

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**November 15, 2022**

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[Translation]

### **OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT**

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this Premier does not understand anything about the official languages file. During the review of the *Official Languages Act*, he tried to mix up language rights and second language learning. In addition, the Conservative Party continues to voluntarily burn bridges with Acadian and Francophone communities in the province, and it is a shame that the Francophones in the Conservative Party are allowing it.

We are well aware of the positions taken previously by this Premier, and his recent actions confirm that we have cause to be worried, Mr. Speaker. For example, the Premier has made disrespectful comments towards the Commissioner of Official Languages. Why is he trying to create confusion about the role of the Commissioner of Official Languages just to create language-related tension in the province, Mr. Speaker? That is unacceptable. Why does the Premier continue to create language-related tension and divide the province?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the opposition members are taking such exception to having meaningful discussions in our province to try to kind of end up and resolve where we will go together on a path for our future. The goal of having discussions... The member opposite references, in particular, the Official Languages Commissioner. If I read directly from the Act, it says:

*43(1) There shall be an Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick, as well as a Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick.*

So, Mr. Speaker, the Official Languages Commissioner is there to serve both official languages, and all we are doing is reviewing the recommendations, which do not include anything about getting rid of the Official Languages Commissioner. They include a number of recommendations that we are diligently going through, and we will respond to them before the session ends this fall. To not have all discussions and all opinions as part of the process would be, I think, disrespectful. This gives us the opportunity to have a solution for the long haul, and I am confident that that is what we will provide and that the members of the opposition will be satisfied.

[Translation]

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, with his recent actions, the Premier has confirmed that we have cause to worry. He took the same

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kinds of positions 35 years ago, Mr. Speaker. The Premier should acknowledge the importance of official languages.

Conservative Premiers who preceded him all made significant changes to the *Official Languages Act*. Richard Hatfield, Bernard Lord, and David Alward all participated in the process constructively. Why is this Premier taking actions that divide the province on the language issue, Mr. Speaker? It is unfortunate that he understands nothing about the *Official Languages Act*. Either he does not understand anything, or he knows exactly what he is doing.

Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the review of the *Official Languages Act*, can the Premier guarantee us that he will not diminish or erode official language rights?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition on the floor here basically seems to be surmising or has an advance copy of a response that I am not aware of, because he is expounding upon what could be, what might be, and what has been.

So, Mr. Speaker, rather than having all these conditions and concerns, I think that the real issue should be saying: Okay, why, after 53 years, have we not had a situation where we have really moved the bar so that we all become bilingual as we graduate from our schools? That is obviously a huge concern.

I would say: Let's wait and get the response to the report. Before this session, this fall, I said it would happen. All this speculation provides good fodder for everyday discussion, but it is not really pertinent to what our recommendation will be at the end of the day.

[Translation]

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier continues to mix up the *Official Languages Act* file with the one on second language learning. He did it last year when he requested a report to assess those two issues. He is creating confusion about official languages.

That being said, we can no longer believe what this Premier says concerning the review of the *Official Languages Act*. We had asked the Premier to give us a response within six months after the report was tabled, in April 2022. He did not. Two months later, the Commissioner of Official Languages for New Brunswick asked for the same thing, saying that the lack of progress on this file is a setback for language rights.

It is now November 2022. A month ago, the Premier told us that he would table his response before the end of the year. However, we are asking that he do so as soon as

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possible. We are wrapping up the session on December 16, before the holidays. We want his response before December 16 so that we can debate it properly, if necessary. Will the Premier do so in a timely fashion?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, there is something that I would certainly challenge to a great extent, and that is how anyone's rights—in either official language, but we talk particularly about the Francophone sector—have been restricted here during our mandate. I would like to hear about anyone who has been restricted because of our actions in this government. The fact is that I am not aware of any of them—not aware of any of them.

I think there is a lot of hype being created here because it serves the purpose of the federal Liberal government to divide our province and to continue to use it. The Prime Minister came down here last week and made it an issue, Mr. Speaker. This is not a federal issue. It is a provincial issue. But he has done that on more than one account. Those comments are not helpful, and I would suggest that, throughout this process, the Prime Minister should stay in his lane. This is a provincial issue, and I am honoured to say that we have treated everyone around this province equally and have especially honoured the *Official Languages Act*.

