Oral Questions



June 9, 2021

CONTENTS

1

PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Mr. McKee Hon. Mr. Higgs Mr. McKee Hon. Mr. Higgs

AN ACT RESPECTING EMPOWERING THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Mr. Bourque Hon. Mr. Cardy

Mr. Bourque

Hon. Mr. Cardy

UNIVERSITIES

Mrs. Landry

Hon. Mr. Holder

Mrs. Landry

Hon. Mr. Holder

BUILDINGS

Mr. LeBlanc

Hon. Ms. Green

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Coon

Hon. Mr. Crossman

Mr. Coon

Hon. Mr. Crossman

IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Austin

Hon. Mrs. Shephard

BUILDINGS

Mr. LeBlanc

Hon. Ms. Green

MAPLE SYRUP

Mr. LePage

Hon. Mr. Holland

Mr. LePage

Hon. Mr. Holland

[Original]

PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, today, I want to come back to Dr. Ngola. The Premier's behaviour yesterday in trying to pick a fight with a citizen was unbefitting of a premier, to say the least. A premier's task should be to protect our citizens, not to launch unjustified attacks on them.

The Premier has alleged that he has additional information on this matter that would justify his actions and actually incriminate the doctor. If he does have documents, why was this information not disclosed to Dr. Ngola's lawyers in the court proceedings?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot really comment on the court proceedings. That is obviously an independent process that has been well established over the years.

I can comment that I am certainly very prepared to put all the information on the table, and I would think that the doctor would be very pleased to have that happen because that would really settle it. For me to make a suggestion that I am willing to do so would be, I would say, very appropriate and maybe very . . . I guess that I am willing to share every bit of information I have. Let the public decide whether there is a concern there or whether there is not a concern there. Following that, we can decide where we go from there.

I await a decision from the doctor in relation to waiving privacy concerns because, as we all know, there is information I cannot share due to privacy concerns. That is why I have not. Thank you.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): There are no privacy concerns in court proceedings. An accused is actually entitled to full disclosure to make a defense against the charges. The Crown lawyers in this case represented to the court that they actually had no documentation, communication, or evidence in any form from the Premier or his office in relation to the Dr. Ngola matter. If the Premier had this information, why was it not provided to the Crown and disclosed to Dr. Ngola's lawyers as part of the Crown disclosure obligation?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I think I have already gone through the legal side of it, and I think that we should deal directly—and the member opposite should deal directly—with the task at hand.

If there is a willingness here to waive the privacy concerns... All this information that I have and all this information that we want to talk about—the concerns and what I knew about the situation at the time—would be very open. I am prepared to share that very openly and honestly. What more can we ask for? That is open, transparent, and honest information

Oral Questions

that, right now, I am not able to share because of privacy concerns. I would think the member would be very supportive of this initiative. Rather than hiding and going away somewhere, I am facing this head-on. I am opening it up and saying this: Let's put all the facts on the table. How much more open and transparent can I be? Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, it is one thing for the Premier to tell the public that he has documents in his possession. It is another thing to tell the court that he does not have any. One of Dr. Ngola's lawyers says he has received little or no information from the Crown and was considering making an application to compel disclosure of all previously undisclosed information.

If the Premier withheld information, is he aware that he may have compromised the Crown lawyers who told the court that they had no additional information to provide to the defence team representing Dr. Ngola?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I am not a lawyer, and neither is the member opposite, Mr. Speaker. Regarding the information that I am talking about, if the doctor's lawyer actually wants to have everything that I know, I cannot understand why he would not recommend this to his client: Waive the privacy concerns because we want to know the facts. If there is something there that we should know, waive the privacy concerns and away we go.

Why would that not be an easy solution? Why would that not be something that would be pretty straightforward in the discussion? It will be what it will be, and we will all accept the outcome. It is pretty simple. It is very simple and very transparent. I would like to be very transparent, so I am asking the legal counsel and the doctor to consider being as transparent as I want to be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, that is quite funny. I do not know if the Premier is accusing me of not being a lawyer. The last time I checked, I was indeed a lawyer and a practicing member of the Law Society of New Brunswick. Maybe he should do his homework here?

