

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**February 12, 2021**

### CONTENTS

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Melanson**

**Hon. Ms. Dunn**

**Mr. Melanson**

**Hon. Ms. Dunn**

**Mr. Melanson**

**Hon. Mr. Higgs**

**Mr. Melanson**

**Hon. Mr. Higgs**

**Mr. Melanson**

**Hon. Mr. Higgs**

#### **OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Bourque**

**Hon. Mr. Higgs**

**Mr. Bourque**

**Hon. Mr. Higgs**

**Mr. Bourque**

**Hon. Mr. Higgs**

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

### RENTS

**Mr. Gauvin**

**Hon. Mary Wilson**

**Hon. Mary Wilson**

**Mr. Gauvin**

**Hon. Mary Wilson**

**Mr. Gauvin**

**Mr. Gauvin**

**Hon. Mary Wilson**

**Hon. Mary Wilson**

### HOUSE SITTINGS

**Mr. Coon**

**Hon. Mr. Savoie**

**Mr. Coon**

**Hon. Mr. Higgs**

### CORONAVIRUS

**Mrs. Conroy**

**Hon. Mrs. Shephard**

**Mrs. Conroy**

**Hon. Mrs. Shephard**

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Melanson**

**Hon. Mr. Higgs**

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

[Original]

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, the world is going through one of the worst crises in one hundred years. I think 48 of us in this room realize that. I think there is one individual in this House who does not get it.

The IMF has documented where most industrialized countries and jurisdictions are financially intervening in the economy to save it and to allow their economies to grow beyond COVID-19: France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland. They are all investing based on a percentage of the GDP.

In New Brunswick, based on what the Premier said, the calculation is that the investment level is about 0.0006 of New Brunswick's GDP. Premier, what is wrong with you?

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business, Minister responsible for Opportunities NB, Minister responsible for Immigration, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member opposite for the question. I want to speak specifically with respect to your remarks that we are not doing anything. I would totally disagree with that.

I think that you should also be cognizant of the fact that we have to be guarders of the public purse. Number one, that is very important. Number two, we have to worry about our deficit and our credit rating. That actually implies that other folks will want to come here and invest in this province.

Also, I would say to you that over the course of the last year, we have offered \$50 million in working capital loans and numerous deferrals on interest payments and loan payments. We have subsidized essential workers in the primary care sectors. We have done numerous things, so I would ask that you please acknowledge some of that stuff because it is very important to the public. Thank you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Our economy and the protection of our small and medium-sized businesses are very important issues. I listened to the Premier's state of the province address the other day, and he is clearly out of touch with reality. He sees everything through rose-coloured glasses and thinks that everything is all right and all is well. That is the way he sees it.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business did some research. It is telling us that up to 1 in 4 businesses—25% of businesses—could go bankrupt. Nearly 5 000 businesses could go bankrupt. Nearly 47 000 jobs could be lost in New Brunswick, and up to 50% of tourism operators could simply disappear.

Mr. Premier, this is an important issue. You need to stand up today and explain how you view those things and why, oh why, you are not taking action to try to protect our small and medium-sized businesses and ensure that our economy is ready for recovery after the pandemic.

[*Original*]

**Hon. Ms. Dunn** (Saint John Harbour, Minister responsible for Economic Development and Small Business, Minister responsible for Opportunities NB, Minister responsible for Immigration, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. It is actually my job to defend what we are doing with respect to the economic file and ONB and small business. I would say to you that this is a direct quote from the CFIB, which actually represents over 100 000 businesses in Canada. It came out last weekend, and here is what businesses said to us: We do not want any more subsidies; we want sales; we want safe pathways to reopen.

And that is exactly what this government is doing. Thank you.

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, the minister is getting up, but the Premier should actually get up. He is the commander in chief of this government, and obviously, we are seeing the outcome of his inaction in the economy.

The minister said she has to defend. Yes, you are defensive, clearly. Clearly, you are on the defensive on this one. Everybody wants to have more sales for businesses. But do you know what? Nobody controls COVID-19 right now. It is a reality of what we are going through here.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives came out with a report. It clearly stated how much money provincial governments actually invested last year in 2020—British Columbia, per person, \$283; Alberta, \$745; Saskatchewan, \$935; Manitoba, \$1 047; Ontario, \$612; Quebec, \$758; Prince Edward Island, \$391; Nova Scotia, \$541; Newfoundland and Labrador, \$283; New Brunswick, \$75, which is 26¢ per person per day that this provincial government invested—shameful. Please...

