

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



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GOVERNMENT FINANCES

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, this government is starting to receive quite a trademark. You have the Minister of Finance, who is withholding fiscal information, and you have the Premier manipulating numbers.

I want to explain to the Minister of Finance the process that is normally followed to establish a budget. First, there is a budget, then there are three quarterly updates, and then there are the audited financial statements at the end of the year. In Quarter 1, which is April to June, the update is normally in August. In Quarter 2, which is July to September, the update is normally in October. In Quarter 3, which is October to December, the update is normally in January. The Quarter 1 update was scheduled for September 3 of this year. It was canceled, and then we got the update on October 13. Can the minister explain why that happened?

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Yes, I can explain why that happened. COVID-19 happened. A number of things are happening around here. We had strikes, and we had a number of things going on here. That is what happened.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): I would like to know what the opposition is upset about.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): The opposition is upset that this province is finally getting some surpluses. It is upset that this province is finally balancing budgets. What is it upset about? It is upset that the C.D. Howe Institute says that we have the most transparent books out there. Is it upset about that? Is it upset about WorkSafeNB premiums that have gone down significantly since this government took over? What is it upset about? What is it upset about other than not being able to spend and spend more and more all the time and take us further into debt? That is what it is upset about—not being able to do it its way, which is debt, tax, and spend.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Wow. Wow. The last time I checked, minister, you were not quarantined for five weeks because of COVID-19. Do not blame

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COVID-19 for something that you missed doing accordingly. With this government and this Premier, it is COVID-19, COVID-19, and COVID-19.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): It is COVID-19. Really? Really?

(Interjections.)

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

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Seriously, when you hear experts saying that it is way too much of a coincidence that the government was trying to withhold information and that, within five weeks, the revenues jumped by \$92 million—from \$145 million extra to \$237 million extra in five weeks. Maybe it is possible that the government was negotiating with its employees.

Premier, tell us this: How many numbers did you manipulate to get to these numbers?

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): You know, the opposition talks as though it is unique to New Brunswick that we are seeing a little influx of revenue, a little influx of federal dollars. Let's look at Ontario, which cut \$11 billion from its deficit—\$11 billion. This is not happening just here. It is happening in all the provinces right across Canada.

Let's talk again about some of the successes that we have had. Remember last year's capital budget? We are coming up on another one, and it is going to be on December 7. There is the date, so you can set it in your calendars. It is December 7. Last year, we increased that capital budget by 12%. There was \$73 million in new spending to get the infrastructure up and happening. We have another capital budget, and you are going to love this one, Mr. Speaker. You are going to love it. It is coming up in two weeks, on December 7. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, the government has lost all credibility when it comes to financial management—all credibility. This government no longer has people's confidence. When the current Premier was Minister of Finance, he called himself a good manager. He talked about transparency and about how credible his numbers were. He even tabled a bill that specifically provided for transparency and deadlines for quarterly updates. When he became Premier, that was all scrapped. There is no transparency. Numbers have been manipulated to make it look like the financial position was worse, apparently, for negotiations with civil servants.

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Mr. Speaker, is this the kind of government we want, seriously? Absolutely not—absolutely not. The Premier must explain himself this morning.

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, first, I will go back to a previous question. I manipulated absolutely none of the numbers—none—because we do not do that in our government. I know that the previous Liberal government was well able to do that sort of thing.

The other thing is that the very things that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about with the fiscal transparency Act that was put in place... Do you know what the first order of business was within three months of his being in government? It was to scrap it all, Mr. Speaker—scrap it all—because that government wanted no transparency of any kind.

In relation to the reporting, I would welcome any one of you to spend time with our Finance Department to look at the records kept during COVID-19 and to look at where the money was spent during COVID-19—every single dime. I am proud of the people who put our facts together. And do you know what? There was a lot of money that came in at the last minute, such as the HST that came in for the second quarter. We did not know how much was going to come. And do you know what? The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that we have an estimate but that, during COVID-19, we could not estimate what that return from the federal government would be.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier really believed in the bill that he tabled in 2018, he would apply it now. He would apply it now. It was a gimmick. It was clearly a gimmick because, right now, you are not even respecting what you said then and what you tabled then, which was prescribing specific timelines for when fiscal updates were supposed to happen and for full transparency of the numbers.

