

November 17, 2017

[Original]

### Health Care Services

**Mr. Higgs:** First, I want to go back a little bit to questions that I have asked these past couple of weeks and see if we can finally get clarification. Maybe there is an opportunity for the Premier to make a commitment. I am going to pick up where we left off in relation to... The Premier was responding to many things yesterday or at least standing up, so that was a plus. He was not answering questions, but he was here and participating.

Today, I would like to give the Premier one more chance, a last chance, to stand up and press pause on the Extra-Mural Program and to take it to the people in 2018. We are looking for an Extra-Mural Program that is made in New Brunswick and that stays in New Brunswick. It is the people who are nurses and the people who are delivering the service that have been doing so well for so long. We want to make sure that the right thing is done here and that people understand the agreement. The Premier has not allowed those details to come forward and we really have no specifics on what we can expect from this, and I would like an answer. Will the Premier press pause and hold this until the 2018 election? Thank you.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** It is always a pleasure for me to rise to talk about this wonderful partnership we have established with Medavie. In fact, I completely agree with what the Leader of the Opposition is saying; we are actually putting forward a solution that is made here in New Brunswick by a New Brunswick company. Medavie is a non-profit organization that has demonstrated its expertise in the field of home care. So, in this regard, we are doing exactly what needs to be done to respond to the opposition's complaints.

That is why, not only will services remain the same on January 1—they will not change—but they will be improved eventually. In fact, the number of home visits to Extra-Mural Program patients will increase, we will see fewer visits to the ER, and, most importantly, we will maintain the high quality of the home care provided to New Brunswickers.

[Original]

**Mr. Higgs:** There is no surprise there about the Minister of Health being the respondent. "Improved eventually" is an interesting choice of words—"improved eventually". Anytime you really negotiate a contract or sign an agreement, you have some clear timelines on changes to be made or improvements to be made. That is the basis of our questions. We cannot figure out the timelines. We cannot figure out the details of the soft targets that have been placed out there—whether they are a bonus program or are not a bonus program, whether they are part of the contract or not part of the contract. Now, we have "improved eventually". I would like to



ask the Minister of Health this: Just what does “improved eventually” mean, and how long is “eventually”?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** I love the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, because they give me the opportunity to demonstrate once again that, in fact. . . Since this agreement will take effect on January 1, does the Leader of the Opposition expect everything to change overnight? That would not be a responsible approach. It is wise to start gradually and work with employees on the ground. People on the ground are the ones who know how things work in the program, and they are the ones with whom Medavie and the Department of Health will work to ensure an efficient transition with absolutely no compromise on the high quality of home care. I can tell you that we have key performance indicators and I will be pleased to list them for you again to show that we will indeed have decisive results.

[*Original*]

**Mr. Higgs:** The inexperience in negotiations has come through loud and clear over and over again with this government. There has been one contract after another that has been more or less not negotiation but capitulation. That is where we have seen one deal after another. Now, we have this: Oh, well, things will get better. We just do not know when. Well, eventually.

What is the definition of “eventually”?

I believe that the people in this province, the extra-mural nurses, and the other employees we have in the civil service know what can change. They know what improvements can be made, and they want a voice in that matter. It does not appear that they have had any voice here. It does not appear that they have been involved in this, but it is all secret. It is all secret. We do not know the timelines. We do not know the commitments. We do not know what the deal is in relation to the contract. We do not know whether there is a bonus program or whether it is part of the contract if performance standards are not met—performance standards that have been set by the very company that is going to put the program in place.

I would like to ask the minister this again: What are the timelines? “Eventually” does not cut it. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** It is a pleasure for me to stand and remind the opposition, as I have done for many hours in committee and many times here during question period, about our key performance indicators. These are linked to penalties that Medavie will not receive if it does not achieve these objectives with regard to the following indicators: an increase of 15% more visits to extra-mural patients; a decrease of 15% in emergency room visits by extra-mural patients; maintaining the level of satisfaction above 95%; a decrease in the time of referral by doctors and nurse practitioners from the referral to the first intervention, from three days to one day; and an increase of 20% in referrals from doctors and nurse practitioners to register in the Extra-Mural Program. Those are clear indicators that are linked to financial penalties.



