

November 3, 2016

[Original]

## Education System

**Mr. Higgs:** I think that yesterday may have been groundbreaking. We have unanimous agreement that education is one of the key issues in this province, and we all believe that we need to face it head-on.

The recent education assessment results have created a groundswell of concern from our citizens regarding our education system. I have described the system as broken, and I sincerely believe this to be the case. We cannot let these results continue, and it will not be fixed by simply throwing dollars at the problem. We all have done that, but that is not working. We need an understanding of what caused these poor results. Can the Premier tell the House whether an analysis of these results is being done and, if so, when can we expect the results of such an analysis?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I would like to start by congratulating the new Leader of the Opposition on his victory, which has made him the leader of the Conservative Party. I also want to take a moment to thank the member for Riverview for acting as Leader of the Opposition for the past two years. It is nice to see all the members who were candidates in the leadership race rise and say they now stand behind their leader. Of course, we are very much looking forward to working with all members to advance all the priorities of New Brunswickers.

Education is crucial for the future of our province, for our economy, and for our social fabric. That is why we very clearly indicated in the speech from the throne that our government will make education a priority in order to improve results and provide our children with the best system possible, here in New Brunswick.

[Original]

**Mr. Higgs:** The Premier has spoken about the importance of stability in the New Brunswick education system. In fact, the 10-year education plan document identified stability as a key concern on page 4, saying: “that lifelong learning is fundamental to the citizens of New Brunswick and that there is a need for a clear vision and greater stability within the system”.

Given the acknowledgement of stability and given the catastrophic assessment results, why would any changes be made without the full understanding of the last changes in the French immersion program and of the current situation in mathematics and sciences? Will the Premier reconsider this rush to return early French immersion to Grade 1 in our Anglophone school



system in the fall of 2017? Will the Premier consider this? In the name of stability in the system, let's understand where we are before we move to another place. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I have a few things. First off, I do not think that it is prudent to call our system broken. We have teachers and educators that are working very hard to offer the best education possible to our youth. Are we getting the results that we all want? No, so we have to work together to improve that, and, with the education plan that we have put forward, that is exactly what we are doing.

Our plan is going to ensure that there is flexibility for different districts, different schools, and even different classrooms to try out different things to be able to get the results that we need. Offering this flexibility to our educators, to the leaders who are trying to make this happen on the front lines, is the best thing that we can do for our education system, and we are committed to giving them the support that they need by investing more in education. However, it is important to note that these investments will be strategic in the ways that we think are best to give us the outcomes that we need in our education system in the province.

**Mr. Higgs:** I have been contacted by many retired teachers who want to help. They are very passionate about their ideas to fix what they call a broken system. When I asked them why our current teachers are not speaking out, I was told that it is due to the fear that it could be considered as insubordination or grounds for dismissal. That is sad. That is sad, that the key people in the heart of our education system feel that they are not able to voice their opinions. We need their voices. These are the people who are with our children every day and possess the intimate knowledge of the day-to-day classroom. In short, we cannot fix what is broken without their help. Will the Premier commit to joining me in creating a mechanism for these educators to share their knowledge with us, unfettered by the fear of losing their jobs? Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** We have consulted extensively with people around the province on how to develop our education plans.

And to the point of the Leader of the Opposition, we have given more flexibility to the teachers and educators in our province than ever before. We believe in them. We know that they have the answers and solutions to the challenges that our education systems face.

When it comes to French immersion, I think that it is very unfortunate to have the Leader of the Opposition try to use French immersion as a scapegoat. French immersion, over the past few years, has been in Grade 3. During that time, we have not been getting the results that we would like in many other fields. Using French immersion and it going back to Grade 1 as the reason for the challenges in the education system in the province, I think, does not stand up on facts and, I think, is very unfortunate. At the end of the day, we committed, during our platform and during the campaign, to restore French immersion to Grade 1 because studies show that it is the best way to pick up a second language.



**Mr. Higgs:** It is not about language. It is about results in all sectors. We have seen math and sciences with an 80% failure rate, or at 80% below the target. We are asking for stability, which is what the Premier committed to. Stability in the classroom allows you to move forward in the direction that teachers want you to move forward in.