You are manipulating the numbers, Premier. You are. It is clear. It is clear because, within five weeks—five weeks—the revenues went from \$145 million in extra money to \$237 million—within five weeks. That has never been seen before. It has never been seen before. Were you doing this because you wanted to negotiate? You were negotiating with the labour movement and wanted to show people that we were in worse fiscal shape. Is that the reason, Premier?

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Well, the one thing the Leader of the Opposition is correct about is that none of this had ever been seen before, Mr. Speaker. Do you know that? COVID-19 had never been seen before. We never had an economic hit or a health risk in our province and across our country as we have seen with COVID-19. It is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition bailed on the team. When it got a little rough, the Leader of the Opposition said, Well, okay,

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now I have to oppose full-time rather than being part of the solution. He bailed—walked away.

In relation to the offer I just talked about, if you want to come and visit with the Finance Department and go through the numbers and how staff arrived at them and when they arrived... We were, what, three weeks late on the first quarter? I actually announced the other one before the negotiations were done, before the minister came out, and before the actual date it was due so that I could not be accused of just what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about, that I had numbers that I was not sharing in the middle of negotiations. Talk is cheap. Facts are important.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, if the Premier wants to give a full disclosure of the numbers and if what he is saying is true... This morning, I sent a letter to the Auditor General to ask... That is very abnormal—I get it. But what is happening is very abnormal. I asked for a midyear audit of these numbers. I think that there should be a full midyear audit of what is happening with this government and how it manages these numbers. I really hope that the Auditor General does this. I think it is important that we trust the numbers that are being disclosed, not only for New Brunswickers but also for creditors and investors. It is critical because, with what we have seen so far, there is absolutely no trust in the numbers that they bring forward. It changes on the fly. Will the Premier accept the Auditor General doing...

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I know how difficult it is for the Leader of the Opposition to accept that a government could actually continue to run a surplus for five years running, four years running, or whatever the time. Ever since we have been here, Mr. Speaker, we have continued to run surpluses. Those members could never even fathom the concept.

Last week, the Leader of the Opposition talked about how he gets confused with numbers. He said, I get confused with facts. That says it all. I do not know what we could share that would not confuse the Liberal leader, but I would be prepared to do that, to share all the information and let them see exactly how the numbers came about.

Mr. Speaker, this is an unprecedented time that we have had. You look at the consistency of the past few years. Yes, in 2020-21, things have been disrupted all over our country. We have had unprecedented changes in how we manage the revenue, because we did not know where it was going to come from, and in how we would manage the expenses, because we did not know where we were going to need to spend money. But we spent the money where we needed to for the province, and we did it when it was necessary throughout COVID-19. And we will continue to do so.

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

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, I just announced to the Premier that I have sent a letter to the Auditor General asking her to do an audit in the middle of the fiscal year, which is unusual. I understand perfectly that this is an unusual request. However, the way this government has been doing its financial management—it seems to be manipulating numbers and holding back information—is unusual, too, in my opinion.

Since the Premier did not answer my question, I will ask him this: Does he support this request to the Auditor General for an audit after the second quarter, so that we can get an understanding of the numbers and financial situation of our province?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have already said that we would share all the numbers and have a session with our Finance folks to do just that, but all that information is readily available—every dime of it, where it came from and where it was spent. Unlike any other province, I think, we tracked everything that was spent for COVID-19. I think that it was about \$330 million. The federal government gave us about \$280 million. In addition, it gave \$2.3 billion, and every dime went out into the public. None of it went into the provincial coffers. That money is all well accounted for with respect to where it went to help New Brunswickers.

I appreciate that it is easy to stand on the sidelines and be full-time opposition, but it is a shame. We are still working through the COVID-19 pandemic. We still have uncertainties going forward, and I am hopeful that this will continue to get better and better. We are seeing that our hospital situation is stable, but it would be helpful if the Leader of the Opposition had just one more thing in mind other than opposing. Thank you.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): You know, when someone questions this Premier, he gets on the defensive and tries to throw out all kinds of stuff that is actually of no value to this debate and discussion.

The question is this, Premier, because the numbers that you are giving out and the information that you are providing this morning has absolutely no value. We do not trust those numbers. The Auditor General is a totally independent officer of the Legislative Assembly. I sent her a letter this morning asking her for a midyear audit of the financial statements of our province. That is abnormal—I get it. She does not need to do it normally, but I am asking her because what is going on is abnormal. Do you support that, because that would be a truly independent review of your numbers and the numbers of this government?