[Translation]

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, the things the Premier has said and done recently really worry us. He wants to talk about creating division and tensions. All of that was caused by his actions.

Let me remind you that three things have happened since the report was tabled last year. First, both members of the People's Alliance of New Brunswick joined the Conservative Party. Second, the former leader of the People's Alliance of New Brunswick, who has made his contempt for language rights known, was asked to be in Cabinet. Third, he was appointed to the committee reviewing the *Official Languages Act*.

We know what the former leader of the People's Alliance has previously said, and we know his position regarding the *Official Languages Act*. He has no business being on this committee, Mr. Speaker. So, why is the Premier so determined to give him the opportunity to influence the government decision-making process on official languages, knowing the position he has previously taken?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate what I said. My response was: Has anyone, in any part of

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the province, had their rights not respected under this government? I would say no. There have been no changes. There has been no decrease. There have been no changes.

Again, to provide, again, the fearmongering and the concern... We should have opinions from all members of government listened to so that we have a path going forward that works to enhance both languages in the province and, in particular, to ensure that the Francophone population is enhanced and maintained. To that point, I would make a reference in relation to immigration. We have increased our Francophone immigration during our time in office. We are targeting 33%. That did not happen previously, Mr. Speaker, so what about that?

I would challenge anyone. Just because I am not afraid to have open and frank discussions with everyone... I will challenge you, what has changed, Mr. Speaker...

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

### COST OF LIVING

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, government members want to say that they have not done anything to break linguistic rights during their mandate. What about all these press conferences they had during COVID-19? None of them were done in the French language. That has clearly been documented by the language commissioner. Government members want to talk about Francophone immigration. Where were the government members this weekend when the centre of immigration innovation in the province was announced in Dieppe?

(Interjections.)

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

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Where were the government members, Mr. Speaker?

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Member, order, please.

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): What is frustrating is that we are talking about an issue that is well settled.

(Interjections.)

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



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**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): We are talking about an issue that...

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Order. The honourable the Premier.

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): I was not done my question. I sat down because you stood up.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a distraction here. I want to know what this Premier and government are going to do about the cost of living. This is what we should be talking about and not this distraction.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): I am glad that the Opposition Leader has decided that he cannot think of anything that we have done negatively. In fact, we have enhanced things, so that does not fit the narrative, does it? So we switch gears—fair enough.

In relation to what we need to do in terms of inflation and costs, which, by the way, are greatly enhanced by the federal government's policies... We have seen that. Why would we expect anything else when policies are cutting off our energy supply? Why would we expect to see anything else when we have no backup for the crisis in Europe that is raising the costs of energy when our own energy is stranded? Why would members opposite not look in the mirror and say: Wow, I wonder whether those federal policies have anything to do with the state we are in? Well, news flash, Mr. Speaker—they certainly do.

In relation to that, we are looking at relief programs, and we will introduce those in the near future because we recognize the costs, particularly on those who cannot afford groceries and fuel. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, this is what we should be talking about. This is what matters to New Brunswickers who are facing difficulties with the rising cost of living. But the government is offering distractions. French immersion—we are going to scrap that. The Commissioner of Official Languages—we are going to scrap that.

(Interjections.)

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

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): We need to be talking about the issues that matter to New Brunswickers. Government members want to talk about looking in the mirror. They should look to their neighbours. All governments across

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Canada are facing the same economic consequences that this government is facing, but those governments are choosing to help their people. They are helping their people. This government has introduced—what?—14 bills now. We have seen the speech from the throne. There has been nothing to help New Brunswickers right now. The Governor of the Bank of Canada has confirmed that low-income Canadians are hit hardest by inflation, but this government is not doing anything. What is this government going to announce? It is now sitting on its \$774-million surplus. What is the government going to do for low-income New Brunswickers?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): You know, Mr. Speaker, I think the phrase was that this government has done nothing. By working with the federal government, we reduced the cost of child care for a family by up to 50%. We increased benefits to social assistance recipients and reduced the clawback. We have eliminated interest on New Brunswick student loans. We have increased the minimum wage by 17%, with more coming on the CPI in the new year. We have reduced property tax for the 2023 taxation year, and we will reduce personal income tax. There was the cost-of-fuel benefit that we did earlier.