## Property Tax

**Mr. Higgs:** Financial penalties outside the contract.

Let's talk about the issue at hand today and what is coming in the next few weeks. Would the Premier care to acknowledge the front-page story in today's *Telegraph-Journal*, with the headline "E-mails link Premier to tax fiasco"? We have already seen the Service New Brunswick PowerPoint slides that state that the Premier ordered the fast track. Now, we have even more information that this all started with the Premier.

*"We briefed the premier on modernization last Friday," ... in an email dated May 10, 2016. "He subsequently requested to move faster with this initiative."*

*Another email ... on May 20, 2016 states the same thing.*

*"We are about to move even faster on modernization... It comes directly from the premier."*

Would the Premier like to come clean today in relation to his involvement in this tax fiasco?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Rousselle:** As I have repeated over and over again, we are committed to rebuilding public trust, or the trust of citizens, in the property assessment process. We have taken steps, and we will continue to do so.

Yes, next week, we will receive the Auditor General's report. We are looking forward to this report, and we will follow up on the Auditor General's recommendations.

That being said, that is not what the Leader of the Opposition did when he was Minister of Finance. During his mandate, there were about 35 000 mistakes for some 158 000 assessments, which gives an error rate of about 22%. What the current Leader of the Opposition had to say at the time, when he was Minister of Finance, was that the system was fair and just. We do not believe that a system can be fair and just if there is even one error.

[Original]

**Mr. Higgs:** As with any statistics that come from this government, you have to question them all. Do you know what? I was not Premier. I have questions for the Premier, and I have questions related to the Premier, who refuses to answer them during his own mandate. He likes to refer to the past. He likes to refer to history, but he will not answer questions during his own mandate. The time to come clean is not next week. The time to come clean is now. We have new information now. The opportunity is now.

There is more:



*An email sent on June 7, 2016 from Service New Brunswick Richibucto manager ... to employees cites a meeting held by the Crown corporation's regional operation director ... where the premier's name came up.*

*As ... mentioned at our last staff meeting, our premier is committed to our branch's modernization strategy and in fact has given us the mandate to speed up the process so we can achieve this goal sooner*

“Speed up the process so we can achieve the goals sooner”—does the Premier deny that this is a true account of his direction to Service New Brunswick, to speed up the process?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Rousselle:** I can see that the members opposite are happy to see me respond to the question, and I really appreciate their comments.

That being said, I am astounded. You know, there is a certain process. The Auditor General has conducted an investigation over the last six months, and she will present an independent and objective report to us. This report will obviously be much more objective than what the Leader of the Opposition is saying, as he is trying to invent a story in his own way. He said this:

[Original]

“The time to come clean is now.”

[Translation]

I agree with him.

[Original]

“The time to come clean is now.”

[Translation]

Is the Leader of the Opposition finally going to tell us what role he played in the Canaport LNG file? He seems to be telling us he was not involved in this much-talked-about tax transaction and did not promote it, when we have proof to the contrary.

[Original]

The time has come to be clean.

**Mr. Higgs:** Maybe next year at this time, the member opposite will actually have an opportunity to stand up and ask questions. For now, this is our role, so we will continue to ask questions.



Forgive me if I do not accept the argument that they are waiting for the Auditor General's recommendations so that they can follow every last one of them. I do not recall that being a pattern that has been set. In fact, it is just the opposite. Reports are shelved, put in the drawer, and thought about later or never, unless they are brought up.

*An updated PowerPoint presentation also contained in the documents reads "premier got a pictometry demo at NB+ Digital Lab Open House during innovation week—was very impressed—wants us to modernize faster!!!"*

"Faster"—whether the Premier wants to come clean or not, we have reached a point where he has no choice. This, indeed, is a moment for the Premier to stand up, be accountable, be transparent, and take ownership of the situation that he has created.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Rousselle:** As I said earlier, we are looking forward to the Auditor General's report. However, I would like to clarify that, in his answer to my question, the Leader of the Opposition shifted the responsibility to his former boss, former Premier Alward.

That being said, the current Leader of the Opposition was indeed Minister of Finance in the Alward government when the 2012-13 deficit was \$533 million. In 2013-14, it was \$600 million. The economy shrank for three years—yes, I am saying it shrank—which is negative.

In the meantime, the current Leader of the Opposition is still not answering the often-asked question: What role did he play in the Canaport LNG tax transaction? We are still waiting for him to take responsibility for his actions and stop blaming his former Premier.