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Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, we have a very transparent public system, and the Leader of the Opposition knows that. He knows how the numbers are put together. He quotes the timelines when the numbers are available. He knows the information that flows into them. He also knows the volatility that exists around federal money coming from the HST fund every year, and this is a lag year. He knows that.

(Interjections.)

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): He knows all this stuff, and he asked a question about why I did not bring the fiscal transparency Act back. Do you know what I learned? You cannot put in any guidelines that control the Liberal Party because its members do not follow guidelines. They just do not follow anything. It is just this: What can I spend to buy your vote? There is no credibility.

Mr. Speaker, we have a system, and it is very transparent and very open for all to see. I am proud of the people who put it together within the Finance Department because they detailed it like no other province and, as the minister identified, it has been recognized by the C.D. Howe Institute as the most transparent form of financial accounting in this country.

Mr. Melanson (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, I think that the Premier has something right. It used to be one of the most transparent and accountable processes in terms budgeting and updating, but it changed this year. You just changed the whole process because the numbers have been changing on the fly, and we cannot trust the numbers that are being given out by you or your Finance Minister in the quarterly updates.

It is a whole whack of money. Within five weeks, it changed. Why was that? There were negotiations going on with New Brunswick public service workers. There were negotiations going on, and they were asking for a decent wage. The numbers were changed. Actually, the update scheduled for September 3 was canceled and pushed out later, on October 13. That was about three and half months and into the quarter being over. Will you accept the Auditor General's findings if she does this audit?

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

Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well—he said it—that the first-quarter report usually comes out in early September. Well, it came out in late September.

(Interjections.)

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

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Hon. Mr. Higgs (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): But he also said that it did not come out before the negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, the point I made earlier, which seems to have escaped the Leader of the Opposition, is that when I identified the second-quarter surplus that we had learned of, it was about a week or two or three before we actually finished negotiations. It certainly was before we finished signing the tentative agreement. I identified the number as being somewhere between \$250 million and \$300 million before we signed any tentative agreement.

Maybe the Leader of the Opposition would like to check out when I actually said that. This discussion, suggesting that I did not bring forward the second-quarter numbers before the negotiations were completed and a tentative agreement was signed, is absolutely false. I know that he will not look at the dates because it is a better headline for him to say that I did not share that second-quarter number of \$250 million, but I did—before we concluded negotiations.

CHILDCARE

Mr. Bourque (Kent South, L): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, many New Brunswick families were thrilled when the federal government announced a childcare program that would see childcare costs be cut in half starting next year and steadily decrease until they are \$10 per day. This program is nothing short of a game changer and history in the making. It would allow hardworking families much-needed relief on top of allowing a lot more people—namely, women—to be in the workplace. This is an incredible opportunity to address our labour shortages and grow our economy. Other provinces have signed off on this, and they have recognized its importance. So why does this government refuse to do so? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, what a gross misrepresentation of reality from the member opposite. We had been—and this has been out in the public—in discussions with the federal government, with Minister Hussen, until there was an election. Several months of negotiations were lost at that point, and we have been in discussions with Minister Gould since then.

What we have been talking about is how we adapt an early childhood education system, which was developed by the current opposition party—I would remind the members of that before they start criticizing it—and which we have proudly built upon. It is a system that depends on government regulation of the sector and government subsidies for wages and for operators and for a sector that is largely based upon women-run small businesses. The federal government is proposing a model based on not-for-profits. We want to make sure that the existing model, put in place by the official opposition when it was last in power, is protected, that those businesses and those jobs are protected, and that we get the

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best deal possible. We are getting that done, Mr. Speaker, and I am looking forward to reporting back...

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bourque (Kent South, L): Mr. Speaker, when the minister says that what I have said is a misrepresentation of reality, does he mean that, when it comes down to it, the government does not acknowledge that this is a good program? I think the question deserves to be asked.

There is one cause for concern. Only two provinces still have not signed the agreement. Yesterday, in the federal throne speech, New Brunswick was mentioned as one of the jurisdictions that had not yet reached a funding agreement. That makes us look bad. It is not like this came out of nowhere, was inadequately prepared, or was undecided upon.