It is a bit like Dr. Ngola's case. I think the Premier does not know what he is doing on this file. He tells us he has documents. He told the court that he did not have any. Why say one thing to the court and another to the public? What is the answer, Mr. Speaker? Can the Premier indicate how he obtained access to the alleged information of which he now claims to be in possession?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is not a lawyer on this case. That is well established. He is trying to be a lawyer now, but he is not a lawyer on this case. I was not part of this case either. I was not involved in this court proceeding.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that we can do this directly. We can go directly and deal with this with all the facts that we are aware of and with all the facts that Public Health had gathered, and there we are. Why not agree right up front to put everything on the table? We do not need to make this a big event. We do not need to make a big splash out of this. We can just say: Here are the facts that we know. Here is how we were working to protect the public. Here are the facts that we knew, and here is what we knew was the outcome.

Mr. Speaker, I know that it may be a little unorthodox, to want to share all the information and to make sure that the public is well informed. If that is what it is going to take to end this discussion, then let's do it. That seems pretty straightforward and pretty simple, and I am prepared to do that. Thank you.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier says that he was not involved in this case, but there was a piece of investigative journalism that was released not too long ago that showed that he was behind the investigation in this case. In fact, he and members of his office had orchestrated an investigation against Dr. Ngola. Can the Premier tell us today why he announced that a person, who was soon identified as Dr. Ngola, would be charged even before police were made aware of the situation?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I guess that reading the media and saying that this is what happened might be the source of one bit of information, but with every situation during this pandemic, if I thought someone was... If we had issues where people were not following the compliance rules or were not following the Public Health rules, then we issued fines. We talked with Public Safety, and it reported to the COVID-19 committee on the number of fines and on where the compliance rates were and whether they were at 80% or 95%.

In every case, Mr. Speaker, whether it was a house party, people in a crowded gathering, or people who were not following the rules of isolation, we wanted to make sure that they did follow the rules. We did inspect that, and we did go after them. So it was not an isolated case, Mr. Speaker. It was a planned, routine requirement to follow the rules of Public Health. There were no exceptions to that. It was part of the program. It was not unique, Mr. Speaker, that I would say to follow the rules.

What happened in this case... As we all know, Mr. Speaker, during this situation, we had our first fatality.

Original by Hansard Office

Translation by Debates Translation

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

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, there was an intensive investigation into the Dr. Ngola matter, and yet the Crown decided to withdraw the charges, as it clearly did not have sufficient evidence to proceed. It did not have this supposed information which the Premier is now in possession of and which would have apparently aided the Crown's case against Dr. Ngola. This contradicts the Premier's claims as he attempts to convince the public that he has this information. Does the Premier believe that he knows better than the public prosecutors who dealt with the matter and who decided to withdraw the charges because they did not have a reasonable prospect of conviction?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot really answer it in any different way. What I have said is that I do not control the prosecution. I do not control its decisions on whether it proceeds or does not proceed on a particular charge. I have said very openly that I personally was hopeful that it would proceed because I wanted all the facts to be put on the table. I am still hopeful that all the facts will be put on the table. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared for that to happen. However, I obviously cannot do that because it would breach privacy rules and then I would ultimately be charged for breaching privacy rules. I am very cognizant of that, and I will maintain the same position that I have said repeatedly.

The member can get up and down and up and down. At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, the next response will be that I have already answered that question because that is where I am. That is my position. I will indeed reveal whatever I knew at the time, but I will need a waiver on the privacy rules to do that.

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, the actions of the Premier to pick a fight with a private citizen are absolutely outrageous. He wants to put all the facts on the table. He had the opportunity to do so in the court proceedings. In fact, it is the Crown's obligation to disclose the entire case against Dr. Ngola. Apparently, the Premier is in possession of more documents that he did not disclose, so I do not know what he is trying to hide.

Privacy rules do not apply to quasi-criminal court proceedings. The defense is entitled to those documents, so why is the Premier now threatening to disclose personal and confidential information and attempting to bully a citizen into releasing the Premier from liability for his actions? Those actions may have put the Premier in violation of the law and obstruction of justice.

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, there is no threat. There is no bullying. It is just saying that I will put everything that I knew on the table. I would think that the opposition would welcome that transparent approach. There is nothing more I can say to this. Thank you.

AN ACT RESPECTING EMPOWERING THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Mr. Bourque (Kent South, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Bill 35 saga continues. Yesterday, we had the Minister of Education saying that, in fact, resource teachers will not be conducting any psychoeducational assessments regarding any type of medical or medication situation.