The NBTA president, Guy Arseneault, and the Education Minister were both quoted in a recent CBC story indicating that one contributing factor to the catastrophic education assessment results is classroom composition. Mr. Arseneault provided an overview of a high school English class with 28 students and their varying challenges. It was an eye-opener, and it helped me to understand the issue. What we do not have—and I feel it is critical—is an overview of what our educators feel would be a workable and productive classroom composition. Would the Premier agree that identifying such a classroom composition will be essential to fixing our broken system?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I would urge the Leader of the Opposition to stop calling our education system broken. There are challenges, but there are lots of good things happening as well. We need to work with our educators, our teachers, and our community leaders to improve the system, not demoralize them by saying that they have a broken system.

I would like the Leader of the Opposition to answer the question that I put forward. If he is saying that French immersion is the problem, why is it that, in the last five, six, or seven years, when French immersion found itself in Grade 3, the outcomes did not improve? Would he answer that? If he does not have an answer, then could he please explain to the people of New Brunswick why he would come to the floor of the Legislature and use French immersion as the scapegoat for all our problems in the education system?

**Mr. Higgs:** I think that, if the Premier had been talking to the educators, he would realize that we need another year, and three years, to assess the results of the three-year program and to assess whether the Grade 3 levels are actually working. That is why you have stability—so that you know how it is working before you change it.

The Government House Leader was quoted in the media as stating that education would be the number one focus of the government in this session. I suspect that he speaks for the Premier. Yesterday would be an example of that, it is true, but let's see the results. I am glad to hear that since the opposition intends to make it our focus as well.

Fixing our problems—fixing our broken system—will be a daunting task, often frustrating, often controversial. However, ultimately, if we do this right, rewarding our children with the education that they need to be completely global, they will be able to move around because they will be getting the best education in the world. However, we want them to stay here. In the spirit of cooperation, and with a true sense of urgency, will the Premier agree to getting together and establishing the criteria of what a graduating New Brunswick student should look like so that we can...



**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I think the Leader of the Opposition might have been a bit too focused on his leadership race to notice that we consulted extensively with people around the province on how to develop our education plans. No, we are not interested in starting the process over.

To provide flexibility and financial support to our teachers and educators throughout the province, we have a plan that was developed in a nonpartisan way by experts, with the contribution of New Brunswickers.

So, no, we are not going to start another process to develop a new plan. We have two very solid plans that will give educators throughout the province the flexibility they need to ensure that young people in every region of our beautiful province are provided with the best education system possible.

*[Original]*

**Mr. Higgs:** This is the irony of it all. We have a 10-year plan that is touted loud and clear everywhere. It has goals that are hard to find. It has targets that are hard to see. It has timelines that are not concrete, but guess what! It has no mention of moving the French immersion program from Grade 3 to Grade 1. It is a 10-year plan. This is one of the biggest moves in education, according to the educators in the classroom, and this plan has no mention of it. If we are consulting with educators, why would the plan have missed this very important item, if it was anything more than a political statement made during a political campaign to get political results?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** There was a report done by two past Education Ministers, one from a Liberal government and one from a Conservative government. They looked at French immersion specifically, talking to parents, talking to educators, and talking to experts. They found that the best time to do French immersion was in Grade 1. For the Leader of the Opposition to get up and say that our promise to give children across the province the opportunity to learn a second language is political is very unfortunate. It was based on a report that was done by experts, with exhaustive consultation and with parents chiming in on what they wanted to see when it came to French immersion.

We get it. The leader wants to blame French immersion for all the challenges that our education system faces, but we know that is not the case. We know that there are educators, teachers, and community leaders working so hard to offer the best education possible, and we are going to give them the flexibility to get it done and give them the financial support as well.



[Translation]

## Day Care

**Mrs. Dubé:** On our side of the House, we agree that education is extremely important and that it is part of developing our future.