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, is it not interesting? There are several speaking points, and there is only

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

one philosophy—spend more money, and it will get better. That is all we do. It does not matter what we do. Spend more money, because that is a trend of the Liberal philosophy.

Mr. Speaker, our economic indicators in this province are leading the country. We are seeing ourselves at one, two, and three across all sectors in economic growth, economic openings, and people being employed. I think that the number was 99%, according to StatsCan—leading the country. So you tell me: What do we want? Do we want results, or do we want to be broke? Which do we want when we can have one or the other?

We can manage our way out of COVID-19, or we can throw our way through it. We have a disciplined approach and are getting results, and people are respecting that. That is why we see our continuing population growth. That is why we see businesses opening. That is why we see record investment. People see stability, hope, and confidence in New Brunswick for one of the first times.

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Absolutely, New Brunswickers want so see hope, and they need hope. They need their government to show leadership on the economic file, and we are not seeing this. Seeing a society as a balance sheet and a provincial budget and seeing it as an accounting exercise creates many different problems, Mr. Speaker. We see that.

I am going to ask the Premier whether he has had a conversation with Krista Ross, the CEO of the chamber of commerce. She wants to see less austerity and more investment. Has he had a conversation with Richard Saillant, who said, “Higgs’s deficit obsession threatens” New Brunswick’s recovery? Has he talked to the economist Herb Emery? Mr. Premier, these are experts. Have you discussed with Donald Savoie?

*[Translation]*

Mr. Savoie says that investment is needed. Investment is needed right now. Pierre-Marcel Desjardins says your obsession with an accounting approach is detrimental to our economy. Have you spoken to these people, Mr. Premier?

*[Original]*

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have talked to many of those folks that would be economists. It is interesting about economists. They are like doctors. You can go to a number of them and get a different philosophy, particularly Richard Saillant, whose views seem to have changed quite dramatically over the last number of, well, years, months, weeks—I am not sure what.

There is one thing that we want to be sure of. We want to be sure that we are actually getting results for the money that taxpayers spend. You know what situation we are in and

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

why our rating within, let's say, the provinces in the GDP-growth opportunities is an issue. It is because we are one of the highest-taxed provinces in the country. We have no room for more taxation. We have no room to keep telling people that we are taking more from their pocketbooks. You can thank the previous government for that sort of position and the Liberals and their past spending spree. If you want to look at results, let's talk about results.

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier just proved that there are 48 members who understand what is going on and there is one who does not.

What makes him the most expert person in the field of economics? All industrial jurisdictions around the world, including Canada, are investing. All these economic experts... Now the Premier is criticizing Mr. Saillant. That is a good job. Experts and business advocates are saying that the government needs to play a critical role in sustaining our economy in New Brunswick and in helping small and medium-sized businesses. They need to be able to bridge this pandemic so that they can strive again and grow our economy.

Mr. Premier, I am going to be blunt here. What makes you the expert in this field when you have all these people and all these jurisdictions doing exactly what you are not doing?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, let's be blunt. Let's look at the facts. Let's look at the numbers that we see. Population growth continues. Our labour force is at 99% of where it was pre-pandemic. We see record investment in the province. For 50 years, we have not seen the level of activity in our residential sectors that we are seeing right now. We are seeing unprecedented change in the culture, view, and attitude toward this province. We have seen record movements in our province prior to these last few months of our own people looking at New Brunswick for the first time and realizing how great it is.

The only people who do not understand anything but spending... I am looking at them. The only words they can use are "spend more". They do not care about results. Just spend more. They just care about spending more—throwing it out there.

Mr. Speaker, look at the results. I will stand with any province and I will stand with any records because we have a team here that is focused on action and results.

[*Translation*]

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Bourque** (Kent South, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to remind you that the minister responsible for official languages is the Premier.





# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

Last year, the Premier rejected out of hand our proposal to create a standing committee on official languages at the Legislative Assembly in order to carry out an impartial, transparent review of the Act. After doing nothing for months, he decided on the review format in secret, without consulting the official opposition or, as far as we know, the Commissioner of Official Languages.

A month ago, the Premier announced that he would be appointing two commissioners to carry out the review. We are still waiting. When does the Premier expect to announce the names of these two commissioners?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I put out a press release about a week or so ago that basically indicates the process that would be followed and the commissioners that would be forthcoming. Our goal is to have them in place by the end of this month. That is the process. We are following the *Official Languages Act* in our ability, certainly, to have this sort of approach versus the committee approach. More importantly, looking right now at COVID-19, it is not as it was before. It is not as though you can have a big open session in a public forum. This is a different philosophy, and much would have to be considered as to how this works in COVID-19.