I guess my question to the minister now is this: Why do we need this bill? Why can resource teachers not conduct psychoeducational assessments as they are doing now? They now have all the tools to conduct those tests and to assign personal learning plans for these individuals. The answer is not Bill 35. The answer is just hiring more resource teachers, as they currently have the power to do. What is the obsession of this minister to give the resource teachers more training to do the types of things that are very seriously encroaching on the psychologists and their field? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, this discussion gets stranger and stranger. First, the members opposite say that we do not need to do this, there is no problem, and let's just hire more psychologists. Now, they are saying, if I am gutting the question right, that those resource teachers actually do not need any more training. Why do we not just let them do it now? This makes absolutely no sense at all.

Let me go back to the points of this bill. We are going to hire psychologists—already in the plan and already in the budget. Bill 35 means that we are going to add to the teams that support those school psychologists by hiring a team of resource teachers and giving them 1 000 hours of training so that they can conduct psychoeducational assessments. The honourable member appears still not to understand what the assessments even are. This is not about people writing prescriptions. This is about doing assessments of people's ability to get through learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and so on.

The misrepresentations are bizarre. This government will act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker...

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

Mr. Bourque (Kent South, L): It is very clear that this minister has not gone into the classrooms to hear what is going on there. They are conducting those personal learning plans. They already have the tools that they need, so I do not understand this blabbing that goes on with this minister. Why do we not just hire them and also work with the psychologists and give them a better raise and what they need to properly conduct their work?

There is another thing, since we have a few more seconds here, about what happens. He is talking about psychoeducational assessments. Well, if you are talking about anything that has to do with learning disabilities, then you are encroaching on medical issues. That is

Oral Questions

what is happening, and if that is to be the case, which it will be, then if there is a misdiagnosis, who will cover that? The College of Psychologists is properly trained to do so, but the current associations are not. Mr. Minister, how are you going to handle that?

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, where exactly do I begin? Let me try to explain this one more time. Personalized learning plans are not psychoeducational assessments. Psychoeducational assessments are different and are a more specialized process that involves additional training. Traditionally in New Brunswick, they have been performed by psychologists. With this bill, as in other places around the world and in Canada, these assessments would be performed by the equivalent of what we call "resource teachers" here.

What we are doing here is dealing with a backlog of thousands of kids, and in many cases, they are poor kids who do not have the help they need. We are doing our best to get rid of that backlog with a program that has been shown to work elsewhere, and we are going to be hiring the psychologists that we need to support them.

All I hear from the member opposite is an obsession with psychologists. I have talked to teachers, I have talked to parents, and I have talked to psychologists, and after two years of discussion and consultation, I am confident that this is the best plan available.

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

[Translation]

UNIVERSITIES

Mrs. Landry (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): Mr. Speaker, our universities have been struggling with the pandemic, which has increased costs and decreased enrolment. As a result, they had asked the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour to recognize their additional financial needs.

[Original]

Will the minister provide an update on whether he is signing new MOUs with the universities and whether they will contain funding increases?

Hon. Mr. Holder (Portland-Simonds, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I can assure you that over the past two and a half years, we have had some very significant conversations and some very significant results, with our universities, in particular, around the way that we do business in this province. There is no better example than the one we outlined in this House just a couple of weeks ago. For years,

Oral Questions

we were getting bad results with respect to enrollment in the nursing programs at both the Université de Moncton and the University of New Brunswick. Continuously, the previous government did not ask the tough questions. Well, we have asked those tough questions, and you have seen the results that we are getting in terms of the increase in enrollment.

In terms of funding, yes, we are looking at different ways of funding our universities. A lot of those ways are going to have to be labour market-driven, particularly around the health care sector, about which we have had significant conversations in this House over the past couple of weeks.

Mrs. Landry (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): Well, that did not quite answer the question.

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development expressed a few weeks ago that he prefers a performance-based model for our universities. That is a move that, if done, many believe would infringe institutional autonomy, compromise university programming, and weaken our universities. Is there a hidden agenda to tie university funding to force universities to meet subjective targets set by the minister?

Hon. Mr. Holder (Portland-Simonds, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we do intend to make sure that the public dollars that we spend in this province get us the results that we need, particularly with respect to the health care demands that we are going to have over the next number of years. The best example of that is the LPN-to-RN bridging program, where we actually flow the dollars after the first full year of education has been completed.

I do not think that there is anything hidden about that. We were up-front and honest with people when we announced that agreement. What we did not do was just give money to universities and tell them to do whatever they want with it. Yes, we are going to get results, and we are having very positive conversations with our universities with respect to that. They do not expect anything less, Mr. Speaker. But we have not been afraid to have those conversations.

