

June 5, 2019

[Translation]

### Carbon Tax

**Mr. D. Landry:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has reached a new low as he tries to imitate his hero, Doug Ford, every chance he gets. As part of an advertising campaign funded by taxpayers, the province sent stickers to all service station owners to be put on the gas pumps. These stickers refer to the federal carbon tax. Just like the stickers that Doug Ford sent to service station owners in his province, these stickers do not mention the carbon tax rebates to which every single New Brunswicker is...

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of the Opposition, no props, please. Leave that on your desk.

**Mr. D. Landry:** Mr. Speaker, this is an official government document with a letter. I will submit it to you when we get to the tabling of documents.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier justify these expenditures for documents funded by taxpayers?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, it is pretty easy to justify informing the members of the public of the taxation that they are expected to pay. The issues that we see in this case and in the case of the carbon tax... In the case of the carbon plan and in the case of all these issues, Mr. Speaker, we have said that we can meet our environmental standards and our emissions targets. We actually have a carbon plan that the federal government has, unlike what was happening before when it was not accepted. We have a carbon tax situation in which we are saying that we do not need a carbon tax. We want people to know that this is 4¢ now. It will be 12¢ in two or three years, and it will go beyond that ad infinitum, Mr. Speaker. We are focused on the emissions. We are not focused on taxing people more without results.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to this, we will continue to inform the public of the money that is being spent because of the decisions that have been made in this House or in the House in Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, the members of the public have a right to know. They will know, and we will continue to put the facts on the table. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

**Mr. D. Landry:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier will take \$100 a month away from parents of children with disabilities. He does not even care about a single mother of three children who will no longer be able to attend university, because tuition is not free. However, he can spend



hundreds and thousands of dollars, or more, from taxpayers on this obviously political advertising campaign.

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs:** You know, Mr. Speaker, we covered this issue yesterday. There was a discussion about free tuition and the fact that we made it accessible to everyone. We do not pick and choose winners. We allow students to actually follow their dreams in the institutions where they want to be educated—not prescribed by government, but aided by government—to go where they choose.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in getting results for the money being spent. We believe that in the case of money, it is not about the headline. It is about the results. And I know that is a foreign concept to the red-green team. I know that is a situation that exists—that results do not matter. Well, for me, taxpayers' dollars are important.

We are one of the highest, if not the highest, jurisdictions in the country. We are the only province or one of the only provinces... I know there are some others that are impacted with the federal imposition of the carbon tax and with the implementation of the backstop. We have a plan in place that the federal government has not accepted yet. So, Mr. Speaker, if we want to work together on making things right for New Brunswick, let's let the opposition members go to their federal counterparts and say: Why are you not accepting the New Brunswick plan?

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

[*Translation*]

**Mr. D. Landry:** The Premier mentioned the Liberal Party and the Green Party. I will now say the Alliance-Conservative-Doug Ford party. I would like to know how much this advertising campaign, about which I showed you a little document earlier, will cost taxpayers in the province? I would like the Premier to tell me how much this campaign cost.

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs:** Mr. Speaker, you know, I do not know the exact cost of the stickers. I can find out. I will take that under advisement. I will find out, because it will be very minor in comparison to what people need to know to make informed decisions. Now, I know that the practice in the past has been not to put any facts on the table. Only put a headline, Mr. Speaker, but no facts. I do not agree with that, and our team does not agree with that.

While the red-green group can continue to talk about and espouse these things, it does not want to look at the actual numbers. That goes for any case where we look at how we avoid paying more taxes, whether it be absenteeism and sick time management, which I have talked about in public... Look at the facts, Mr. Speaker. Look at the facts right across the system and



say: How do we do better, and how do we ensure that our employees want to come to work because it is a great place to work? I am not suggesting that we do not have problems in the workplace, but I am suggesting that those are the areas where you need to focus so that people want to be part of the solution. It is about more than money, Mr. Speaker. It is about having a place to work that you feel really good about.

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

[*Translation*]

**Mr. D. Landry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier not know there is a *Government Advertising Act*? It clearly states that any government advertisement should concern public health and safety, as in the case of a measles epidemic or a flood, or serve to explain an important new program. It is not supposed to be political. This Act requires, as is stated, that the advertisement not be paid for with public money. These stickers seem to breach these three conditions. Through the Speaker, were you even aware that your minister had sent this kind of letter to the public?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs:** You know, the next place this information needs to show up is on the NB Power bills so that people see that the potential 6% increase that comes along with paying for electricity is thanks to the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. The CEO has talked about that on numerous occasions. It is thanks to the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. You know, it may come across as an abnormal process to inform the public on where its money is going and how that money is being spent, but this is business as usual for this government. It is business as usual because we want decisions that make sense, where people understand why, when, how, and who.

