

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**May 11, 2022**

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[Original]

### COST OF LIVING

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): I hope the member for Moncton South would also say, go, Leader of the Opposition, go.

Mr. Speaker, the gas tanks of New Brunswickers' vehicles are empty because they cannot afford to put in the gas. Their fridges are emptying because they cannot afford the groceries. In March, the cost of living in New Brunswick, year over year, was 7.4%. People are struggling. New Brunswickers cannot afford some of the most essential goods that they need to live every single day. We have a government and a Premier in front of us who do not want to address the issue. I want to ask the Premier what he has decided to do to ease some of the pain of the 7.4% increase in the cost of living.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think if we look at what we have done in the province and through Social Development and in a number of areas, we see what we have done to raise the minimum wage to get it on par and what we have done with social assistance so that people can work and not have it clawed back and what we have done with putting in place other programs that the minister could elaborate on in detail.

But we also question the federal government policies in relation to a pause in the carbon tax, which, in our case, could basically take 11¢ off the price of fuel. We also question the philosophy and the ideology of it all, since we are here because we are not using our own resources to help our economy. While we can talk about our green economy and how we get there... Mr. Speaker, it is how we get there. It is not a matter of if we get there, but how we get there. What we are doing right now is basically bankrupting many people in our province because we have put policies in place that are causing energy costs to go through the roof, causing food costs to go through the roof, and causing housing costs to go through the roof, and it is directly related to a federal policy that is full of ideology but not practicality.

[Translation]

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier seems a bit angry and frustrated himself this morning. However, the fact is that he can be as angry and frustrated as he wants. New Brunswickers, the most vulnerable and poorest people, are living through incredibly difficult times. When I look at the price of home heating oil, I note that it has increased by 64% in one year. That has a huge impact on all economic activity and on New Brunswickers' purchasing power. The price of gas has risen by 37% in New Brunswick.

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We see these increases in the cost of living and the consumer price index, and we note that the government is doing absolutely nothing to help people out. Government revenues continue to increase throughout the province, but it is offering no solutions for people.

Mr. Premier, are you going to take responsibility and help people to minimize the impact of the increase in the cost of living?

[Original]

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

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I realize that the approach of the Leader of the Opposition and the entire Liberal Party would be to say, well, we will just distribute money wherever we can and hope that some of it makes a difference. But we are evaluating the housing impacts. That is why we are looking at the issues: How do we ensure that the rents stay proper? How do we have a system where the tenants can actually appeal their situation? And then, how do we work on the real case with the landlords?

We have been meeting with the landlords and the development group to get affordable housing because we know that the buy-up of property here does not allow or address affordable housing for communities, and we met with municipalities on that. We are looking at a housing report from across the province to see how we can manage that in such a way that people can stay and live in their homes.

You know, we know that we protected the seniors with a tax deferral program introduced 10 years ago. We did not know that we would experience something such as this, but fortunately, something was put in place that was looking to the future. These are unprecedented times for Canada and unprecedented times for New Brunswick, and we will deal with it in an unprecedented way. But it will be well thought out and meaningful, and people will feel it, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Well, Mr. Speaker, in the difficult time that we are going through now, the Leader of the Opposition and our party would give less money to the bankers in New York and put more into the pockets of New Brunswickers to ease their pain. That is what we would do.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that because of the increase in the cost of living, the price of meat has gone up by 14% over the past year? Did you know that the prices of dairy products and eggs have gone up by 9.9% in the province? Did you know that the prices of bakery products and cereals have gone up by 11.9%?

(Interjections.)

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

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): And in the meantime, costs are going up for New Brunswickers to get the goods and services that are essential for them to be able to have, at a minimum, a quality of life. And this Premier gives no help to them. He wants to help the bankers in New York and not help New Brunswickers. Please address the issue, Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, let's do a little financial course here. The banks in New York are receiving less money now than they have for years. Do you know why? It is because we do not owe them as much money. We do not pay as much money in interest. With the rates going through the roof, we would be paying more. So what a good time this is to be in a financial position where we can help those who are most fortunate—unfortunate. We will deal with them. We will help. We will help those...

(Interjections.)

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Yes, that was a mistake, Mr. Speaker. My apologies.

We will help those most unfortunate. We will help those people so that they can actually get a better life through these high costs, these high times.