[Original]

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

**Mr. Higgs:** Well, it continues. How many examples do we have where this Premier has turned his back on New Brunswick to stay in favour with Justin Trudeau, Bill Morneau, and the feds? Let's consider how the Premier has failed to stand up on the small business tax grab that we saw the federal government try to impose on all people in this province and all businesses in this province. I know that the Premier has no real interest in private businesses in this province.

The Premier's silence shows once again that he has abandoned the people of New Brunswick and his provincial counterparts to side with Ottawa on the health transfers, the carbon tax, and marijuana. The list goes on and on. Why does the Premier refuse to speak out for New Brunswick? Why has he not spoken up for the farmers, professionals, doctors, and small businesses in relation to the tax deal? All these things, the Premier was silent on. Here we have a situation. The Premier was not silent when all the e-mails were going and he wanted a fast-track program, but he is certainly silent on taking ownership. Likely, it was another staffer, but it seems as though a lot of staffers have the same message: The Premier ordered a fast track...



**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Before I begin, I want to thank my colleagues from Quebec who are here. I imagine it is always more fun to watch question period in a province other than our own. We really appreciate your presence.

That being said, we are very proud to work with Justin Trudeau's federal government. We are proud to do so, because we have the same objectives: Investing to help the middle class and people who work hard to make ends meet, and working hard to invest in our infrastructure in order to create jobs.

We are working hard with the Trudeau government to ensure we help people who have mental health or addiction challenges. We are working hard with the Trudeau government to invest in our young people, thereby ensuring they receive the care they deserve. With the Trudeau government, we are going to invest in home care to help our seniors get the support they need. We are going to continue working with the Trudeau government to create jobs and grow our economy.

[*Original*]

**Mr. Higgs:** That is really interesting. The only time that the Premier rises is to defend Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Interestingly enough, no matter what he says, no matter what he does, whether it is Morneau or whether it is Justin Trudeau, the Premier stands and rises to defend. There is the issue. There is the very crux of it.

Now that the Premier is up and now that there is an opportunity to take ownership—take ownership before he is forced into taking ownership. I do not know, he could take ownership in relation to all these e-mails that are out there that say the same thing. There is no contradictory e-mail here. They say the same thing. How long can the Premier stay in denial? Now is the chance. Let the Premier stand up and say: Yes, I made a mistake. I ordered a fast-track system. I did not really know what that meant. Now, I do, and I would not do it again. That would be a good start. Will the Premier do that? Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I think it is very well known in the Legislative Assembly that the Auditor General is preparing a report that she will publish very soon. This report will help us, as a province, find out what happened with property assessments this year. This report will also help us fix problems in the property assessment system, which has unfortunately led to thousands and thousands of mistakes each year since 2011.

So, I can tell New Brunswickers and the Leader of the Opposition that we are going to take this report very seriously. We are going to make sure we do everything we can to rectify the





situation. Yes, we are going to find out once and for all what happened with property assessments this year, and, in a few days, the Auditor General will make it all public.

[Original]

**Mr. Higgs:** In the history of this province, there has never been a property tax fiasco like this one, in this mandate of this government—never in the history of this province. The government members can deflect and talk all they like, but this has been a first in this province. Never has there been a situation where I have had so many e-mails and seen so many people so offended by the Premier not taking ownership and accountability that they are willing to stand up. We need more people in our system who are willing to stand up and be heard, be counted, and be part of correcting and fixing this province.

We need more people, but it starts in the Premier's Office. It starts right with the leadership. When the Premier stands up to be accountable and take ownership, then we will move on to a better New Brunswick. But it seems that will not be possible, because the Premier will continue to deflect, deny, and move off on different topics, but he will not take ownership. One more time, will the Premier take ownership of the fiasco that he created? Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I recognize that the Leader of the Opposition wants to gain as many political points as he can with this subject. I would understand the line of questioning today if there was not a report being done, but the facts are that there is a report being done by the Auditor General, who is looking into the very questions that he is asking. I think that it is not too much for the Auditor General to implicitly ask everybody to wait over the next few days. Her report will be released, questions will be answered, and we will finally have suggestions and recommendations on how to fix, once and for all, the provincial property tax assessment process, which has been problem-plagued since 2011.