In fact, we were very proud of the childcare program we had established when I was elected as part of the previous government. There was actually work to be done to enhance it, but I find this government is dragging its heels on this. Even Alberta has signed the agreement that New Brunswick is stalling on. When will the government finally sign the agreement?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Cardy (Fredericton West-Hanwell, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the member opposite for the question. I appreciate the discomfort that the member opposite feels when he hears his federal colleagues calling out, perhaps, our province. This government is not here to win brownie points with Ottawa. We are here for the people of New Brunswick, the kids of New Brunswick, and the families of New Brunswick. With the system that we currently have in place, we have a system—again, built by the previous government—that does not align easily with the federal government's program. I am proud of the program the previous government put in place, and we have been building on it.

We have to make sure that when we sign this deal with Ottawa . . . Make no mistake, we are going in that direction. Make no mistake, we are not going to walk away from that support. But what we are going to do is make sure that our current sector, which is stronger than that of nearly any other province . . . New Brunswick ranks third in the country in access to childcare. We are going to make sure that we do not lose that spot, and we are going to make sure that this money adds to our program and does not detract from it. I look forward to the honourable member's support.

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



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CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, according to the UN, the Chignecto Isthmus, the land connecting New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, is one of those pieces of land most vulnerable to climate change in North America. The dykes that keep the Bay of Fundy out of the Sackville area are one major storm away from disastrous flooding that would put us under the water and cut off Nova Scotia from the rest of the country.

The governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia along with the federal government commissioned a study in 2019 to recommend how to prevent the Bay of Fundy from flooding the Chignecto Isthmus. It was supposed to be released this past February, but nine months later, it has yet to see the light of day. People have been waiting years for action. There is no more time to waste. The report must be tabled in the House as soon as possible. Can the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure tell us when this important study will be made public?

Hon. Ms. Green (Fredericton North, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member opposite, this is a very important study. This is something that was undertaken in partnership with the federal government, the province of New Brunswick, and the province of Nova Scotia. New Brunswick took the lead on the project. A study was conducted over a number of months, and it looked at many different ways to protect this very important piece of land between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. This 19 km of highway and railway sees the transportation of more than \$50 million worth of commercial goods per day. It is an incredibly important connection. It is a strategic transportation corridor for Canada.

We do have the draft report now. We are briefing Nova Scotia and the federal government early in December. Once that is complete, we will release the report.

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, things have moved slowly, and that is the level of urgency that we have come to expect from this government. In March, when I asked the climate change committee that does not talk about climate change to review the government's climate action plan before the mandatory deadline of the end of this year, the Environment Minister said that the government would worry about it later. Well, now it is almost December, and we still have not heard anything about the government's plan to update it.

As I said in March, this is a life-or-death issue. People are being displaced because of the effects of climate change, and people are dying. Nearly 500 people died in British Columbia this summer due to extreme temperatures. People have died due to flooding and mudslides in British Columbia this past week. Newfoundland and Nova Scotia have been hit hard by storms this week. I think that we can do more than kick the climate change can down the road.



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What is the plan of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to update the climate action plan by the end of this year, as is required by law?

Hon. Mr. Crossman (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister responsible for the Regional Development Corporation, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the important question from the member next door. It is important to us, for sure. I am not sure how many times I have mentioned this already. The present plan, which is due in December, will be coming soon in the new year—very soon. The renewal plan will be coming shortly after. Stakeholders as well as our climate change and environmental stewardship committee will be engaged to have input on that. I am looking forward to that.

Out of the COP26, reducing... We have 118 items right now, as you know, and we need to bring those down to a more manageable number and to have specific targets and times to make sure that we get it finished and that we move ahead on climate change. They are all very important. I mentioned some yesterday as well, some regarding the erosion concerns on the coastline. You mentioned the Tantramar Marshes. There is lots on the go, lots to work on, and lots to plan for. But things are happening along the way. The EV program of this past summer, by the way, was up and running in July. We should have a round of applause for that program, which joins the federal money to have more electric vehicles on the roads.

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

PARAMEDICS

Mrs. Conroy (Miramichi, PA): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new health care reform that was announced last week is greatly needed, but it does leave some people worried. The health care system, as we know it, is broken. The staff have reached their absolute limit. Our nurses are leaving the profession because they are tired of working short-staffed every single day, and our paramedics have been struggling for years for support mentally and for a new contract that has not been signed. They generally feel undervalued, and the morale is at an all-time low.