So, doing nothing? Not quite the truth, Mr. Speaker, but this tells you that the government does things and we will help people. We want to help those 60 000 new people who have come to New Brunswick—a record growth with record low unemployment—a province that truly has the advantage over the rest of Canada. Let's move forward.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, the government is now recording a \$774-million budget surplus for the second quarter. It is boasting about bringing forward initiatives, but nothing is planned to help the people of the province who are struggling daily to put food on the table or gas in their cars.

Mr. Speaker, there are no initiatives to help people facing electricity rate increases and those facing exorbitant gas prices; there are no measures to help low-income families dealing with increased grocery costs; there are no investments to increase the number of child care spaces, and so on, Mr. Speaker. This government lacks creativity and empathy for New Brunswickers.

If this government can find funds to reduce taxes on the wealthiest, why can it not find funds to help the people in the province who are most in need?



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[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, when we look at the ways that the Fuel and Food Benefit that we put forward... We will continue to look at that benefit for the next few months and in the new year, early, early on. We can talk about how we made changes in reducing the debt. This saves us about \$80 million to \$100 million that can go into the services that we can provide in the province.

I know that this is a foreign concept to the members opposite, but, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you where the revenue is coming from throughout the province. It is coming from more people working. It is coming from more people spending money, and it is coming from more people investing—private-sector investment—in our province. I know that the only job the Liberals think is worthwhile is a job paid for by the public purse. Well, Mr. Speaker, when we encourage people here and we have an advantage in our province because we are not the highest-taxed jurisdiction, people look at us and say: I want to be in New Brunswick. That is the place to be. And, Mr. Speaker, it is happening. Thank you.

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick's growth in revenue, as stated, has been helped by the huge increase in population during the pandemic. People saw New Brunswick as a desirable place to go, with a lower cost of living and an opportunity to work remotely even if their employment is in Ontario or elsewhere.

(Interjections.)

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

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): But, Mr. Speaker, people are coming here now, and they are realizing that there are no day care spaces, that there are no family doctors, that there are increases in heating prices, that hospital ERs are closing, and that there is overcrowding in schools. Many families decide within two years whether they are going to stay. If this government does not do anything to address those issues, people are going to leave. Where is the government's strategy? Its members keep saying, Oh, we are up to—what?—820 000 people today. Where is their strategy to deal with helping New Brunswickers?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the Leader of the Opposition will repeat the first part of that. I think that he needs to say that again.

Is it not interesting? We talk about, okay, people coming here to look at New Brunswick for the first time. Let's talk about health care. Let's talk about Health Link. Do you know that list that used to be at 70 000? It is now down to 54 000. Do you know why? It is because we

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are making the connections and we are fixing the list. Mr. Speaker, when you look at where we can make improvements and where we say that we will put money, you have heard me say that I will spend money anywhere in our system where the people of this province will feel the results, where they will go home and say: Wow, I am getting better care. I am getting better service.

And it is all because the people in New Brunswick are delivering it. It is not about a headline on an investment. It is about a headline on results, and it is about people saying: Things are really happening. They are feeling it, Mr. Speaker, and the opposition does not like it. Thank you.

[Translation]

### **OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT**

**Ms. Thériault** (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, the Premier says he has no examples of unfair treatment, so here are some: attempting to reduce language requirements for ambulance services; holding press conferences only in English during a health crisis; telling us to settle for interpretation; accusing us of speaking French in the House to create a diversion; calling us lampshades; remaining silent on the report of the review of the *Official Languages Act* for a year; stating that the Commissioner of Official Languages is negative; abolishing the boards of directors of the health networks; welcoming two members of the People's Alliance into the Conservative Party; appointing one of them as minister, and, finally, entrusting him with the review of the *Official Languages Act*. Mr. Premier, given the sad track record of your words, actions, and inaction, have you really changed or are you still holding on to the values of the CoR Party?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite has referred to are criticisms, not lack of action or personal interactions that are causing people difficulty. During the COVID-19 crisis, we were achieving a 95% approval rating in relation to the communications. It is unfortunate that in a bilingual province and in a government that has full translation requirements—and I am only unilingual—that that is not acceptable. I am along with probably about 80% of the Anglophone population in our province.

