

November 23, 2018

[Original]

Ms. Mitton: Mr. Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to extend today's question period by four minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Just to remind you, usually with the other parties, I alternate. In the last question period, I started with you. This time, I will start with the People's Alliance and go to you after. Okay?

[Translation]

Child Care

Mr. Gallant: We urge the Conservatives to continue to roll out the programs established by our government in order to provide free child care to families with an annual income of less than \$37 500 and subsidies to middle-class families. These programs were first implemented in the Greater Edmundston area and in Saint John. In September, the Grand Falls, Saint-Léonard, Saint-Quentin, Kedgwick, Sussex, St. Stephen, and Quispamsis areas were added. The third phase began in November of this year in the Moncton, Riverview, Dieppe, Shediac, Sackville, Port Elgin, Hillsborough, Riverside, Havelock, Sainte-Marie-de-Kent, Salisbury, Petitcodiac, Alma, and Cocagne areas.

The implementation must continue so that these programs are available in every area of this province by the end of March 2019. Could the Premier please confirm that his government will stick to the schedule set out by our government for the implementation of these child-care programs in all areas of our province?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Higgs: Yes, I commented yesterday. We certainly are looking at the programs that have been put in place to make sure that they are achieving the goal that was intended. It would be our intention to continue to provide day care support and to ensure that rural areas also have the mechanism to achieve that. It is not only the urban areas that we have to be concerned about. It is also how we make sure that we have a fair system for all.

It would be our intent to continue the program, and the program would be one that we would evaluate in each of the sectors to make sure that it is achieving the intended goal and that it is



doing it for the people whom we want to serve. And that would be providing the right day care in the right places. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Premier has to be briefed on many files. I completely understand that, but I want to brief him on this very important one. It is a program that offers free child care for families that need it the most, and it helps the middle class by subsidizing child care and making sure that no family pays more than 20% of its revenues to child care.

Today and a few days ago, the Premier has kept talking about rural areas not being a part of this. I can go through the list again, if it is helpful. They are the regions of Grand Falls, Saint-Léonard, Saint-Quentin, Kedgwick, Sussex, St. Stephen, and Quispamsis. We have the regions of Havelock, Riverside, Hillsborough, Port Elgin, Sainte-Marie-de-Kent, Salisbury, Petitcodiac, Alma, Cocagne, Sackville, Shediac, and, of course, Greater Moncton as well, Mr. Speaker. All those regions have received these programs already. The next phase is for January and February of next year, and it includes Restigouche, Chaleur, the Acadian Peninsula, Miramichi, Rexton, Fredericton, Oromocto, and Woodstock. We ask the Premier to confirm that he will continue this schedule, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Higgs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said a few minutes ago, we are evaluating all the programs. It is true that we are getting up to speed with the programs that are currently in existence and, more importantly, the programs that are actually achieving the intended results and getting to the bottom line. I think it is no secret that from the very beginning, I wanted to ensure that taxpayer dollars were getting the results that they were planned to get. That is not only a theme, but it is a must. We will not just be pouring out money for a headline. We will invest in the right areas to ensure that we get the right results.

Having the right day-care system for families in this province is indeed a priority. We will evaluate the program. We will ensure that it gets results, and we will make sure that the money is spent where it is needed for each and every family. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I can completely understand that the members opposite would want not only to be briefed but also to evaluate certain programs to see whether they want them to continue. I can sympathize with that. Indeed, we did something very similar when we became the government.

However, there are families in the regions of Restigouche, Chaleur, the Acadian Peninsula, Miramichi, Rexton, Fredericton, Oromocto, and Woodstock that are scheduled to get free child care for the families that need it the most and subsidized child care for the middle class. This would be in January and February 2019. I hope that the Premier can understand that we are urging him to do this evaluation very quickly. The rollout to the New Brunswick families in the regions that I just named, the last regions to have the program rolled out to their child-care operators, would be important. I ask the Premier whether he can confirm that he will do this



evaluation in the next few days, Mr. Speaker, so that we can ensure that the rollout will continue and will be completed by the end of March 2019.