During its election campaign, this government promised great things in terms of assistance for day care centres. It promised to create 6 000 new day care spaces for children. It also talked about investing nearly \$60 million in day care centres, but, when all estimates are taken into account, the investments amounted to nearly \$120 million.

That was the promise made by the Liberal government. I would like to give the minister a chance to rise in the House today and tell us how much money he has invested so far in day care centres in the province and how many spaces have been created to date.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I hope the member listened to what was said yesterday; we very clearly indicated in the speech from the throne that education would be a priority for our government. This includes investments to ensure that day care is affordable and accessible.

As you can see, we are committed to ensuring high quality in our day care system and our education system. The goal is to make sure our children have the opportunities they deserve and need.

I can tell you that, during the upcoming session, good things will happen for day care. We will continue making our investments strategically.

[Original]

I do want to add that the New Brunswick Teachers' Association President said on CBC this week that one of the reasons that there are challenges in the education system right now is that the Leader of the Opposition, when he was in Finance, kept cutting into education and that we are feeling those cuts now, today, in our systems.

[Translation]

**Ms. Dubé:** My question was very, very precise, and it was about how much money the government has invested in our day care system so far. The government had promised to create 6 000 new day care spaces, but how many of them have been created so far?

We know that we have not heard much yet. We saw the speech from the throne, but the rest is yet to come. My question pertains to the starting point. How much money have you invested, and how many spaces have been created to date?



[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Kenny:** It is nice to be here today at the opening of the Legislature as the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and I really take this job very seriously. I have had the chance to tour the province to meet with day care operators and educators in the province. To the members opposite, we promised to put in 6 000 spaces by the year 2020. Right now, we are up to over 2 000.

However, I want to say that we are going to be investing dollars and resources and putting them in the right place to be able to make sure that our day care spaces are more affordable for New Brunswickers, for parents, and to be able to make sure that we have the proper curriculum in place to help with literacy. To work with the Premier... Yesterday, we focused on education in the province, and that is what we are doing. We have done many consultations, we have listened to New Brunswickers, and we are moving forward a platform that is going to be the best for all New Brunswickers to be able to improve in literacy and math, to help parents, and to go through and do the right thing for New Brunswick. Thank you.

[Translation]

**Ms. Dubé:** What I am saying this morning is that you made a campaign promise and that it is worth about \$120 million. You also talked about creating 6 000 day care spaces. You are at the mid-point of your mandate, and we have only seen crumbs thus far. I have yet to hear anything about the amount invested so far; I do not know the result. Nevertheless, the investment has been minimal.

The people of the province are thinking that the government will probably not fulfill its campaign promise. Can the minister confirm to us that the promises were so grandiose that he will not be able to fulfill the whole commitment?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** First off, I think that it is important that the member opposite recognize what happened during the campaign. We had a platform in which we made promises, and we are going to do everything that we possibly can to keep those promises. We have been doing a good job of getting those done so far. There was also a costing mechanism that the Leader of the Opposition wanted us to do, so we estimated the costs. Those were not part of the promises. Those were a mechanism based on legislation presented by the then Minister of Finance.

We had promised—if the member opposite had read our platform—6 000 new spaces in our day cares by 2020. We have created over 2 000 spaces during our mandate, which puts us well on track and actually exceeds our target to create the 6 000 new day care spaces for parents to have the accessibility they deserve and need across the province. We are very certain that we will hit our 6 000 mark by 2020, and we hope that we will exceed it.



## Education System

**Mr. Crossman:** As the citizens of New Brunswick digest the education assessment results, they are coming forward with a lot of questions about these assessments. They are expecting clear answers from their government. As opposition Education Critic, I have been receiving plenty of phone calls, e-mails, and messages regarding concerns and offers of assistance. People are looking for more information, and they are looking to help. I think that the starting point would be to have a clear understanding of the assessment results.

I would like to ask the Education Minister whether he can provide clear and accessible examples of what constitutes successful versus unsuccessful achievements by our students on these provincial assessments.

