dispute, and that, potentially, is sending a message throughout the province that this is the type of government our Premier is leading? It says that we have laws in place and we ignore the laws that protect people from discrimination and wrongful dismissal. Mr. Premier, are you satisfied with this approach?

**Hon. Mr. Boudreau:** I believe that I have said all I will say on this file. Thank you.

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