Accountability is another key platform, Mr. Speaker, an area where we will take responsibility for results. However, we cannot do it alone. We have said that. We want help from everyone who is working, touching, and feeling government. We want help because we can do better, and we are going to push on that. But the idea, Mr. Speaker, is reporting on the facts, and we will continue to report on the facts.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. D. Landry:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's hero, Doug Ford, fines service station owners who refuse to put the stickers on gas pumps. This campaign is clearly based on Doug Ford's campaign and coordinated with it. The letter from the Minister of Energy and Resource Development does not indicate clearly whether people have a choice. I know that, if the government gives me something like that, unless it is clear, I am going to think that I must put it up. If it is optional, why did the minister not indicate that clearly in his letter?



[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs:** Mr. Speaker, I think that if people want to put out the information and inform the public of what they are paying for, that is perfectly okay. In fact, I encourage it, and I think they should do that, but if they have an operation of their own, they have a choice.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we are finding that people actually want to tell the public how they are being taxed beyond compare and how every cent is being taxed to the point where we are just taxing ourselves out of business. We have seen companies leaving our province and private sector investment going down. We have seen border communities... Now guess what is happening? We have businesses on the Canadian side that are now seeing their business suffer because people are going over to the American side for gas to fuel their cars. And we know that there are other impacts.

And what has been the step change? A new tax of 4¢ per litre, which is soon to be 12¢ over the next two or three years. We will price ourselves out of business and pretend that nothing exists. Well, as long as we are here working together on this side of the House, our goal is to save New Brunswick.

[Translation]

**Mr. D. Landry:** Mr. Speaker, if the Premier really wants people to understand what they are paying at the pump, why does he not include the provincial part of the tax or the profit margin of the oil companies? What is the intended result here, Mr. Speaker? How is this going to help parents of children with disabilities who just had \$100 a month taken away by the Premier, so that he could spend it on things like these, which, apparently, matter more to him? Can he answer questions in the order in which they were asked and provide clear answers?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs:** Mr. Speaker, there is nothing new about the tax on fuel except for carbon tax, and every receipt has the HST paid on every purchase. They already know that. They already know that. What is new is that they do not know that, all of a sudden, this 4¢ per litre has been slipped in. What does that mean to them when they are fuelling their vehicles? But what they really do not know is how that is going to increase.

Once the Liberals get ahold of a new tax, it will be inched up forever to increase spending. It has been a historic issue. Tax more, spend more, and hide more. Those have been the government's three models: tax, spend, and hide. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is changing. The goal here is to know what you are paying, know what you are getting for it, and put it on the table—let people see it.



## Hydraulic Fracturing

**Mr. Bourque:** Hiding? Well, let's talk about hiding. Yesterday, the Premier told the press here at the Legislature that the fracking moratorium is no longer in place and that has been the case for a month—one month, and we are finding out now. What is this thing about being transparent? They did not see fit to inform New Brunswickers previously. Perhaps the Premier should make stickers for that as well or perhaps fridge magnets. Maybe that would be more efficient.

I would like to know this: Is this a regional lifting of the moratorium? Are we talking about the Sussex area? Are we talking about the Elgin area? Other parts of Albert County? The Memramcook area? We would like to know. Kent County? The Turtle Creek watershed? We would like to know. What are we talking about in terms of this moratorium being lifted? Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs:** Natural gas development was on our radar in last year's campaign. We said it was a regional approach. Actually, you may recall the throne speech and the amendment that was added by the Liberal Party and the subamendment that we put in place. It was voted on as a confidence motion here in this House, and it gave us the ability to change the regulation, which we said we would do. We said we wanted to do it by the end of May.

Now I know it is a shock to the opposition that we are actually following up on what we said we would do. We are actually doing what we said we would do when we said we would do it. Sometimes timelines shift and change, but this is no surprise. This is what we intended to do, and this is what we have done.

Now we are in a position to take the next step and meet with First Nations and say: Okay, we have a regulatory change now, because there was a pause that was put on this by that government. It was a pause to allow that government to focus exclusively on spending tax dollars. That was the goal before, but the goal today is to work with all communities to develop and build New Brunswick. Thank you.

**Mr. Bourque:** I am happy to know that, Mr. Speaker, that they will work with all communities. I guess that includes Kent County and that includes around the Riverview area, because the Premier did not answer the question other than that, so thank you for that answer.