**Hon. Mr. Kenny:** We are at a point in time right now where we are going through a very extensive process to be able to deliver the best education program for all New Brunswickers. On these assessments, let's realize that this is a point in time where these assessments are taking place to better align us nationally. We have raised the bar in New Brunswick.

What we hear today is that it is all doom and gloom. As the Premier just mentioned, I have to say that we are doing some really great things in New Brunswick. As the member opposite knows, we had a chance to speak about the education plan. We are moving forward, and we are putting the proper resources in place to improve on this. This is a point in time where we know that we have to do better, so we are putting the proper resources in place to have the best education system in New Brunswick and to have the flexibility to allow the teachers to do the right job.

We had a chance to meet teachers throughout the province as well as principals and district education councils. They all want to get involved, and they like what they see. We have to move forward, and that is what we, as a government, are going to do.

**Mr. Crossman:** I am certainly not here to talk about doom and gloom. We are here to look for answers as to how we are going to move ahead in the best way for the students. I do know that the government wants to help concerned New Brunswickers understand the education assessment results, because they are not clear. What has gone wrong? What is going wrong? What is working right in the system? We need to know that.

As Education Critic with a history in the system, I know that when you ask the right question, it helps in getting the right answer. I will do my best with the right questions. I think that it will help everybody understand where the bar has been set, how high it has been set, and where we go from here. There must have been some expectations when this was done. There would have been criteria and expectations for student success to be developed. Can the minister provide a clear outline of criteria for student success on provincial assessments?



**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** If the member opposite does not want to talk about doom and gloom, he should talk to the Leader of the Opposition to stop calling our education systems broken. We, as a government, have committed to investing more in education than has any other government. We have done so because we believe that education is crucial to our economy and to our social fabric.

You can be guaranteed that our investments will be strategic. Our investments will be in working with the people on the front lines to ensure that they have the support that they need. I would like to ask the member opposite, who was in the education system, what he thinks of the New Brunswick Teachers' Association president saying this week that one of the main reasons there are challenges today is because of the cuts to education by the Leader of the Opposition when he was the Finance Minister from 2010 to 2014.

**Mr. Crossman:** I will not mention at this time the 301 education assistant and teacher positions that were cut last year.

Provincial assessment results show that Grade 6 students are in particular trouble, especially in math and science, with 80% below target levels. Everyone read it last week, and they saw the news. Something is going wrong here. When the Education Minister was on CBC Radio, he mentioned that parents who can afford it can hire one of the learning companies for tutoring help. As we know, and as the throne speech mentioned, so many families in New Brunswick are getting along from paycheque to paycheque, so paying for private is not an option. Can the minister tell us what measures are being taken in the system when students are struggling to meet expectations? Are those expectations clearly defined and stated anywhere?

**Hon. Mr. Kenny:** We have been working with our educators in the province. We also have to realize that these assessments were developed by the education system and the teachers here in the province. I have had a chance to meet with the NBTA and the AEFNB to discuss these issues one-on-one. What we are doing right now is investing over \$19 million this year to address some of these issues. We have to find a better way. I do agree that we all have to work together on this. It is very important.

As for a plan for literacy, we are going to be putting the resources in place to be able to work and we are going to be looking at raising those standards with the assessments. We will be able to find ways to improve on this with our new education plan, working with our educators here in the province. We have been working with all the stakeholders. It is not just one issue that is going to make a change here. It is about all of us working together.

We are hiring 130 teachers, literacy and math leads, etc. We are putting in additional resources and materials and professional development. We are putting resources where they need to be put.

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





## Climate Change

**Mr. Coon:** Over the break since July, your Select Committee on Climate Change has been hard at work. I just want to say that it was a tremendous experience in terms of cooperation and collaboration among all three parties that sit in this Legislature. All the members were fully engaged. We heard from over 150 people in the public hearings we held around the province. It is that kind of cooperation and collaboration that somehow needs to extend into this Chamber.

We reached unanimity on 84 out of 85 recommendations that the select committee came up with. The speech from the throne pointed out that the government will help New Brunswick move toward a low-carbon society. One of the key recommendations that we agreed on was that the Premier should establish and chair a committee of Cabinet to steer that transition to a low-carbon society.