I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to get up and take responsibility for supporting and promoting the LNG terminal tax deal. He said in this Legislature that he did not support and promote that tax deal, but that is something for which we have proof to the contrary.

## Forest Industry

**Mr. Stewart:** Mr. Speaker, I quote:

*March 14, 2014, Chipman & Doaktown N.B.: At events today in Chipman and Doaktown, J.D. Irving, Limited (JDI) announced \$38 million in investments to modernize the company's sawmills in Chipman and Doaktown.*

The following was said by the Mayor of Doaktown.

*"From the village of Doaktown operates Atlantic Canada's largest white pine mill and our largest employer. Renewable forests and a significant investment in a new mill means new jobs for construction workers and the woodlands. This is great news for the 24 businesses in our village that supply the mill," said Bev Gaston, Mayor of Doaktown.*



What will the Premier do to ensure that Doaktown gets its new mill?

**Hon. Mr. Doucet:** I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. It is really good that we start talking about some of the pillar industries in this province: forestry, fishing, and farming. Within the forestry sector, we have 22 000 people that have boots on the ground, doing work. I have to tell you that there is so much innovation out there. The forestry sector has so many challenges, yet at the same time, we have so many opportunities in that sector. It is over a billion dollars, and it is paying toward things such as health care and education while, at the same time, creating many jobs.

I think the points that the member opposite brings across the floor are very important. But at the same time, back in 2014, I think that he was in government. I think that he was in government. This is something that we are working on, but by the same token, the language that the member opposite used in the media when he went out was: Stick it to this company. On this side of the House, we are going to have dialogue. We will pick up the phone and talk. I do not understand what...

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

**Mr. Stewart:** That was not an answer, and you cannot put a price on pride. Yesterday's announcement by JDI about the Doaktown sawmill brings those Liberal attack ads back into the spotlight for the people of my riding. The Premier has tried to link our leader to big business even though he was the Premier who paid a New Jersey company to cut the Canaport LNG assessment by two thirds. It was this Premier who broke his campaign promise on the forestry plan. Well, what a glorious opportunity for this Premier to show that he is not joined at the hip with big business and JDI in particular. Will this Premier get on his feet, play a firm hand with the corporate giant, and ensure that Doaktown, New Brunswick, gets its new mill?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** It certainly is an opportunity to talk about the contrast, because it was actually the Leader of the Opposition's government, when he was the Minister of Finance, that signed the deal that has market conditions as one of the things with which the business is able to get out of some of the investments. It was, in fact, the former government of members opposite that signed this deal with this big business that allowed it to announce what it did yesterday. They can try to deflect, and they can try to blame others, but they need to look in the mirror.

While they are doing that, this is the second time in two days that members opposite are raising the LNG terminal tax break that was given by a Conservative government and that was repealed by our Liberal government. Because it was repealed, the LNG terminal is paying more in taxes, and because of our ripping up the deal, the LNG terminal is giving more money to the city of Saint John. I would now like the Leader of the Opposition to get up, to take leadership and ownership, and to say what he did to support and promote this deal.

**Mr. Stewart:** I would note that all other projects are in progress—all except for Doaktown—with many completed despite the tariff. Remember that this was a two- to three-year project, and it will be four years when March rolls around. There is no excuse for the tariff, and there is





no excuse for the market conditions. All the other projects—most of them—are almost completed. There was \$37 million for the sawmill in Chipman and \$15 million for Doaktown. Where is the \$15 million? Remember that JDI has received far lower tariffs than anyone else in our province, so I will ask this again: What will the Premier of New Brunswick do to ensure that Doaktown gets its new mill?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** One thing that we are going to do is not sign deals such as the one the opposition members signed when they were in government. We will take responsibility for the contracts and deals that we sign. We will take responsibility for the contracts and deals that we promote and support.