The other aspect of this, of course, was in relation to how we can have individual viewpoints be presented with very open, frank, quiet, and meaningful discussions. Mr. Speaker, I certainly believe that we have an opportunity to pull our province together like never before and we have an opportunity for people to work together to find solutions so that we can be a bilingual province all over our province. That is our goal, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bourque** (Kent South, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I would like to remind the Premier that this press release came out three weeks ago and not a week ago. I would also like to remind the Premier that he talks about COVID-19 as if it were a reason for us to take our time. I would be interested to know why we have to hurry when it comes to consultation about health, but not when it comes to this. I find there is some inconsistency in that.

I would also like the Premier to explain the scope of these commissioners' powers and tell us whether they will be at liberty to carry out the work as they see fit or be placed under the authority of the Premier. Thank you.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): As the process unfolds, Mr. Speaker, we will identify the scope of the work, the scope of the review, in addition to the requirements in the OLA. Obviously, the commissioner's role is to be independent in the process and to take in the views. I do not want the commissioner to come with preconceived notions. I want the commissioner to come and listen to people from across this province and then give the government a report.

**Mr. Bourque** (Kent South, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My God, I am kind of bewildered because he is talking about these processes and there are 10 months left. Normally, when this was done under previous governments, it was done two years before. Now he is still talking about how we have to think about this and think about that. My God, this is very, very worrisome.

[Translation]

Will the written submissions and presentations to the commission be made public? Will the report be submitted to the Legislative Assembly? Thank you very much.

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I am not sure, in the past... I do believe that, in the past, in terms of the one that was done 10 years ago... Actually, I think it took two years to do, if I recall. But I know that we have a requirement to do it this year, and that is our goal. We will follow the process as outlined to make the report available, to make the process whatever it entails right now. I am not exactly sure what that is, but we will meet the requirements, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

## RENTS

**Mr. Gauvin** (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Several organizations have tried to get in touch with the Premier about rising rents. As we know, this is an unprecedented crisis here in New Brunswick. Unfortunately—given how cold it is today—these tenants are not eligible for the same programs as deputy ministers on six-figure salaries are so that they can get some money to pay their rent. Now, here is my question for the Premier or whoever rises: What assistance can we expect from this government for renters? Thank you.



# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

[Original]

**Hon. Mary Wilson** (Oromocto-Lincoln-Fredericton, Minister of Service New Brunswick, Minister responsible for Military Affairs, PC): I very much appreciate the opportunity to respond to this very important issue. Mr. Speaker, the first thing I want to say is that my department, my government, and I have the utmost empathy for any tenant who is going through a difficult time. We also encourage these individuals who may be experiencing unreasonable rent increases to contact our Residential Tenancies Tribunal.

(Interjection.)

**Hon. Mary Wilson** (Oromocto-Lincoln-Fredericton, Minister of Service New Brunswick, Minister responsible for Military Affairs, PC): No, not at all. I also encourage every member in this House not to fearmonger, not to tell tenants that they are going to get kicked out for reaching out to us. That also affects the landlords in our respective ridings who are good business owners and who have the right thing in mind for their tenants. I can tell you that for 100% of eviction applications that came through this year, we were able to intervene. Residents who were cooperative with us, none of them were evicted.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time, minister.

**Mr. Gauvin** (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Mr. Speaker, fearmongering? What should we tell the people who call our offices who are being kicked out? What should we tell them?

[Translation]

In his address and then in the news, the Premier said he would take 90 days to review the situation. Mr. Speaker, a lot can happen in 90 days. I certainly do not mean to say that anyone is ill-intentioned, but, in order to protect the most vulnerable during that 90-day review of the file, can the Premier commit to implementing a rent freeze? The objective would precisely be to protect the people who are most at risk during the winter.

[Original]

**Hon. Mary Wilson** (Oromocto-Lincoln-Fredericton, Minister of Service New Brunswick, Minister responsible for Military Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the data very, very clearly shows that the provinces that have rent control actually have had higher rent increases in recent years. The CMHC has shown an average over a seven-year period, between October 2013 and October 2020, and Ontario and British Columbia have had well above the Canadian average increases in rent. It just does not prove that rent control actually helps. It actually has a negative impact.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

Saying that, we have heard from the residents of New Brunswick, we have heard from our opposition, and that is why Premier Higgs has announced that we will conduct a 90-day review of the rental situation in New Brunswick. We hope that it will be done sooner—the sooner the better. We will be evaluating the market, vacancy rates, rental fees and trends, and the impact that COVID-19 may have had on all of the above. What are you going to tell your people? You are going to tell every resident in this province to dial 1 888 762-8600. We are there to help.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time, minister.