[Translation]

BUILDINGS

Mr. LeBlanc (Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé, L): Mr. Speaker, during consideration of Main Estimates, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure was asked about the plans for the Memramcook Institute. I seem to recall her answering at that time that it was a very important project and that she hoped to have news about how things were progressing very soon.

Original by Hansard Office

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is this: Can she tell the House which stakeholders and developers she has worked with on the project?

[Original]

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I did speak about the Memramcook Institute earlier this year. It is a very important building in our province, and we have had a number of different companies and individuals interested in taking something forward with it. There are some really innovative ideas around it, but I cannot disclose what they are at this point.

I can also tell you that I have no formal offers on the table related to the purchase of that building. The Department of Transportation has published that we are looking to work with developers on what they are thinking about in relation to that building. I have met with several of the members opposite from all the parties to talk about this important building, so it is extremely clear that people in New Brunswick care about this building. The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure is open to any offers and to any ideas on what to do with this building, and we will continue to work with stakeholders and try to do the best thing for this building and this area. Thank you.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been hot in New Brunswick, and it is just the first week of June. New Brunswickers want to know how climate-ready we actually are. Is there a plan?

Students have been sent home in early June because their classrooms are too hot. Rural schools are trucking water in because their wells cannot supply it. Rural households are worried about their wells running dry. Farmers are culling their herds for lack of hay. There are toxic blue-green algae outbreaks in our lakes and rivers. Critical infrastructure, from highways and rail lines to sewage treatment plants, is at risk of flooding from storm surges. There is no inland flood mapping for communities to enable them to implement their climate protection plans.

I do not think we are prepared, Mr. Speaker—at all. Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change tell us what is his plan to make New Brunswick climate-ready?

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister responsible for the Regional Development Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from across the way. We are getting ready, and it is better now than ever before. We have \$36 million coming out of the Climate Change Fund. It was determined across government departments by the directors on that committee to publish a lot of projects.

Original by Hansard Office

Oral Questions

There is \$36 million, as I mentioned. It is across DAAF, DTI, Environment and Climate Change, Social Development, Service New Brunswick, and RDC as well. You will be very pleased in the next week or two when things are announced. We are pretty excited, and we are moving ahead. Thank you.

Mr. Coon (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Well, Mr. Speaker, when your kids are sent home from school because it is too hot to learn, I would not say that we are climate-ready. A lot more needs to be done.

Also, a lot more needs to be done if renewable energy and energy efficiency are to flourish in New Brunswick. We need to be building much greener, cooler buildings. We need actual targets to substantially increase the energy efficiency of our existing homes and our existing commercial buildings and industrial buildings. This is good for the climate, super for the pocketbook, and great for the building sector. But we actually need targets to substitute renewable energy for nonrenewable energy and the legislation and programs to achieve them. Does the Minister of Environment and Climate Change have a plan?

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister responsible for the Regional Development Corporation, PC): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. It will be rolled out shortly. There is more now than ever before. We are moving ahead, for sure.

As a retired schoolteacher and school principal, I know that you will never provide enough money to cool the schools in the province. It is financially impossible. These are changing times, and this week has been extremely hot, especially here in the Legislature as well.

I want you to know that we are committed to being part of the climate change solution. As you heard before, the Standing Committee on Climate Change is coming up with the stewardship and action regarding the climate change plan. There are lots of good things on the horizon. It is not all doom and gloom. We are moving ahead, and you will know that when this plan is rolled out.

We had the new solar mills coming out in Saint John last week. The announcement is coming up, and it is great news for the Saint John area. As much as we want these things to happen, not every part of the province wants them to happen in their backyard and in their location.

Also, the board was appointed, as I mentioned before, regarding the deputy minister...

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

Original by Hansard Office

Oral Questions

IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Austin (Fredericton-Grand Lake, Leader, PA): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Government has been pushing for several weeks to have as many people as possible vaccinated, which is a good thing. Even as we now have over 72% of the population vaccinated, we still all want the numbers to go higher. However, government cannot, on the one hand, push for everyone to get vaccinated and then, on the other hand, make it as cumbersome and difficult as possible for some to get the shot.

For example, I spoke to an individual in Chipman who is trying to get her three grandkids booked for the vaccine, but appointments are available only in Sussex, Oromocto, and Fredericton. All those communities are an hour's drive away from the village of Chipman. Think of trying to book three kids for vaccines on separate days, each one taking time out of school, parents taking time off work, and then driving an hour each way to get their vaccines.