I would wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition would now get up and do the same. Will he get up and maybe explain the deal that he signed when he was in government with the big businesses that the member opposite is referring to? Will he get up and explain how he supported and promoted the LNG terminal tax break? He said that he did not, yet we have documents saying very much the opposite. We will certainly give him the benefit of the doubt. If he wants to explain how these documents are not accurate, that is fine, but the people of New Brunswick deserve to have a Leader of the Opposition who takes responsibility and takes ownership of these types of things. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to do just that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

[*Translation*]

## Members' Conduct

**Mr. Coon:** Over a year ago, I tabled a motion to define the roles and responsibilities of members and develop a code of conduct for them. My motion was carried in the House and sent to the Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers so that a review proposal could be prepared. This committee has not met. Will the Premier finally ask the chair of this committee to convene the members so they can finally get to work?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Doucet:** Look, we thank you for the information here today. Thank you for bringing it to the floor of the House. Certainly, we take all that information into consideration. We are a government that wants to be as transparent as possible and to get as much information out into the public view as possible. However, by the same token, we bring all the information that the leader of the third party brought forward in the motion that he put on the floor. At the same time, we, as a government, are working toward that. All our Cabinet ministers, the government, and all our MLAs are working toward that code of conduct. There were some very good points that the member brought forward in the past, and we will work toward that. This is something that we, as a government, will work toward. We cherish that very dearly.



**Mr. Coon:** The motion was adopted, so it is, in fact, a resolution of this Legislative Assembly. It is very clear why it should move forward quickly. In his report on Atcon, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner recommended years ago that this House consider adopting a code of conduct for members. More recently, the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie found himself embroiled in a conflict-of-interest controversy caused by the second job as a lobbyist that he had taken on. Perhaps if we had had a code of conduct that he could have consulted, this would not have happened. Can the Premier tell this House when the work will get under way on the code of conduct for MLAs?

**Hon. Mr. Doucet:** We really appreciate the member bringing this to the floor of the House. With regard to the information that he is bringing forward, we are working on that. The work is ongoing. We hope to bring something forward so that we can have a discussion at some point in time. However, as I said, we want to be as transparent as possible. We want to have the information out in the public domain—anything that the people are looking for. We value the information that has been brought forward by the member of the third party, and we are definitely going to work toward that. The work is ongoing at this point in time.

**Mr. Coon:** The resolution adopted by this House was to have a standing committee put together a proposal for us to consider, and that standing committee has not met. On October 27, in fact, the government issued a press release that listed a series of initiatives that it has taken which it claimed supported transparency and accountability, which it claimed would improve the functioning of the Legislature.

Among the initiatives listed was creating an all-party legislative committee to draft a code of conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly. However, this is something that has not happened, despite the adoption of my motion by this House as a resolution to direct the Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers to draft a proposed code of conduct for members assembled in this House to consider. The government should not be claiming credit for carrying work that has yet to take place. When will committee work begin on the MLAs' code of conduct?

**Hon. Mr. Doucet:** Again, we appreciate the information that the member has brought forward to the House. We appreciate that he has brought it to the floor in the past. We are taking that into consideration. The work is ongoing at this point in time. The work is ongoing. We will present it at some point in time. However, the bottom line is that we want to be as transparent as possible and we want to get the information out in the public domain. To the member opposite, we appreciate his bringing that to the floor.

## Property Tax

**Mr. Higgs:** I think there is an opportunity here. In relation to last year, I remember I challenged the Premier to meet with the media and talk about various issues. As it turned out, I met with the media and talked about issues, but the Premier did not. Right now, we have another opportunity. We have an opportunity where the Premier refuses to speak about his role in the property tax scandal. He refuses to acknowledge the many e-mails that highlighted his direct



order to make this happen faster, which had repercussions that were never even identified or talked about and that the Premier did not care about.

I will challenge the Premier: Let's meet in the rotunda. Let's talk to the media. I will talk about the issues that they wanted to question me on and the issues that the Premier wants to question me on. Let the Premier join me, and he can talk about the property tax issues. I am there, Mr. Premier. Where is the Premier?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** As much as I appreciate the invitation of the Leader of the Opposition to meet him behind the oak tree of the school...

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** I think he should be taking question period a little more seriously.

(Interjection.)

**Mr. Speaker:** The member for Gagetown-Petitcodiac will come to order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** We have New Brunswickers who have challenges. We have many opportunities as a province that we need to work together to seize. Day after day, question after question, the only thing that the Leader of the Opposition is interested in is gaining political points.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** This little stunt with his last question demonstrates that yet again. I can tell you that on the government side, we are focused on ensuring that we improve education for the children of our province, that there is accessible and affordable child care for the families of our province, that seniors get the help and support that they need in their homes, and that we have health care that is high-quality and accessible to all New Brunswickers. We are focused on ensuring that there is economic growth that works for all New Brunswickers, improving their quality of life.

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