Hon. Mr. Higgs: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a priority, but you know, we are finding that there are a lot of things that are priorities that we have to deal with. This is one, and it is extremely important. However, there is certainly the paramedic issue. There is certainly dealing with the WorkSafeNB issue. There is certainly dealing with the carbon tax and the carbon plan, the one that was rejected by the federal government. There are numerous files that have not moved forward, except in a headline. We will deal with this. We will do it in a timely manner, and we will ensure that the dollars being spent get results for the people who need them. That will be our focus, and we will do it in a manner that means people can realize it is getting done, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gallant: Out the window goes the idea of answering questions straight, Mr. Speaker. I asked a question about free child care and the subsidized child care program for the middle class, which have been rolled out to many regions across our province, also in rural New Brunswick. There is a schedule for this to be done by the end of March 2019. There is a schedule that would have, in the months of January and February, many other regions receiving these programs.

I think that it is a very valid question—to ask the Premier whether he can evaluate the program and whether he can confirm to this House, the people of New Brunswick, and, more importantly, the families in those regions that he will indeed give an answer on whether the program will continue and whether the program will be rolled out as scheduled so that the families can depend on getting this much-needed support for child care. Could the Premier please give us a deadline that is sooner than the budget cycle so that the families in these regions can know that they are going to be able to get this child care support that is much needed for their families?

Hon. Mr. Higgs: Mr. Speaker, the fact that the leader opposite did not get the answer he wants is not a case of not getting an answer.

There are other deadlines that are certainly in the hopper as well. January 1, 2019, is when the federal government is going to impose a carbon tax. Is that a deadline that the member opposite would remember? There is a deadline for WorkSafeNB, given the case of a report that was put together last August, and the premiums are going through the roof this year, starting January 1. Is that a deadline that the previous Premier would remember? Mr. Speaker, this is a deadline that is important to individuals.

We will indeed ensure that we move in an expedited fashion, but we are doing that on a lot of files. We are not cherry-picking. We are following a program to get results, and we are following a program for people who need it, Mr. Speaker.



Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I humbly suggest to the Premier that it is very evident that there is lots on his plate. I can completely sympathize with that. I was there not too long ago. However, the good news is that he does not have to do anything when it comes to this program. He just has to let the department finish its rollout. He has a lot to do, so why would he not just allow this wonderful program that offers free child care and subsidized child care to the middle class to roll out all over the province as scheduled? He does not have to do anything. In fact, doing something to stop this rollout would create more work for him. At the end of the day, I would suggest that he just let this program be rolled out. Let the department do what it needs to do to make sure that all families in our province get these wonderful programs. Can the Premier please confirm that he will indeed just allow the program to roll out by the end of March 2019?

Hon. Mr. Higgs: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition may feel that the Premier's role is that you do not have to do anything and that it will just happen—something like in the federal government, where the budget will balance itself. Well, what I have seen happen is that there is \$1 billion more in spending without the results to show for it.

Every program will be evaluated so we know that it is getting the results for the people who need it, when they need it, and where they need it. That goes with every program. I do not believe the Premier's Office should be on autopilot, and, rest assured, Mr. Speaker, it is not on autopilot today. We are working for people in this province. We are working with departments, and we are getting great ideas coming forward on how we can be better for the people of this province.

Hydraulic Fracturing

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bourque: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Original*]

Mr. Speaker, the speech from the throne commits to allowing the Executive Council to share its power with the Legislature. Nonetheless, on the contentious issue of hydraulic fracturing, the Alliance-Conservative government, it seems to me, is acting like a majority government. If you combine them, yes, it does make a majority, I guess. But had New Brunswickers wanted to make unilateral decisions, they would have elected a majority government with a single party. If there is any chance that they would want a major change on this issue, New Brunswickers definitely deserve a vote in the House, so we introduced an amendment here yesterday. I am asking the minister responsible whether the government will vote in favour of this amendment, allowing for a vote on lifting the moratorium on fracking. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Higgs: Mr. Speaker, I have made statements in public a number of times about this situation of developing our natural gas resource in regions that wanted to pursue that. There



are the discussions I have had, too, in the Legislature about having a free vote, Mr. Speaker—a free vote from both sides in this Legislature on this very topic.

Of course, bringing forward the throne speech is another antic. It is not about the throne speech. It is trying to develop more play and more political maneuvering, and it is unfortunate. I feel bad that the member opposite feels that when you can work in good faith with people who want to move the province forward... They find that a difficult concept. Well, I do not find it a difficult concept. I find it the way of the future, and we will continue to work with people to make New Brunswick once again the best place to be—in this province and in this country. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bourque: Listen, I reiterate again that the throne speech indicated that the Premier would provide clear and direct answers; therefore, I would appreciate it if he answered the question directly and clearly.