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

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I want to start by thanking the member for Fredericton South and the members from all political parties represented here in the House who participated in the work of this committee. I completely agree with the member for Fredericton South that this exercise was very well received by New Brunswickers, who greatly appreciated this opportunity to talk with different members about this very important issue for the future of the province.

I think this also serves as a reminder that it would have been fantastic if we could have had a similar process to look at our electoral system.

*[Original]*

Unfortunately, although we had such success when it came to the climate change steering committee, we were unable to get the opposition to cooperate to have the same type of process regarding electoral reform, which would have been very well received by New Brunswickers. Hopefully, in the future, the Leader of the Opposition will seek that type of cooperation with us and with all the members of the Legislature.

**Mr. Coon:** Thank you. One of the key recommendations from the select committee's report was that the Premier establish a committee of Cabinet, which he would chair, to oversee and to steer the implementation of recommendations from the select committee. As it says in the throne speech, this would steer New Brunswick towards a lower-carbon society, recognizing, as the Premier has said repeatedly, the significance and the priority of addressing climate change in New Brunswick and across Canada. My question is: Will the minister establish a Cabinet committee to do so, and will he chair it?



[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Rousselle:** I would also like to join the Premier in thanking all committee members, who worked very diligently, as well as the members of the public, the experts, and everyone else who participated in the process.

Looking at the report, we can see how substantial the work is that has been done. Given that 85 recommendations were made, you can appreciate that civil servants in the department are reviewing all of them. Therefore, I will not start telling you today what the response to each one of these recommendations will be.

However, I want to clarify that our government is determined to make sure that we have a positive economy and environment for everyone in the future. We all know to what extent one of the great challenges of our century will be to respond to climate change. We want to be among those who will play a part in improving the future of our planet for everyone.

[Original]

**Mr. Coon:** We have heard in the news recently that the Premier was in discussions with the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change around funding for New Brunswick's climate plan. The Premier will be meeting with the other First Ministers and the Prime Minister on December 9 to finalize the pan-Canadian strategy to address climate change. My question for the Premier is this: Will you have a New Brunswick climate plan finalized in time for the First Ministers' meeting on December 9?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Rousselle:** As I said earlier, the government very carefully reviewed the report submitted to us by the committee of the Legislative Assembly. You will understand that we have an enormous amount of work to do in all respects. I think what counts is that the Premier is well aware of all the recommendations that have been made, and he will certainly attend this meeting of all Canadian First Ministers to ensure significant progress is made with this issue.

We know that, at the federal level, the Prime Minister has already announced that there will be carbon pricing. We therefore know that we are moving forward together. We have taken note of what the federal government is doing, and we will continue to work with our partners across the country to have an environment...

[Original]

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



## French Immersion

**Mr. Jody Carr:** Teachers are worried about the government's recent surprise decision, the reintroduction of a Grade 1 entry point for French immersion next September. That is not found in the 10-year plan. This quick timeline gives very little turnaround time for our teachers in the education system to respond adequately. Staffing, recruitment, scheduling, getting information to parents, teacher training, and continuing the current Grade 3 programs for another three years—these are all challenges that worry teachers. Can the minister assure the teachers and parents in New Brunswick that the resources will be in place and that there is an adequate implementation plan? Will the minister, in the spirit of collaboration, provide to the Legislature this implementation plan for the entry point change, which will start next September?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Of course, there is going to be an implementation plan. Of course, we are going to give the support that we believe will allow our teachers to offer French immersion in Grade 1. As I said when we made this announcement, we understand that there are some concerns with the way the system was before in Grade 1 and we will do the best we possibly can to mitigate the concerns.

What I find very interesting is that the opposition members are saying today that they are surprised. We promised this in our platform in 2014. In fact, when the opposition members ran in 2010, they promised to reinstate French immersion in Grade 1. Maybe they are surprised because we are actually doing what we promised.