But let's deal with the root cause, Mr. Speaker. Let's address why we are here. We are here because a federal policy, in an idealistic way, has put us at risk to a country like Russia, a country that is basically threatening the world. We are at risk because of that and because of a policy that will not directly address it. But there is hope. They are changing some of their views.

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

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Well, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in at least three years, the Premier has apologized—once—for making a mistake. But over the past few years, there have been so many other mistakes that he has not apologized for, and he should. But forget about apologizing. He should address the issues.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the pandemic had a huge impact on supply. We know that this war in Ukraine, which we have no control over, has an impact on supply. We know that. But stop blaming others, Premier. You have things you can do here in New Brunswick to try to ease some of the pain. In the budget, you are going to provide about 400 000 New Brunswickers with \$100 at the end of the fiscal year when they file their income tax to try to ease some of the pain. It is more than \$100 per person that is affecting them every single

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day because of the cost of living. Why do you not temporarily reduce the provincial tax on gasoline?

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

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I want to go over some of the specific programs that we have put in place here in New Brunswick to help not just the people who are recipients of social assistance benefits but also the people who are working here in the province, people who have a family and who actually rent an apartment.

We came forward with the Canada—New Brunswick Housing Benefit program that puts money into the pockets of individuals who are struggling with the cost of living, as has been articulated by the members across the way. We have helped 1 000 families, and the average benefit that we are putting into their pockets on a monthly basis is almost \$392. That is a specific program that is helping families—families that represent almost 3 000 people here in the province. And that is just one program. I could go on and on and on about some of the other programs, and I would be happy to do that.

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

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to add one thing, because I do not think the Premier and his government... We will not talk about the Minister of Finance, because, often, he does not know where he is or what he is doing. However, the reality is that, over the past year, the cost of fresh fruit—which is essential for human health—has increased by 7.8% in New Brunswick. Statistics show that rental costs—the costs of housing we rent—have increased by 6.5%. The cost of water has risen by 11%. What nutrient is more essential than water? The price New Brunswickers have to pay for water now has increased by 11%.

While all this is going on, the New Brunswick government is not looking out for these people. The government offers them a \$100 year-end tax credit. Meanwhile, these people are going to be suffering for at least a year.

[*Original*]

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

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk more about the programs that this government put in place. We were proactive because we could see that the cost of living was going up. We have indexed the social

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assistance payments to inflation. We have not clawed back the wages that people, if they are on social assistance, can earn—up to the first \$500 and, beyond that, 50¢...

We have helped people who are the recipients of child benefits. Their cheques will not be clawed back, and that will go directly to helping their children here in New Brunswick. If you are between the ages of 60 and 65 and you are the recipient of social assistance plus the Canada pension, you are going to be able to keep the first \$200 of your Canada Pension Plan benefit. That is new, that is progressive, and that is something that their government never even thought of doing when the members opposite were in power. We are progressive. We are helping the people here in the province today.

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, when you look at the price at the pump—and we hear that it is going to go up again this Thursday—we see that on October 7, it was \$1.45 per litre, and now it is \$1.91 per litre for regular gas. That is a 46¢ increase over the past seven months. Either somebody is paying for that, or people are not filling up their tanks because they cannot afford it.

Diesel cost \$1.52 per litre, and now it is \$2.61. It costs over \$1.09 per litre more for diesel. Think about the impact on the transportation industry. That cost goes all the way back to all of us as consumers. We are trying to buy groceries, but a lot of people cannot afford to. This government is doing nothing to address that.

Regarding furnace oil, I was talking to a lady who cannot afford to pay her furnace oil bill. Now it is warming up, thank God. The cost went from \$1.56 per litre to \$2.40 per litre, an increase of 83¢. That is the reality, Premier. Can you address...

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

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to face it head-on. The problem is our energy program—our energy policy, our federal policy on energy. In fact, if we want to look at both the Greens and the Liberals... How do we manage our economy going forward so that people can afford to live and work in this province? It is great to say that we should shut the lights out and hope for the best.

We have been talking about this for a long time, but we did not expect the outbreak in Europe. That has put an issue in place that is really, really threatening our economy and threatening our security. What are we doing about it, Mr. Speaker? Nothing. I have asked for a federal meeting. I have asked for a federal meeting, and I have said that we need to have a call with the Prime Minister.

(Interjections.)

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

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**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): We need to have a national policy on energy security and energy supply, but no, there is nothing, Mr. Speaker. There is no information coming from the federal government. Nothing is set up. We need a federal policy that fixes our energy security and allows us to use resources that are right here in New Brunswick.