With this announcement that came out last week stating that EMTs will be filling the trucks, our paramedics are saying that they feel that they are being set back by 20 years instead of moving ahead. An EMT does not have nearly the scope of practice that a paramedic does. So my question for the minister is this: Can you explain to us what this is going to look like when it comes out? Is this indeed a step backward instead of a step forward, with only one medic in a truck? What will this look like, especially when there is a truck on the road with two patients in it? Can you give us a little idea?

Hon. Mrs. Shephard (Saint John Lancaster, Minister of Health, PC): I appreciate the question, Mr. Speaker, but I think that the member opposite needs to understand that none of this is going forward without actually... None of this has even been brought forward



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without conversations with the Paramedic Association of New Brunswick. I actually held a town hall with the Paramedic Association on Monday evening when we had 150 individuals on the line. We had great conversations, and we had lots of questions and answers going back and forth. They actually corrected me, saying that the “EMT” position is “EMR”. I completely understand. We want to use proper terminology.

Mr. Speaker, this is a way to build on what we have. The EMRs are going to be necessary in order to support the work of paramedics. We have paramedics who want to do more of their scope of practice. They want to work in communities. They want to do many things. We also need to ensure that we have trucks on the road. This is a way to help support our paramedics.

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

CHILDCARE

Mr. Bourque (Kent South, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier is great at making excuses when he does not want to invest in social programs that will bring huge benefits to New Brunswickers. The federal government has indicated a willingness to be flexible, but it seems that the Premier’s no-can-do attitude continues to be a roadblock, and that is on top of this being one of the most secretive governments on record. We just need to look at its creative accounting measures, which is a fancy way to say that it is fudging the numbers, on top of it bringing dangerous changes to the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, to name only a couple of examples.

We also see this government’s inaction and inability to get things done with the current federal government. Obviously, it loves not having brownie points with that government. Yesterday’s throne speech highlighted this government’s and the Premier’s ineptitude and made us a national laughingstock—a national laughingstock, Mr. Speaker. All of this was self-inflicted by this government’s shameful behaviour. When will we see the Premier finally realize how important this is for New Brunswickers? Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite mentioned social programs at the start of that question, and then he went on a rant that did not make too much sense. When it comes to social programs here in New Brunswick and moving forward with the social development reforms that we have undertaken, we can walk with confidence because every step we take is making sure that the lives of New Brunswickers are getting better and better, day in and day out.

If the member needs to have some specific examples of where we have worked with the federal government, let’s talk about the Canada-New Brunswick Housing Benefit. That program, whereby we are putting money into the hands of the families that need it the most, is worth \$98 million between the feds and the province.

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(Applause.)

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): Yes, go ahead. That is something to be applauded.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to reform social assistance. We will work with every...

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

PROPERTY TAX

Mr. K. Chiasson (Tracadie-Sheila, L): Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, with regard to municipal reform, there are many questions that remain surrounding property taxation at the local government level. With many LSDs joining existing municipalities, people are worried about a sudden property tax increase or an adjustment period that is just too short. Now, the white paper does mention a different tax rate and a phased-in approach, but it is very general and high-level. It does not specify that the government will put in place safeguards to protect homeowners living in LSDs.

My concern is that without concrete safeguards in place before the transition team gets to work, the hard decisions on how to address property taxes will fall solely on the municipalities. Government needs to put on paper parameters with a solid cap and a clear timeline. Then the transition team and the new entities will be ready and better equipped to tackle property taxation. So I ask the minister responsible how he intends to protect property taxpayers in these communities.

Hon. Mr. Allain (Moncton East, Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as a little clarification for the member for Kent South, the biggest secret in New Brunswick is what the date of the next Liberal leadership will be. That is the biggest secret in New Brunswick.

To the member for Tracadie-Sheila, that is an excellent question. It is an excellent, excellent question. For New Brunswickers during this consultation process and during the local governance reform, the fourth pillar is definitely taxation. People in New Brunswick obviously do not like paying taxes. That is why we have to make sure that we minimize that impact. Action Items 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 in the white paper specifically indicate that. In Item 4.1.1, it says that there will be variable tax rates and differential tax rates in New Brunswick. In Item 4.1.2, it explicitly says that if there are impacts, they will be phased in. Mr. Speaker, I cannot wait to have the opportunity to discuss the bill with the member opposite to make sure that we make it even stronger. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