**Mr. Jody Carr:** It is unfortunate that the Premier is continuing to play politics with our education system. Clearly, the Premier does not have an implementation plan for this change. He said that he is going to have an implementation plan, which means there is no implementation plan. The decision has been made, and, now, the education system will scramble to respond.

What the teachers are asking for is stability. Yes, our commitment was to do a review of French immersion. We did that. Yes, we received a report that said Grade 1. However, we chose not to implement the change to Grade 1 because teachers said that they wanted stability. We chose not to play politics. They wanted to recover from the previous entry point change made by the Liberal government.

The entry point is not... The report not only says Grade 1, but it also says that there will be additional resources. Will the government provide an implementation plan? Will the necessary resources be in place? Will you make sure that you provide the implementation plan so that we can assure the teachers that you will get the work done properly?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Doing everything we can to support teachers in the province is important for us, and this is precisely what we are going to do.



I do not understand how opposition members can rise today and say that more must be done to help teachers provide early French immersion starting in Grade 1, since they criticize us when we invest more money in education.

Investing more in education and doing so strategically is important, and this is precisely what we will do. We have given our teachers more flexibility than any other government has ever done, and this is because we believe in them.

We believe teachers can provide our young people with the education they need. Teachers must be given flexibility and financial support; this is exactly what our government will do, and it will do so strategically.

[*Original*]

**Mr. Jody Carr:** The teachers are asking for stability, as they had asked the previous government, and that is why the previous government did not make the change to a Grade 1 entry point. In 2012, the report said that a move to Grade 1 would require additional resources. It would require staffing, recruitment, and support for struggling students. The costs are enormous with a change like this, not only financial costs but also the cost of chaos and instability that this quick change will cause.

The Premier said that we will have—we are going to have—an implementation plan. That leads this House to believe that there is no implementation plan in place. This is of very much concern to teachers. We do not know what the resources are going to be. We do not know whether the resources are coming from existing funding or whether there will be new resources. We know that there are great challenges. This is not in the 10-year plan. It did not come up during the consultation. In the spirit of collaboration, will the Premier involve the opposition and the stakeholders that were involved with the 10-year plan and provide this implementation plan to assure us that this will be...

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** We very clearly indicated that we would provide teachers and districts with more resources so that they are able to establish early French immersion. We have repeated this ever since we made the announcement. Once again, the questions from opposition members on this topic perplex me. We will give teachers and districts the financial support they need and alleviate a lot of fears they have had regarding the system.

Of course, our decision was based on a report commissioned by the current opposition members when their party was in government, which clearly indicated that, in order to give people the opportunity to learn a second language, early French immersion had to be available in Grade 1.



[Original]

Again, I think that it is very unfortunate to see the opposition trying to use French immersion as a scapegoat. It has been in Grade 3 for over five years, and we have been getting the results that we have seen. This will help us offer second language training to our kids.

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

### Carbon Tax

**Mr. B. Macdonald:** There seems to be a little confusion, so I will ask whether the government can clarify a simple question today. Will a carbon tax in New Brunswick be revenue-neutral?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I think that this is a great question, and I am very pleased to have the chance to explain. We have said from the beginning that, for any pricing mechanism that we would entertain, we would ensure that it would be a system in which we would invest that money again for energy efficiency. It is as simple as that.

Now, as for what term people want to use to describe that mechanism, I will allow others to decide that. The debate has to do with whether the government would actually see an increase of revenue or whether it would keep the same amount of revenue and then lower taxes to decrease its revenue if it had a carbon tax.

We have made it very clear. If there is a carbon tax, if there is a price on carbon, if there is a cap-and-trade system, or if there is any type of pricing mechanism for carbon, all those revenues that would be raised would go back into the economy. They will be invested in things that will help us be as energy efficient as possible. I hope that clarifies everything for everyone, and I actually thank the member opposite for giving me the chance to explain.

**Mr. B. Macdonald:** Actually, in a CBC article, it explains very clearly what it means to be revenue-neutral. It says: "That would mean finding a way to reduce the overall tax burden by the same amount of money." That is something very different from what the Premier is explaining to us today. In fact, a year ago, the same article quoted the Premier and it said a few interesting things. These are the Premier's own words: "It's very clear that the best way to do any type of price on carbon for a jurisdiction and have a good, positive impact on the economy is making it revenue neutral." The Premier also said: "If we were to look at any price on carbon, we would make sure that it would be revenue neutral."