Let's talk about the conditions that we had set. We talked about the treatment of frack wastewater. I would like to know if the Premier and the government have a plan for that. Also, what happened to the constitutional right, the duty to consult the Aboriginal communities? Am I to understand that this was not done? How can this government bypass these founding communities? Was this just another of the government members' many missteps, or do they just not care?

**Hon. Mr. Holland:** I get it. I get it. I get it, Mr. Speaker. The members on the other side see members of a government get elected and go to work at rolling up their sleeves and getting





something done and they think, so let's put some misinformation out there. I see members of an opposition party who realize that we passed a throne speech, so they think, well, we must misdirect them and create hysteria so that people cannot see that there is a government getting things done. I see over there a government... I see opposition members who are looking at a government that is walking out the commitments that it made prior to the election and is making progress, so they think, we have to distract New Brunswickers so that they cannot see, for the first time in a long time, a government getting results.

I sit behind this Premier in the Legislature, but I stand behind him as a leader that is putting New Brunswick first.

**Mr. Bourque:** I have to say that is pretty rich coming from the minister who signed letters to send to gas stations with partial information, blinding New Brunswickers. "Do not confuse me with the facts" is alive and well with this government.

Yesterday, we asked about a very bleak APEC report that says that New Brunswick will be dead last by a significant margin in private sector investment over the next two years. APEC was aware of the intention to lift that moratorium. That is true. That government did make it public. Nothing surprises me when it comes to this government, Mr. Speaker, including the boondoggles. It does not project any major investment in industry for the next few years. Does the Premier know something that APEC does not? Or, is he once again selling false hope to New Brunswickers, as he keeps on doing? Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs:** Mr. Speaker, it is really rich. One of the first things we were confronted with when we came into office was a chart from Finance that showed that our public sector investment was now matched with our private sector investment. Do you know what happened? Private sector dropped, and public sector went up. That is usually a factor of two to one, private over public.

So, what we saw during the last four years was a complete decline, for one of the first times in history, of private sector investment. So, how do you start to build that back, Mr. Speaker? One brick at a time. What was the first brick? It was having the credit rating agencies not downgrade us, Mr. Speaker, not only by paying more interest, but also by saying to the world that New Brunswick is a basket case. Well, they did not say that. What they said is that we are actually turning a corner. We have actually gone from a negative outlook to a stable outlook. Industry people are taking notice and investors are taking notice because New Brunswick is getting its act together. So, it should be no surprise to the member opposite how we got here, with a decline in private sector investment—it was perfectly clear where it came from, Mr. Speaker.

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



## **Official Languages Act**

**Mr. McKee:** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the New Brunswick Business Council and the Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick announced a working group to increase the economic benefits of bilingualism in the province. This is a follow-up report from two respected New Brunswick economists. The report is called *Two Languages: It's Good for Business*. We agree with much of the information in this report that clearly demonstrates that bilingualism is good for business in New Brunswick. We believe that government has a role to play in increasing the economic benefits of bilingualism. Does the Premier agree with this report? Also, how will he play a leadership role in underlining how bilingualism is good for the province?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, we agree with that report. We also recognize the opportunity to have fairness in the system. We also recognize the failure we have had in our ability to teach our kids to speak both official languages. So, the two go hand in hand. We want to have more of that opportunity for more people, more residents, and more kids in this province.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we look at the facts and say that this can be an advantage that no other province has—New Brunswick as an officially bilingual province—but it needs to be an advantage for all New Brunswickers. That is why, when we look at the school system, we say: How could we be in this state at this time, with less than 20% of our kids in the Anglophone system actually becoming bilingual? How could that be after 50 years? I am not prepared to accept that as being right. I am not prepared to accept it as being fair. I want to fix it for all New Brunswickers, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McKee:** Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the Premier, who repeatedly addresses this question by saying that we need to graduate more people who are bilingual. But if that is the case, why are the members opposite musing on the idea of cancelling the French immersion program? What they need to do is to address the underlying issues to boost the program, not cancel it. When we look at the facts in this report, we see that, for people 15 to 44 years old, 41% are bilingual. That matches the percentage of people who are entering the French immersion program. The Premier is distorting the facts to move his agenda forward.

The benefits of bilingualism are real in this province, Mr. Speaker. I think about my wife. She comes from Alberta—Alberta. She went through French immersion and went to university at Faculté Saint-Jean in Alberta, and then she studied right here at law school in Moncton. So what will the Premier say about the leader of the fourth party and his position on amending the *Official Languages Act*?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Cardy:** Mr. Speaker, it is slightly unreal to hear the comments from the other side of the House. Over the past few months, did opposition members not pay attention to what was being said on this subject?