**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, it is the same tune over and over again from this Premier. You always want to try to put the responsibility on others, and you never take responsibility. You can take specific actions now to ease some of the pain for New Brunswickers over the next 12 months. You can do it right now. By the way, you do not work for Irving Oil anymore. You work for New Brunswickers.

By the way, the federal government is making decisions to help Canadians and New Brunswickers, to try to ease some of the pain. You have not even tried to ease some of the pain. People are paying more at the pump. People cannot afford groceries. They cannot put gas in their vehicles because you are not trying to give them a quick, short-term fix. That is what we need. We get that there are long-term challenges, but people need a short-term fix that will ease the pain of this cost of living. Why do you not reduce the...

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

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, as always, the Leader of the Opposition focuses on an issue right now rather than on the root cause of how we got here and how we could fix it. At the beginning of this crisis, I proposed deferring the carbon tax: Let's defer that 11¢ immediately. That could easily have been done. The federal government had no part of it.

We do not know what consumption is going to do. We know that we put a lot of programs in place that are financed by current taxes. We are watching that as well, to see how it is going to balance out and what we can return.

What we do know, Mr. Speaker, from what is in our budget this year is that we returned taxes to people. We reduced the double tax situation because it went back into pockets. We did that right across the province for people who wanted to build and provide housing. We have asked municipalities to do the same on their tax rates. We reduced the personal income tax because we want people to keep more money in their pockets.

Mr. Speaker, we have a short-term problem created by a long-term philosophy that has no basis in reality. That is the issue. You can call it blame, or you can call it poor performance from a government...

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



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**Mr. Melanson** (Dieppe, Interim Opposition Leader, L): Mr. Speaker, you know the definition of blaming others. I know that. The reality is that when you talk about landlords, owners, or apartment building owners whose rents you are trying to cap... The cap is not the solution for rent. The solution is to invest in more affordable housing and also to control the peak time of property assessments going up now. They have gone up 42% on average in the province. Some have actually gone up 100%.

While that is happening and while you are not addressing affordable housing and are trying to control the rent, you are stacking up a whole bunch of revenues for the province and giving them to New York bankers. New Brunswickers are suffering. Your solution is not working. It is not working. Address the issues. Try to help New Brunswickers right now. At the end of this year, they will be in worse shape.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I tried to explain to the Leader of the Opposition what we are seeing right now with a sudden increase such as we have never seen before in our province. Never have we seen such an explosion of activity in our province. That is a good thing. That is something where we are saying: Wow, people are looking at New Brunswick. They are moving here and investing here.

Along with that come challenges. There are challenges in communities with housing, certainly. There are challenges with the cost of rent and the cost of building. Mr. Speaker, we are looking at all of that based on how we manage our revenue going forward. For one thing, we do not plan for just tomorrow. We plan for next week, for next month, for next year, and for 10 years down the road. It is not like the short-term vision that we have always seen from a Liberal government. It is: How do we build a province that people look at and say they want to come to? Do you know what? They are coming. We are doing it. That is what is exciting.

We will calculate how we can manage to work with people to help them to survive and thrive. But let's have an energy policy that works for our country, Mr. Speaker—not only for New Brunswick but for our country—because that is the basis of why we are where we are.

[*Translation*]

### RENT

**Mr. Gauvin** (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier referred to an explosion, and he is right. The rental situation has exploded in New Brunswick in the last year and a half. The collective failure that is happening in our province is going to be huge. Hundreds of people are leaving their rental housing. There are seniors among them who have no bed in a nursing home because of the staffing shortage. Young university graduates cannot afford to pay rent or buy a house. This is unprecedented in New Brunswick. This

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situation, Mr. Speaker, has made our province one of the worst in Canada when it comes to affordable housing.

This is my question for the Minister of Social Development: Could he make sure that his department makes this situation its first priority? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to help the members across the way to focus a little bit. Today, they are saying that we are not helping people, but I want to be crystal clear here. Just the measures taken with the social assistance rates here in New Brunswick, the investments of \$22.6 million that we have put in place, have helped 29 000 New Brunswickers cope with the increase in costs. We are not done yet. That is just the tip of the iceberg. That \$22.6-million investment has helped 29 000 New Brunswickers.

Our housing budget, the housing budget that was approved on the floor of this Legislature, that \$120 million plus a little bit more, includes a 23% increase over the past two years. Over the past two years, this government has invested the most money ever invested in housing here in New Brunswick. That is progressive. That is helping New Brunswickers right now—today.