**Mr. Gauvin** (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you for that. Thank you for that answer.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to give a little bit of advice. Collaboration is not only for headlines. The advice is very simple: Pick up the phone. All the provinces around New Brunswick took action immediately. The Premier has time to call the Premier of Nova Scotia, who seems to be doing better than we are at everything, and ask him—just ask him.

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Order. Order.

**Mr. Gauvin** (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): I am sure that the Premier of Nova Scotia will be happy to take our Premier by the hand, step by step, and tell him how he can do it immediately, because they all did it. Will he call the other jurisdictions? Will the Premier call other jurisdictions? Get that fixed now.

**Hon. Mary Wilson** (Oromocto-Lincoln-Fredericton, Minister of Service New Brunswick, Minister responsible for Military Affairs, PC): Interesting comments. I have an article, dated October 29, “Nova Scotia not considering... control measures”, in which Premier McNeil is quoted: “We just don’t believe they work... They haven’t worked in other places where they’ve been applied and that’s a different philosophical issue.”

We have an election coming in Nova Scotia. Within a couple of weeks, all of a sudden, Nova Scotia changed its mind. Why would that be? Is it because it made sense?

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Order.

**Hon. Mary Wilson** (Oromocto-Lincoln-Fredericton, Minister of Service New Brunswick, Minister responsible for Military Affairs, PC): No, it is because an election is coming. Thank you.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

### HOUSE SITTINGS

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This provincial parliament of ours has seen only 18 regular sitting days since the state of emergency was declared 11 months ago. Former President of India Pratibha Patil called parliament “the repository of the sovereign will of the people”. This parliament has mostly been the repository of an empty Chamber for the last 11 months. The Premier seems to think that our role is to dutifully participate in the procedures needed for him to carry out his agenda. John Diefenbaker, of all people, said that parliament is far “more than... procedure—it is the custodian of the nation’s freedom”.

The business of this House is not to rubberstamp the agenda of the Premier’s Cabinet. Rather, it is to hold him and his ministers accountable, to make law, and to debate the issues of the day. It is time that the citizens who sent us here know when to expect us at work. Will the Premier commit to tabling a parliamentary calendar when we return in March?

**Hon. Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Minister responsible for La Francophonie, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, starting from the beginning, we got elected in 2020, in the middle of a pandemic. We managed to put through a huge number of bills in a very short period of time. We managed, at the start of the pandemic, to pass a budget in 17 minutes. Mr. Speaker, I would say that this is because we have a well-functioning Legislature, and that view includes the opposition as well.

Since after Christmas and the beginning of the new year, we have been doing committee work and advancing the interests of the people of this province. We have been working through COVID-19 and collaborating, I thought, quite well as a Legislature, and we will continue to do that. So, Mr. Speaker, we do not need a legislative calendar. What we need to do is to continue to work together and do the work that New Brunswickers expect us to do each and every day that we can.

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, in a parliamentary democracy such as ours, Cabinet ministers are accountable to this Legislature. While we were away from this Chamber, we had one minister who stepped over the line by writing to the EUB to suggest how it should carry out its business as an economic regulator and the Premier publicly endorsed his action rather than sanctioning it.

Then, on January 22, the *Aquinian* reported that during the December 1 meeting with university presidents, another minister, the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, criticized the quality of STU’s Bachelor of Social Work program, blaming its graduates for not having the necessary skills to get people off social assistance.

Mr. Premier, what is next? I mean, Mr. Speaker. What is next? Blaming our medical school graduates for sick people or the UNBSJ political science department for the minister’s



# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

appalling behaviour? Mr. Speaker, will the Premier require the minister to publicly apologize for his attack on St. Thomas University and its social work program?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think that in every sector, for what we do, we need to find new ways of doing it. We need to challenge all our big institutions, be it our service delivery or be it our departments, with any aspect of what we do to get better, because we are challenged in New Brunswick, but we are not unique. We are challenged in competing with every province in the country and other provinces.