It is clear to most people that "revenue-neutral" means revenue neutral to the taxpayer, not to the government. I am wondering whether the Premier could explain to us why he made these comments in the past and how his tune has changed a year later.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** As we would have explained throughout the discussions on this important topic, any money that would be raised by any pricing mechanism on carbon will be reinvested



for energy efficiency. We have said that from the beginning, and we are saying that again today.

What is important is that we work together to ensure that we in New Brunswick do our part to combat climate change. It is the most important and significant challenge that humanity has faced in a generation, and we all have to work together. We have to transition to a low-carbon economy. Not only is it the right thing to do, but also there will be economic growth potential coming from it. We are going to be able to invest in a green economy, clean tech, and many other types of investments and opportunities that will help create jobs and grow the economy. What is important is that we all worked on this very important subject together, and I am happy that the steering committee was able to start that dialogue with New Brunswickers.

**Mr. B. Macdonald:** I look to yesterday's speech from the throne, and, on page 14, the government makes reference to some \$1 billion contributed to our economy through the agricultural sector, through our farmers. I will tell you that farmers understand what it is like to be revenue-neutral. They understand what affects their bottom line. In fact, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture says very clearly: "A Carbon tax will significantly increase the cost of doing business for farmers." It goes on to say: "In addition to direct cost increases on the fuels they use, farmers will see an increase in their indirect costs for shipping and fertilizer."

In the last two years, this government has made, as we well know, 10 tax increases, all of which also affected farmers. Those include corporate tax, property tax, gas tax, diesel tax, and, of course, the tax on everything—the 15% HST that this government has brought in. I am wondering this: At least for farmers, will we see something that makes the input of a carbon tax revenue-neutral to them?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Once again, as the minister explained, we have received the recommendations, we will carefully review them, and then we will strengthen our plan to combat climate change.

So, we are very much looking forward to working with the opposition and the member for Fredericton South to make sure that we are doing everything we can to combat climate change.

[*Original*]

But do not worry. We understand what the opposition members want to do today. We get that. It is not a problem. We are not surprised. They are against, of course, putting any type of price on carbon. Any pricing mechanism for carbon, they are against. They are against increasing the taxes on the 1% richest New Brunswickers. We know that already, do not worry. They are against the enhancement of the CPP to allow people the chance to retire with dignity here in the province. They are against raising the minimum wage to give those working hard a leg up.



Of course, they are against our free tuition program. The opposition can stop the line of questioning. We are aware of all those things already.

**Mr. Stewart:** I would like to explore today the genesis, evolution, and ultimate extinction of the term “revenue-neutral” as it applies to the Gallant government’s planned carbon tax. When the former Environment Minister introduced the discussion paper in May, the opposition was understandably cynical that this was an exercise to bring in a carbon tax. Estimates of the costs to the average household run from \$1 200 to \$2 500 per year. With so many working-class New Brunswick households operating from one paycheque to another, this new tax will force many beyond the brink.

The Premier is on record, in December 2015, as saying: “any carbon tax must be revenue neutral”. Will the Premier explain to the House what has changed since his statement in 2015?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Nothing. We have made it very clear since the beginning that, if there is a pricing mechanism on carbon, any revenue that is contributed to the government’s coffers will then be reinvested into energy efficiency programs.

I find it odd to have the member opposite, however, get up and talk about everyday New Brunswickers who are working hard and living from paycheque to paycheque. Where was he then, and where was the Leader of the Opposition, when we raised the minimum wage to help those very people? I will tell you where they were. They were opposing that measure. Where were they when we were working with the Trudeau government to enhance the CPP to help New Brunswickers be able to retire with dignity? Where were they when we were raising the taxes on the 1% richest New Brunswickers so that we could invest more in education and health care? Where were they when we were ensuring that we could give free tuition to those who need the most support? They were opposing every single one of those progressive policies. That is where they were.