**Mr. Gauvin** (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Mr. Speaker, it is normal after an answer that people applaud, but the job is not done. Their prediction is 350 units. New Brunswickers need 7 000. The job is not done. That is 7 000 units, not 7 000 people. The job is absolutely not done. The job has to be done quickly. We all know it. I think that all 49 of us get those calls. People are getting put out of their apartments. We have accepted increases of \$400 per month for an apartment. This is not acceptable in New Brunswick. Those 7 000 units need to be provided as quickly as possible. When will they be provided? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): I appreciate the question from the leadership contender across the floor. You know, people are trying to get headlines, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we are trying to get the work done. We are doing that.

The investment that we have made in housing here in New Brunswick has allowed people to move into housing. That list that the member talks about is fluid. It changes, and we take people off that list every day, every month. That is why we went ahead with the Canada—New Brunswick Housing Benefit, which, again, is helping people to cope with the high cost of living. That is putting the proceeds right into the pockets of the people who need them the most—the working families with children that are renters here in New Brunswick.

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We know that the work is not done. We are going to continue to work interdepartmentally, whether it involves PETL, Health, social assistance, Social Development, or mental health and addictions. Mr. Speaker, we are up to the task. We are getting it done.

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

**Ms. Mitton** (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People across the province are struggling to find housing. Reggie Beal, who works full-time in Sackville, has spoken publicly about his struggle to find housing for himself and his three children, as the house that they rent is being sold. Ashley Legere and her young child are in the same situation. She works at supporting people to find housing, and now she finds herself trying to do the same thing for her family.

To quote Reggie, the housing crisis is urgent and needs to be addressed and not in a five- or seven-year plan. But, Mr. Speaker, that is the plan. At the end of it, in 2029, there will be a total of only 1 262 additional affordable housing units, and in some cases, it is not even new units that are being created, just rent supplements. The waitlist is 7 000 as it stands. I would like to know what the Premier is going to do to make sure that people like Reggie and Ashley are not moving into tents or into their cars or onto couches or onto the street. What will he do to make sure that people are not unhoused?

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you, once again. We are well aware that there is a situation in New Brunswick that needs to be addressed, and we have been working on it. I could go from place to place to place and tell you about the good work that is being done.

Let's talk about the city of Moncton for a second because that is in my backyard. This government went forward with an initiative, coupled with the municipality and the federal government, called Rising Tide. Rising Tide is a project that has helped women who are exposed to violence. It has helped people who are homeless. It has helped people who are in situations of flux, as are some of the people we all know about in all our ridings right across the province.

I could go to the city of Fredericton, and we could talk about 12 Neighbours. Once again, an individual had a vision and, with the assistance of the government of New Brunswick and the federal government, worked together with the municipality to find a solution. We can talk about the John Howard Society, and I could go on and on.

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

**Ms. Mitton** (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is not enough. People are becoming unhoused. I have been hearing from tenants in my riding and from across the province about landlords who are attempting to get around the rent cap legislation. This proposed law is full of loopholes. It is well known now that if you are



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looking to cash in on increasing market rents, you just need to evict your tenants under the guise of major renovations—also known as renovictions—and bring new tenants in at a higher rent or convert the units to Airbnb units, taking them out of the rental market.

Despite what the Minister of Service New Brunswick says, we have heard enough stories of the tenants of entire apartment buildings being evicted under the guise of renovations to know that this is a widespread problem. The minister made it clear in speaking to the media yesterday that she is not going to do anything to solve this problem. My question to the Premier is this: Does he think that this is a problem, and what is he going to do about renovictions?

**Hon. Mary Wilson** (Oromocto-Lincoln-Fredericton, Minister of Service New Brunswick, Minister responsible for Military Affairs, PC): Thank you for the question and for bringing this up. I would like to separate renovictions from terminations. These are two totally separate issues, Mr. Speaker. Despite what the reporters put in the paper about evictions being up, they are not. Termination is another situation altogether, which we are absolutely addressing, as discussed at length yesterday.

The Residential Tenancies Tribunal is making it very clear. Please, please, to every MLA in this room, encourage a call to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal on Day 1 that any of these tenants are notified of any reason to terminate. They have only 15 days from the date that they are notified to reach out to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal to open a file. Whether they call, email, or show up at any Service New Brunswick or whether they have a friend, a neighbour, a son, or a daughter do it, we are there to help. But we need to hear from you.