[Original]

I do not exactly know what is going on, on the other side. I know that we have a serious product shortage at Cannabis NB, but perhaps some of it has been reserved in the anterooms of the opposition.

What I just heard there was a statement in the people's House about an issue of public importance around French immersion. Did the official opposition not pay any attention over the last few months? Did the official opposition not notice when I stood up and said that after consulting with New Brunswickers, for this year, we are leaving the French immersion entry point in place? Apparently not.

It is frustrating. We are sitting here trying to talk about how to build a world-class education system, opening our doors to members of the official opposition to come, consult, talk, and be part of the solution to how we make sure that New Brunswickers graduate—all of them, English and French—with conversational ability in both official languages. It is frustrating when the members of the opposite side do not even appear to be paying any attention.

[Translation]

Therefore, I am going to speak in both official languages. We will insist that all young people in New Brunswick graduate with a knowledge of both official languages.

[Original]

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

We have 10 minutes. I have to go to the member for Fredericton-Grand Lake and leader of his party.

## Health Care

**Mr. Austin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were more than 2 000 documented cases of violence against health care workers in the province last year. In fact, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions says that attacks on health care workers in New Brunswick have almost doubled in five years, no doubt due to the frustration that patients are feeling with the system. These nurses, LPNs, RNs, and other frontline workers work very hard to provide good care, so I will ask the Minister of Health this: Can the Minister of Health tell us what the department is doing to mitigate this increase in violence in our hospitals?

**Hon. Mr. Flemming:** Thank you for the question. Violence in the health care system, as it has manifested itself, is something that we all find abhorrent and terrible. There are two aspects to it, though.





First of all, there is what I would consider to be criminal behaviour. I would urge my colleague the Attorney General to make sure, with whatever influence we can have, that these people are prosecuted. They should be dealt with. They should be severely dealt with to the full extent of the law. It is illegal, unlawful behaviour, and they should be prosecuted to the full extent.

Having said that, there are other cases where nurses have challenges. They are dealing with people with dementia, mental health issues, bad reactions to drugs, and things like that. We have to work in that area as well to provide nurses with further support as this issue seems to continue to grow. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Austin:** I thank the minister for that response, and I agree with the fact that the justice system needs to do its part when these cases land in the justice system. Frankly, we should throw the book at some of these folks.

On the flip side, the reality is that we must have safeguards in place in the event that things happen in the first place. My understanding is that we now have security guards at the hospitals that are not able to go hands-on physically with some of these people that are effecting violence on frontline health care workers. Again, I do have to ask the minister this: Are there any plans? Is there anything in place in terms of motions to get trained security with clearance to go hands-on if needed to make sure that our health-care workers are protected every day as they go to work to provide care to New Brunswickers?

**Hon. Mr. Flemming:** Again, thank you for the question. I fully accept and endorse the Leader of the People's Alliance's saying that criminal behaviour is completely unacceptable. Throwing the book at them is appropriate. People need to realize that this type of criminal behaviour in our hospitals will be dealt with and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. I know we are all in agreement with that.

The other issues are a little more complex. There are patients who sometimes have bad reactions to drugs. There are mental health issues, where you can have a person who is very calm one minute and perhaps very agitated the next. You have the ongoing challenges of dementia, where people are not themselves. Nurses enter this area, and we have to give them support, security, and a timely response when they see these things, to try to nip them in the bud to prevent them from growing into something bigger...

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

## Environment

**Mr. Coon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday during question period, the member for Memramcook-Tantramar asked the Minister of Environment whether he would take provincial leadership to reduce single-use plastics, starting with a province-wide ban on plastic bags, and



the minister replied that this is not one of his priorities. That begs this question: What are his priorities?

We have still not seen a mandate letter from the Premier for this minister or for any other minister for that matter, so we do not have any insights provided there. Today is June 5, the UN's World Environment Day, so what an appropriate day to ask this question. Will the Minister of Environment share with this House his specific priorities for protecting New Brunswick's environment?

**Hon. Mr. Carr:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Green Party continues to try to twist words around and diminish his credibility in this Legislature. I clearly said the priorities of the municipalities were what I was quoting. I was quoting their top six priorities, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the member, the Leader of the Green Party, has met with the municipal associations several times.

Now, we cannot run and chase every little ball that rolls by us like a dog chasing a car, but I can tell you right now that the reduction of plastic use in this province is a priority for this government. The reduction of plastic bags in this province is a priority for this government. The protection of our environment in this province is a priority for this government, Mr. Speaker.