As I mentioned, the Alliance-Conservative government across from us—by all appearances, at least—shows that the Conservative government is acting unilaterally. There is clearly a lot of resentment in the province with regard to the issue of hydraulic fracturing. We, the opposition, introduced an amendment to the throne speech regarding a vote on hydraulic fracturing. Once again, my question is this: will the government commit to voting in favour of this amendment?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Higgs: We have a situation here where we have said—and I have said it publicly—that we are going to have presentations made and have debate here in the House. We will work on this file to move in a direction... The Leader of the Green Party spoke this morning about tradespeople working in all corners of our country. Well, Mr. Speaker, tradespeople are working in all corners of our country in an industry we could have right here at home. We could keep these people at home, but we do not want to talk about it. Well, I do want to talk about it, but I do not want to impose it all over this province. I have said that very clearly.

I have said that we will have a vote here. Maybe it should be related to the throne speech. I do not know that that is the situation, but we have said that we will have a free vote. My concern is that it will not be a free vote. It will not be a free vote because we have seen nothing but whipped votes from the Liberal Party, so I would be unclear that those members would ever allow a free vote. There lies the concern. As we go forward in this House, let's have free votes, but let's make them just that.



[Translation]

Paramedics

Mr. McKee: One of the essential roles of government is to protect the rights of all citizens. To that end, we have to know what these rights are. With regard to hiring paramedics, in the Sonier case, the Court of Queen's Bench specified the government's obligations under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Official Languages Act. In a subsequent ruling, arbitrator McEvoy maintained that the government was not required to respect the language rights of New Brunswickers. Can the Deputy Premier tell us if he considers it important that the government understand its obligations under the Charter and the Official Languages Act?

Hon. Mr. Gauvin: First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is my first reply in the House; I am going to try to do this properly and live up to the combination of the two parties into a liberating party.

To answer the question, I would like to say that my position has always been the same. In ambulance-related matters, priority is placed on safety. We cannot do without it. I have not changed my opinion on this since July. However, my job, as the only Acadian MLA in this party, is to protect official language rights. The ambulances had to be on the road. I do not want to have to go to people's homes anymore to give letters to families who have lost someone because it took 50 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McKee: The Gallant government had previously received a legal opinion from the Office of the Attorney General. The opinion was clear: The Court of Queen's Bench was right. In this context, does the Deputy Premier agree that the government should withdraw the judicial review? Thank you.

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Flemming: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The opposite member, being a member of the Law Society, knows full well that we have a Constitution, and he knows full well what it says. He knows full well that we have an *Official Languages Act*, and he knows what it says. He knows full well that there are legal issues going on which are being looked at. We will not be pushed or pressured into making some rash decision. There are two parties to any piece of litigation. You do not just walk away and leave them standing. You have to settle an issue. You have to do it before the courts. You have to get leave. You have to get consent. There are processes to do. For the member opposite to suggest something as frivolous as just throwing it up and walking away or you do not... He knows better than that because he is a member of the bar. If he does not know any better than that, he should.



Women's Health

Mrs. M. LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the Minister responsible for Women's Equality was asked about women's reproductive health. She was content to answer that everything would be subject to evaluation. She then stated: "As we move forward, we will be looking at that." There is a contradiction here. Either you are to move forward with women's rights or you question them. On the same subject, the Premier answered this: "we want to make sure that the programs are getting the intended results".

Could the Minister responsible for Women's Equality tell us what the parameters are for evaluating a successful result when it comes to Mifegymiso? Thank you.

Hon. S. Wilson: Thank you for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I said is that every program is going to be looked at. All things need to be evaluated to see whether they are working for New Brunswickers in the way they were intended. In looking at that, we will look at all programs. I said that the other day. We will make sure that we are getting the best benefit for New Brunswickers and for the people we serve.