As for the particulars in question in relation to the letter from the minister to the EUB, it was suggested that the EUB make a decision, Mr. Speaker. We asked the EUB to look at it and to make a decision. We have seen what has happened around us. We have seen what has happened in Newfoundland with the refinery closing, and we have seen the refinery close in Nova Scotia a few years ago. We know, Mr. Speaker, that the impact that is coming, which I spoke of in the state of the province address, on the refining operation, based on federal requirements, is going to be devastating. But the saddest part is that we are going to be buying fuel from other countries around the world that do not have the human rights measures and do not have the climate change issues that we are dealing with. We have to...

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time, Premier.

## CORONAVIRUS

**Mrs. Conroy** (Miramichi, PA): Mr. Speaker, the rotational workers are dealing with some very serious issues. They are crying for help, and they need some answers. Being confined for months is not healthy. Not only does it affect their mental health, but also some have health conditions, such as diabetes, that need regular appointments and blood work. Spouses are having to choose between isolating with them or moving out and keeping their jobs. The kids are having to stay home from school with no accommodation made for online learning. We are told stories of kids being bullied at school and of teenagers living without their families so that they can attend school, and they are having to buy the groceries and do errands for the family.

These workers are being treated differently from the essential workers who travel across the borders daily and are able to get tested regularly with no isolation required. Mr. Speaker, these approximately 3 700 workers are essential. They sacrifice to provide for their family while bringing money into our province, and many of them are considering leaving the province.

Mr. Speaker, can Public Health please provide the actual number of cases that were brought in by rotational workers in New Brunswick? Can rapid testing be used on rotational workers so that they can have fewer days...



# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time, member.

**Hon. Mrs. Shephard** (Saint John Lancaster, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the misconception is that this policy targets one group of people, and it does not. This is a policy directed to travellers, travellers who leave this province and go to other provinces that are hot spots and travellers who go through one, two, or three different airports before they come home. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more concerning to this province right now. Every member of the COVID-19 Cabinet committee and every member of the Legislature should understand the reality of what will happen if a variant gets into our communities without being caught.

We know, from our temporary foreign worker experiment, that when we brought them into the province and we made them isolate for 14 days, they did not transmit to anyone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Conroy** (Miramichi, PA): Thank you for the answer, but they are not travellers. They are essential workers, and all the other essential workers are able to get tested. Even Irving, the company, has been able to get rapid testing. It could be under a pilot project or something. These people are getting angry. They are depressed and frustrated. It is taking a toll on their mental and physical health, with no end in sight. How long are they expected to live under these conditions? Can something be done to find a middle ground so that they are tested and treated like all the other essential workers?

**Hon. Mrs. Shephard** (Saint John Lancaster, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, today, we have in excess of 160 or 170 active cases. Our daily numbers are coming down, and that is a really good thing. In December, before the holidays, we had 44 active cases, and then in January, we had 567, more than in all of 2020. Now, we have a variant, and the variant is more transmissible. It will spread faster, we will not be able to contact trace, and it will explode if we are not extremely diligent. I know that this is a very, very difficult time. I understand that. These measures have been in place for a few weeks. Mr. Speaker, we want to get back to normalcy as soon as possible, and if we stay diligent, we can get back to yellow. We can get back to the Atlantic Bubble.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Thank you. Time, minister.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, we heard words from the Premier this morning that were appalling. It shows the level of arrogance of this government. When I mentioned these different economists that he had spoken to, he replied that he had spoken to these would-be economists—would-be economists. And then, when I checked their résumés and qualifications, I saw that they are economists. The Premier has absolutely no credentials when it comes to the economy. When the economist Saillant is now saying that the Premier is obsessed with the deficit and is not investing in





# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

affordable housing, the Premier is now questioning the expertise of Mr. Saillant. Mr. Speaker, the Premier needs to apologize right now, before question period is over, to these individuals. He needs to listen to them. They are the experts.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time. Time, member.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate why the Leader of the Opposition would try to make hay out of all of this. My point that I was raising this morning is that I have spoken to different economists. I am not saying that I have spoken to every one of the aforementioned, but the point is that I can get a different perspective on what is needed to have New Brunswick survive, thrive, and go forward better than anyone from different economists. That is my point. That is why I referenced the doctors, as the leader would likely note.

You can get a different opinion, Mr. Speaker. We all can get different opinions on how we should move forward, and we could be moving in multiple directions based on different opinions. My point was this. I can find opinions that would say that we need to find value for whatever we can spend our tax dollars on, and most of the citizens would absolutely say that. They would say this: I want you to spend our taxpayer dollars, and I want to feel the results. Well, Mr. Speaker, what I am telling you is that we are feeling the results here and we are seeing it on the streets. We are seeing it with our province recovering.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Time. The time for question period is over.