Can the Minister of Health please tell me why people in rural areas are continuing to struggle to get the COVID-19 vaccine locally and why there are not more mobile units and vaccine clinics in those areas?

Hon. Mrs. Shephard (Saint John Lancaster, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of this morning, we are at 72.2% of all New Brunswickers aged 12 and over who are vaccinated.

Over the past couple of days, I have certainly acknowledged that we want to understand any barriers that individual families or individuals themselves have in receiving the vaccination. We are also looking at every option possible, but please let me state that the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are not able to be moved to multiple locations. So we must have a plan in place, and that has been continuing in the work with our communities. It is very important that we have access to the vaccine, so we will look at every opportunity to do that.

I just want to preface this by saying that we do not want to waste vaccines, so we will be deliberate in our attempts to come closer to communities that need them. We will be working with Public Health to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

BUILDINGS

Mr. LeBlanc (Shediac—Beaubassin—Cap-Pelé, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This project is of vital importance to the people of Memramcook. I asked a question about this earlier. Given that the minister says that she understands the importance of the issue, could she tell

Oral Questions

us where the project stands and when we can expect a positive announcement on the future of this venerable historic and cultural site?

[Original]

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish I could tell you that I will have an announcement today. We would really love to have this building being used in an appropriate way in the community. It is a beautiful building. It also costs the government a lot in operating funds each year to maintain this building, so we would be really excited to partner with a private entity that is interested in having appropriate uses within the building. We also want to make sure that we are engaged with our stakeholders in the community and around the community to ensure that the use of the building is appropriate for Memramcook.

We are open to offers. DTI is here, and we have put out an RFP. We want to work with individuals and companies to find a good use for this building. I would announce it tomorrow if we had somebody who had on the table an offer for us to talk about. We will do that when the time is right. Thank you.

[Translation]

MAPLE SYRUP

Mr. LePage (Restigouche West, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spring of 2021, despite the fact that sap flows started very early and the production period was shorter for maple producers in New Brunswick, production in 2021 was described as good. However, producers want to make more.

Since 2019, the New Brunswick Maple Syrup Association and its members in the Restigouche West region have been urging the government to release new hectares of public forest to enable the industry to continue growing. I am proud of the producers in the Restigouche West region, who have proven themselves and who want to develop their land. However, they want to expand their sugar bushes.

I know the minister has several allocation applications on his desk from current and new maple producers. This is a booming industry that has seen its exports grow by 20% and employs over 2 500 people. We are talking about \$100 million in annual economic spin-offs for the province. Does the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development have a plan to allocate Crown land for the maple industry? Can he share it with us today? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. The answer is yes.

Original by Hansard Office

Translation by Debates Translation

[Original]

There is a plan in place, and it is not just the plan that we are talking about here today. It is a file that we grabbed very early, at the point of forming power in 2018. In fact, that strategy of diverse use of our Crown lands and forests was a part of our platform back then. I believe that I can stand on an unprecedented record of collaboration with the association, with the maple federation. We work very much on-site with them. I myself have traveled several times to that region and to that location in northwestern New Brunswick. We also have a maple industry that is spread throughout the entire province, in other jurisdictions as well.

We have shared documents, and we have shared technology. Absolutely, there is a plan that is being put together. When that happens, I think that we will be able to stand very proudly and say that we are the only government—the first government—that has ever had an ongoing maple strategy involved in forestry management. That is progress, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. LePage (Restigouche West, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we know, there has been a silviculture program for the maple industry to date. This funding was intended to improve the operation and growth of maple syrup production on Crown land and sugar bushes on private woodland. Can the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development indicate what his government's investments were in 2020 and tell us about his silviculture plan and any other financial assistance for the maple industry in 2021?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, again, thank you for the follow-up question. We could speak at length about investments that are being made, and they come in many different formats. For example, we have been able to share a lot of the LIDAR information that we have, helping the maple producers to map out areas and locations right down to the individual trees and stems on their properties.

Also, there is something that we have done over the past year by actually being on the ground with folks. I saw it myself when I was up in the northwestern part of New Brunswick, where we learned by talking to the maple producers that red maple presented an opportunity to tap even more of that resource and to create even more volume out of what exists. The investments that we plan on making in that sector will be evidenced by an ongoing investment and by ensuring that maple is forever at the table when forestry is discussed going forward. That is a commitment to the industry that it has never seen before. I look forward to walking that out. Stay tuned, Mr. Speaker. It is coming soon.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): The time for question period has elapsed.