[*Translation*]

Health Care

Ms. Thériault: So, this is my very first question in the House, and it is for the Minister of Health. Health care is a priority for New Brunswickers. In rural areas such as Grand Falls, Sussex, or Saint Quentin, at the Charlotte County Hospital, and in the Acadian Peninsula, like back home in Caraquet, our rural hospitals are vital to our communities. So, will the government commit to keeping our hospitals—both regional and rural—open, with the services that are currently provided there?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Flemming: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for her first question. Health care is an issue which is sometimes emotional and everything else like that. To say that something is the most important... I will tell you what is the most important thing in health care. It is the quality of health care delivery. That is what matters. It is giving the people of New Brunswick the best health care that they could possibly have for whatever issue they have. To turn this issue into a geography issue, rural versus urban... I ask the member opposite to ask her constituents one question: If you are faced with a serious illness and I can give you the closest health care or I can give you the best, pick one. They will always take the best. Thank you.

Ms. Thériault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that the first answer that I got to my first question was as clear as mud. Let's be more precise this time.



[Translation]

My question is again for the Minister of Health. In their throne speech, the Conservatives referred to alternatives with regard to the billing number issue. However, we know that billing numbers are currently assigned throughout the province so that physicians are directed toward the areas that need them most, these being rural areas. So, what plan does the government have for recruitment and retention of physicians in our rural hospitals? Will the alternatives referred to favour urban areas over rural ones?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Flemming: If the member opposite would look at the statistics, she would see that the vast majority of vacancies for physicians are in urban centres. It is also ironic that we have a billing system which restricts the access. I find it most peculiar. The government spends millions and millions of dollars on two medical schools to educate our young people to become doctors. Then, when they graduate, they cannot get a billing number and they go somewhere else. What is the point of it? We need to get more doctors into the system, more doctors throughout New Brunswick, and more doctors to deliver access to primary health care to all New Brunswickers—not rural, not urban, but all New Brunswickers. That is the challenge, and that is what we are going to do.

Homelessness

Mr. Austin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With such pressing times of homelessness throughout the province of New Brunswick, especially in many of the urban areas in New Brunswick, I would like to ask the Minister of Social Development whether some insight could be provided as to where the department is in finding long-term solutions to this disturbing problem. Unfortunately, it will no doubt result in the deaths of some of our homeless citizens in New Brunswick if they are not provided with the means to permanently get out of the cold. This, again, would include helping them in terms of addictions and mental health to get them off the street.

Hon. Mrs. Shephard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the question, because it is important that we address short-term, mid-term, and long-term solutions for homelessness. Many communities throughout this province are certainly working on that with us through the Department of Social Development. In the next couple of business days, we are going to be coming out with the plans for immediate action on the homelessness situation in some of our communities, including Moncton. Then, we are also working with these communities for long-term plans.

I am not at liberty to say right now what some of these communities are doing because it really is in their purview to make those announcements themselves. But Fredericton... I am very excited about long-term plans from Fredericton, and I think that they can certainly be rationalized for other areas of the province. I am really looking forward to that. It is really top of



mind. It is something that is being worked on every single day. Long-term solutions are in the works. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Austin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for the response to the question. I would like to further ask whether the implementation of some of these plans would include nonprofit organizations that are already on the ground, eager and willing to provide assistance if only the funding and resources were available. I am just wondering whether the minister could answer the question of whether, indeed, nonprofit and charitable organizations would be part of that plan to ease homelessness in New Brunswick.

Hon. Mrs. Shephard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. We would not be able to do any of the really good work that is happening with homelessness and other societal issues without nonprofit organizations and community groups on the ground. Those relationships will certainly continue. They will hopefully be fostered. They are always needing our support. Programs are in place, always being expanded and always being reevaluated. I certainly expect, on my end, that these community groups and nonprofit organizations will always be part of the mix. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

School Nutrition Program

Mr. DeSaulniers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is my first question as well.

Some New Brunswick parents are upset over changes to the province's public health nutrition policy that have gone too far. These include no longer allowing the sale of chocolate milk and juice. Now, only water and white milk are sold. School food suppliers are also raising concerns about this change and say that, 12 years ago, they had already shifted to supplying healthier snacks such as baked chips and breakfast bars. We agree with the parents and the food suppliers that this nutrition policy has gone too far.

My question is for the Minister of Education. What do you plan to do about the nutrition policy, and can we expect to see revisions? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cardy: Thank you for the question. It is also my first opportunity to answer a question here in this House, and it is a great honour to do so.

I am happy to answer the question directly. One of my first acts upon receiving the incredible responsibility of being the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development was to order an immediate review of the somewhat bizarre regulations imposed at the last minute by the former Premier's office, restricting chocolate milk while, at the same time, racing ahead with the legalization of marijuana. It is an odd province where the priorities of the previous government were to legalize marijuana while banning chocolate milk.