Now, we have heard lots of contradictory statements from the members of the Green Party—all three of them—in the past two days. Whom do they support when it comes to oil and gas? Is it John Horgan? Is it the Leader of the Green Party in British Columbia? Is it the federal leader, Elizabeth May? I would...

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

**Mr. Coon:** It is good to know, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has at least one priority, which he says is the reduction of plastics. However, he has the *Pesticides Control Act* to end the spraying of glyphosate over our forests. He has the *Clean Water Act* to set legally binding water quality standards to protect our rivers and streams, to improve the protection of our wetlands, or to set a threshold for forest cover that could be maintained in our watersheds. He has the *Clean Air Act* to better protect the health of New Brunswickers living near persistent sources of air pollution. He has the *Climate Change Act* to protect New Brunswick families and communities from the consequences of the climate crisis. He has the *Clean Environment Act* to strengthen the effectiveness of our environmental impact assessment process. My question, again to the Premier specifically, is this: What are his priorities? Do any of them include the ones that I just listed?

**Hon. Mr. Carr:** Mr. Speaker, the protection of the environment, with regard to all those Acts that the member opposite mentioned, is a priority for this government, and it always has been. It has not been for just this government, Mr. Speaker, but for all the previous ministers on both sides of the Legislature. I have talked to the previous ministers who have sat over in Marysville Place in my role as the minister responsible for Environment.



Nobody in our department lets any of these issues fall aside. We have the most educated, professional, and highly educated... The people in our department, Mr. Speaker, are so passionate about their work that every one of the issues that this member opposite raised is their top priority. There is not a day that goes by at the Department of Environment that any of these topics are not spoken about. I think that the member opposite should start promoting New Brunswick instead of tearing it down.

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

### Hydraulic Fracturing

**Mrs. Harris:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I need to be very clear. We are now embarking on a very, very scary and sad day in New Brunswick. We are watching this Premier, with his one-man style of Doug Ford, Trump-like politics: My way, absolutely build no new highways for New Brunswick... He is doing things on his own without any consultation. There is not consultation with his Cabinet, and there is not consultation with New Brunswickers. It is my way, and that is it. Mr. Speaker, New Brunswickers need to be very aware of what is happening here in New Brunswick.

(Interjections.)

**Mrs. Harris:** Do not shush me from the other side. This is my chance to speak.

Mr. Speaker, my question is a direct question to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. We found that the lift-then-consult tactic is happening with this moratorium on fracking being lifted. I cannot understand how you, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, would allow that to happen. You know better—do better.

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

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** Mr. Speaker, it is important to... I thank the member opposite. Here are a few facts. We campaigned on natural gas development. That was in our platform. As lawmakers in the Legislature, it is our job to make law. We had a law against doing natural gas. We had a moratorium. Of course, the other government put it in place. Because it is in our platform and because we committed to it, we, as lawmakers, have the right to make a law that enables us to try to reach our platform commitments. However, we have a duty to consult. That is the honour of the Crown, and we must respect that.

I met with the Mi'kmaq and the Wolastoqiyik in December. They asked whether I, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, would ensure that they would be consulted. I told them absolutely, and they will be. We have the potential for an industry, and we are going to consult. However, we cannot have an industry if we have a law against it. Thank you.



**Mrs. Harris:** Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can rise up and try to stop me from asking another question, but it is not going to happen. We on this side of the floor will be heard.

Mr. Speaker, again, it is unbelievable to think that, one month ago, this moratorium was lifted without any consultation. Where are you going to put the wastewater? What are you going to do to protect the rivers and the watersheds?

This government has no care and no concern. We see it time and time again. It is all about the members saying that they are getting things done. Well, in order to get things done, you need to consult first and foremost with Aboriginal people and first and foremost with New Brunswickers. The style of politics of this Premier, of doing things his way only, is absolutely pathetic. I am encouraging and asking the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs to ensure that the consultation...

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

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member opposite. Of course, it is the honour of the Crown, and we are going to respect that.

However, if we have a law against an industry, we not only do not have the industry, but we also have a law against it. As lawmakers, in order to fulfil our campaign commitments, we have to make a law that allows us to pursue a potential industry. It is potential. It is a potential industry in this province. It used to exist in the same spot.

Now, of course, we are going to consult with the First Nations. I, as minister, committed to that. I gave my word to the chiefs, and we on this side of the floor are keeping it. We will be consulting First Nations in New Brunswick.