**Mr. Stewart:** In 2015, we know where the Premier was. He was spending autumn in Paris. The CBC reports that the Premier said this: “If we were to look at any type of price on carbon, we would make sure that it would be revenue neutral... It’s very clear that the best way to do any type of price on carbon for a jurisdiction and have a good, positive impact on the economy is making it revenue neutral.”

This past Monday, we read in a *Telegraph-Journal* interview that the Premier said: “the dollars from a looming price on carbon... won’t be returned in the form of a tax cut” and “that was never the plan.” My question would be: What is the plan?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** The plan is what I have said the whole time. The theatrics of the member opposite are not helpful. From day one, we have made it clear that, if we raise any money from a pricing mechanism on carbon, it will be reinvested to make the province more energy efficient. It is as simple as that. Whatever term the members opposite want to use to describe



that, that is fine. I will go along with whatever term they want to use. Ultimately, the policy is what is important.

Nothing has changed. In fact, we have not made any decisions yet on what this could look like. However, what is great is that we had the opposition and the member for Fredericton South all work together on a steering committee to listen to New Brunswickers and provide us with 85 recommendations on what we could do to transition to a low-carbon economy. We are going to have a solid plan in playing our role to combat climate change and grow the economy.

**Mr. Stewart:** This past Monday, we read in an interview in the *Telegraph-Journal* that the Premier said:

*the dollars from a looming price on carbon . . . won't be returned in the form of a tax cut.*

*He says that was never the plan.*

Let's go back to December 2, 2015, while the Premier was in Paris. The CBC reported: "Premier Gallant says any carbon tax introduced in New Brunswick will be revenue-neutral, its impact offset by the government giving up tax revenue elsewhere." I repeat: "by the government giving up tax revenue elsewhere."

My question for the Premier is this: Did the CBC get it wrong? Was the Premier misquoted?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I do not know which interview the member is referring to; I would be glad to have a look at the quotes to see whether they are things I said directly.

That being said, the government has always intended to ensure that, if a mechanism to collect money through carbon pricing were ever established, it would ensure that funds were reinvested in energy efficiency in the province. We have been saying this very clearly since the beginning.

[*Original*]

If the opposition has any doubt or if there is any confusion about what that meant, I am very happy to clarify it today. Yes, that has always been our position. Again, it is important to note that 85 recommendations were given to the government by the three political parties representing the Legislature. We are going to be acting on those recommendations soon, and it is important that we continue to work together to transition to a low-carbon economy, making sure that we are creating jobs but also combating climate change, the most significant challenge of our generation.

**Mr. Speaker:** Final Question.





## Education System

**Mr. Higgs:** I want to return to education again. The concern is about what the statistics say. It says that 65% of our kids are graduating without meeting the language standards that we in this province are proud to achieve. It says that we are 80% below our expected levels in our math and sciences. It says that we are 60% below in reading levels. The Premier says: Well, it has been five years. The educators say: We need another three years in order to do a proper assessment of where it is today. The Premier says: I want stability.

Yet, here we go again—a platform commitment turns into a change in the whole system and turns it on its head. I would like to ask the Premier this: If the results, the statistics, and the educators say that we have a broken system, then how does he measure otherwise?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I really think that it is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition is using French immersion as the scapegoat to the challenges facing our education systems. Again, over the past several years, French immersion has been in Grade 3, and yet we find ourselves today with the results that we have. It is irresponsible of the member opposite to try to rev up that issue and try to make it the scapegoat to the challenges facing the province. I have to add that, if there is anything that has caused problems for our education system, to quote the New Brunswick Teachers' Association President, it is because of the cuts in education that the Leader of the Opposition made when he was the Finance Minister.

We understand that we have to invest strategically in education. We understand that we have to invest more in education, and we understand that we have to allow teachers, educators, and community leaders the flexibility that they need to deliver the best system possible. That is what we are going to do so that we can improve our educational outcomes and have a strong economy right here in the province.

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