We are going to be taking action in the days to come to make sure that there is a freedom of choice restored in New Brunswick schools. There will again be an ability for parents to work



with teachers and with their kids to come up with sensible nutrition policies. Government will be there as a partner in healthy eating always, but we are going to do it through education and conversation and not through dictation and coercion, as was the habit of the previous government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. DeSaulniers: What can I say, Mr. Speaker? I can thank the minister for his response, and I will say it again: Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cardy: At the risk of encouraging further inaccurate naming of certain political parties in this House by some of the members opposite, I thank the member for Fredericton-York for his kind words.

We are going to be making an announcement concerning this matter in the days to come. We have to look again at the issues around chocolate milk, around 100% fruit juice, and around the restrictions on fund-raisers in our schools. The confusion that was created is something that I know all members of this House, including the members opposite, heard about during the recent election campaign and have been hearing about since the election. We are going to be taking action based on science, based on the needs of our communities, and based on what we are hearing from the parents, teachers, and children of our province. Thank you again, Mr. Speaker.

Climate Change

Ms. Mitton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In its throne speech, the government committed to establish an all-party committee to develop a strategy that will meet our emissions targets by 2030. During the summer of 2016, the Select Committee on Climate Change toured around the province, hearing from New Brunswickers how best to meet these targets. The report of the select committee included 85 recommendations that were approved by all parties. We already know what we need to do.

The government has been moving too slowly and risks being on the wrong side of history as a result of inaction on climate change. Can the Premier explain why it is necessary to create another committee to develop a strategy to meet our emissions targets when an all-party committee of the previous Legislature has already done so?

Hon. Mr. Higgs: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. Since being in office for two weeks or less, we have met with the Department of Environment several times and have gone through what exists. What is sad is that, after all this time, the work that has been done by departments has not been used and put forward. We will be proposing, with the Green Party and, hopefully, the Liberal Party as well as the Alliance, a carbon plan—a nontaxed carbon plan—in terms of employees or people in the province. The idea is that we are going to meet the deadlines to put a plan together while, at the same time, continuing to fight a new tax on people in this province.



The past work has been done, and the departments have shared with us the climate action plan that exists. I do not intend to reinvent that. I do intend to work with them and with other provinces to get what is right for New Brunswick. I want to work with my colleagues on both sides of the House because we must get the right plan for New Brunswick while, at the same time, meet the targets that have been put forward. I am anxious to do just that, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Mitton: I look forward to the full implementation—the quick implementation—of the climate plan. New Brunswick's *Climate Change Act* lays out our carbon emissions targets. We must reduce emissions to 10.7 Mt by 2030. This compares to the federal emissions targets of 14.3 Mt by 2030. In 2016, New Brunswick's emissions were 15.3 Mt, showing that there is still work to be done to achieve the province's legislated goals.

Meanwhile, the Premier has stated that he wants to revive the Energy East Pipeline project, even suggesting that it could initially be proposed by a government-owned holding company. This will allow for increased production at the Irving refinery and will increase New Brunswick's greenhouse gas emissions. Can the Premier explain what steps his government will take to meet New Brunswick's legislated 2030 carbon emissions target of 10.7 Mt?

Hon. Mr. Higgs: Thank you for the question. First, some clarification. In the case of the refinery that you mentioned, no, it will not change the emissions at the refinery. It will replace foreign crude oil. That is what it will do, so we should clarify that point. It would allow us to use our own resources in our own facilities while, at the same time, being able to export and get, as we have seen, our commodity pricing up. We are losing billions on natural resources here in our country.

On the other point, the target is actually 14.3 Mt. That has been the target extrapolated, based on the federal targets. That is our target. The 10.3 Mt that the member opposite refers to is an aspirational target that was set. When the carbon plan was put together, we hoped to achieve this target. Let's be clear on what targets we are obligated to meet and what targets we would like to meet, based on the implementation of a plan made in New Brunswick. The target is 14.3 Mt, and I have been given all kinds of information on that, so I am very comfortable in saying that. The aspirational target is the 10 Mt or the 10.3 Mt, or whatever in that vicinity. We need to be sure that we are clear on the right targets, but then we make it happen.