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

**Ms. Mitton** (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are not enough protections against renovictions. Yes, they are different from evictions. They are pretending that they are not evictions, but there is not enough protection for tenants in this province against renovictions. This needs to be fixed. How is this going to be fixed? People have been experiencing becoming unhoused and have been experiencing renovictions for years.

During the pandemic, I remember the Premier saying in press conferences that he did not really think that there was a housing crisis. Well, there is. There are people moving their children into cars because they have nowhere else to go, and people with children are being discriminated against. They are not protected in the province. They go to the Residential Tenancies Tribunal, and they are told, Go file a human rights complaint. Much good that does them.

So I want to know this. For people such as Reggie and Ashley, who cannot find housing for themselves and their children, what will the Premier do to make sure that they have affordable housing, to make sure that everyone in this province has housing?



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**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Social Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, New Brunswick has a record number of housing units under construction right now, in 2022. According to the CBC's Robert Jones—he has the numbers, so never fight with Robert Jones when it comes to numbers—there were 5 193 new housing units at various stages of construction during the first three months of 2022. That includes the whole spectrum, whether it is apartments, affordable housing, or other single units.

We are answering the call, and we are answering the need. When I look at the housing budget that we put in place and the number of various components that we are using such as rent supplements, new builds, working with nonprofits, and working with the developers, Mr. Speaker, we know that there is a situation and a tight market.

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

[*Translation*]

### CROWN LANDS

**Mr. Guitard** (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development. Can the minister tell me what his department's policy is on the buy-back or transfer of Crown land or parcels of it for New Brunswickers?

There are people in my riding who have submitted requests. One request dates back more than a year. Another one dates back more than two years. They have still not received responses to their requests. They have never even received confirmation that their requests were received. What would the minister consider a reasonable period of time? For the minister, what is the policy when someone wants to acquire Crown land?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, thank you very much for the question. In the event that, for anything related to Crown land, there is anybody that is sitting on a request that has gone on for a year or more, I encourage the member to get in touch with me off-line because that is something that we would certainly make sure gets absolutely addressed.

I am also sure that the member opposite can appreciate the fact that we are dealing with a limited resource, as it relates to Crown land. We are dealing with it within the boundaries of a relatively small province. We do take our Crown land very seriously, and we work through a significant process that has a number of different components to it when it comes to determining how we get the best value for it. We are working through situations

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constantly as it relates to what is the best benefit for the province of New Brunswick and for the citizens of New Brunswick when it comes to operating the Crown land footprint.

Again, I will finish by saying that we have a process. I would love to explain it and to discuss it with the member opposite. But most importantly, in the event that there are any citizens or constituents that have yet to be contacted by our department, please get in touch with me.

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

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Guitard** (Restigouche-Chaleur, L): So can the minister explain to me why the former Conservative Party candidate in Restigouche-Chaleur had land transferred to her? I am referring to Gilberte Boudreau, who received some land. It is not just any lot; it is land along a river. It did not take three years.

Mr. Minister, does your policy involve a double standard? Can card-carrying Conservative Party members get land transferred to them, while others have to wait, without even receiving confirmation that their request has been received? What do I have to tell people in the future, Mr. Minister? Do I have to ask them whether they have a Conservative Party membership card? Is that your policy? Seriously, give us your answer.

What happened with this file? Why are you transferring land to Conservative Party members, when you are not doing it for other New Brunswickers? What is going on in your department?

*[Original]*

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I think he should realize that...

(Interjections.)

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

(Interjections.)

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): In all corners of the province... In fact, doubling the protected and conserved natural areas had nothing to do with political allegiance. It was for the good of the province.

I think that the member opposite should also know that not all land is created equal. In the event that we can move a file forward because there is significant benefit for the province,

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that shows that we are a government that is going to get every bit of that value, put it in the province, and ensure that we can invest in the natural resources in the best way possible. We will look at everything and find an opportunity to see how we can bring a product into our inventory, trade it, or exchange it, but not every file is created equal.

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

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): I know that the Liberals probably would not know what it would be like to even walk in the woods under the Brian Gallant government.

(Interjections.)

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

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Therefore, we must have confidence and assurance that we are not partisan with this but that we are very well versed in what our natural landscape looks like. We are a government that gets value from every transaction that we do, and there are no lessons for us to learn by the way that the Liberals managed our Crown land footprint, Mr. Speaker.

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

The time for question period is over.