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Shale Gas

Mr. K. Arseneau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for giving me back the question that was skipped on Tuesday. It is very much appreciated. It is not my question that is important, but the answer that people deserve. I hope the Premier will let his minister answer this time, as he clearly promised in a speech given in this House.



Again, as reported in the media, the Premier will be meeting this week with industry members interested in drilling new shale gas wells in New Brunswick. I urge the full-time Minister of Aboriginal Affairs to advise the Premier to put off these meetings until proper consultations have taken place. Will the full-time Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, who has been given this singular responsibility, demand, as I quote from the throne speech, “more accountability and community control over land and resources” for First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Here, we have a government... We have recognized that we have to honour the Crown. First Nations people have the right to be consulted. The government has the right to take care of the duty to consult. Sometimes that results in accommodations, such as the ones in good faith at the Sisson mine.

Right now, the moratorium is still in place. We do not have an industry in shale gas. We, as a government, are considering the opportunities in that industry. However, I, as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, will assure the First Nations people of the province, just as I informed an elder from Elsipogtog at the throne speech, that we will not impose that industry on those who do not want it, and First Nations people will be consulted.

Mr. K. Arseneau: What does “more accountability and community control over land resources” mean? When you say... Sorry, Mr. Speaker. When the minister says... I was not ready for this second question. We were not told that we had two questions, but I will take it.

The minister says that he will consult and will not permit it on the land of the First Nations, but I do urge the minister. Sussex is on unsundered Mi'kmaq territory. Will the First Nations be consulted on anything that takes place on unsundered Mi'kmaq territory? Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: I thank the member opposite for that question. Since we honour the Crown and we have a duty to consult, anytime there is a resource sector expansion or development that would adversely affect First Nations or Aboriginal treaties, the government has the right to consult First Nations people.

As Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I am bringing a new vision to this department. It is a stand-alone department, which shows just how much our government cares about First Nations people, while the previous government did not even consult them on cannabis. I will tell you today, Mr. Speaker, that I will be working hard to ensure that the consultations take place at the right time and that they are done in the right way, in a respectful way, and in good faith with the First Nations people of this province.

Mr. Speaker: It was my error. I allowed four questions instead of three to the other parties. Obviously, you noticed. They were caught off guard. Do we have unanimous consent to allow the official opposition to have two questions?



Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: It was my error, and I am asking for unanimous consent for two more questions from the official opposition. Thank you. *[Translation]*

Employment Insurance

Mr. K. Chiasson: I have the honour of asking the last question this week, so I will not pull my punches.

I am very disappointed that employment insurance was not mentioned at all in the throne speech. It seems like the Deputy Premier was not even consulted during the drafting of the document. Yet, during the election campaign, the Deputy Premier made employment insurance his hobbyhorse. I personally attended every protest, and I can tell you that, every time he spoke, he said loud and clear that the fate of seasonal workers would be his top priority. He portrayed himself as the saviour of the Acadian Peninsula with his 12–35 principle, which means 12 weeks of work for 35 insured weeks. Now that he finds himself Deputy Premier, I want to know what his action plan is to solve the current employment insurance problem, since the men and women who work in seasonal industries are waiting for an answer.

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Holder: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the members opposite for the question.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Holder: I want to assure the members opposite that the Deputy Premier has been constantly engaged in this process as we have moved forward. There is no other minister that I have talked to more about this file over the last number of weeks.

I think it is important to note that EI is a federal issue. However, there are monies given to the province, to be administered through my department, and we are going to be working with the Deputy Premier and every member of this House. I offer that to the members in the region that is most affected. We will be working together to find solutions to make sure that the monies given to us by the federal government are administered properly and that they get results. This is going to be a government of action, and we are going to get results for the people of New Brunswick.

[Translation]

Mr. K. Chiasson: I can tell you that the Deputy Premier made himself heard a lot more during the protests. So, I will ask him another question.



In August, the federal government provided \$2.5 million to the province to create an employment program that would enable seasonal workers to get additional hours and therefore qualify for employment insurance and avoid the gap. My question for the Deputy Premier is this: Is he prepared to stand up for seasonal workers in the Acadian Peninsula and does he commit to using the \$2.5 million to establish employment programs?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Holder: Mr. Speaker, that \$2.5 million is in place. I am working with the Deputy Premier, and I will work with any member of this House to make sure that we use that \$2.5 million to get the best results for the people of New Brunswick.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: Oral question period is over.