Why are we focused on education? Because it is going to be the same thing 50 years from now unless we fix it. That is why the status quo is not good enough. This should not be difficult. We still graduate 72% of Anglophone kids who cannot speak both official languages, and we think that is acceptable? Why would anyone agree that this is acceptable? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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[Translation]

**Ms. Thériault** (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, does the Premier need it spelled out for him? The *Official Languages Act* is not about making people bilingual, and it does not guarantee linguistic harmony in the province. Division is emerging because of this Premier and this Conservative government that supports his actions.

The Premier is causing harm to this province, and whoever replaces him will have the daunting task of identity rebuilding and social reconstruction to do.

Mr. Premier, for the good of the people and the province, we ask for the immediate withdrawal of Kris Austin from the committee reviewing the *Official Languages Act*. We are asking you to make this secret committee a public committee; can you take a position on this file?

[Original]

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Member, I remind you not to name names but to indicate a member by riding or by ministry.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think that it is well understood by now that we are working through the process and that we are reviewing. Yes, it has taken longer than it should have. I will not deny that, but I am confident that we will have a response here, as I said, before this session is over. And we will, Mr. Speaker.

We are having good discussions, and we will have those discussions with our caucus. We will go through this when the recommendations are finalized, and we will present them publicly, as has been done in the past. I am very confident that the discussions that we have had are bearing fruit, but there are also open dialogues about issues that exist in our entire province. How do we continue to enhance the Francophone population, the language capabilities, and our service that is part of our bilingual nature? How do we continue to grow our capabilities in our province? And how do we find a way so that 50 years from now, we are still not debating the very same issue? Thank you.

[Translation]

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): It has been almost two months since the Minister of Environment and Climate Change launched the third New Brunswick Climate Change Action Plan.



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As shown by the devastation caused by Hurricane Fiona, we have no defenses for the coastal communities of the continent or the six island communities of New Brunswick, which are the most vulnerable and must be protected. The climate risk assessment for New Brunswick is only scheduled to be completed in 2025. Will the Minister of Environment and Climate Change commit to completing the climate risk assessment by next year so that coastal defenses can be established faster, Mr. Speaker?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Crossman** (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question from across the way. We certainly cannot come up with timelines today to move things ahead in that manner. I cannot promise that, but what I can promise you is that your money is going to the best places possible. All government departments are working together, along with those in the Atlantic Provinces and the federal government, which was just off to COP27 last week. I would say that we in Canada and in New Brunswick are way ahead with the way that we are going.

Regarding Hurricane Fiona, that was a devastating storm, for sure, especially along the coastline. We cannot fix it all overnight, but there are success stories, too, with the way we are going through our Climate Change Action Plan. The member beside you, leader, would know that we met with the area mayor and some members of the council last summer, along with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. We are working together on the plan to move things ahead. We have not forgotten about it. There is a lot of work to be done, but we are working together to make things happen. Hopefully, that will be sooner than the date prescribed.

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, just before COP27 got underway in Egypt, scientists announced that the world is going to breach the 1.5<sup>o</sup> constraint for global heating. This means that storms like Fiona are only going to get worse, and what happened to Port aux Basques was just a preview of what will become commonplace along our 5 500 km of coastline.

Mr. Speaker, we are facing down a climate calamity. The waters of the Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of St. Lawrence are rising faster than the minister is acting. New Brunswick's coastal communities and infrastructure remain undefended against erosion and against storm surges and coastal flooding—communities from Grand Manan to Sackville, Grand Barachois to Shippagan, and Pokesudie to Eel River Bar. We have got to see a climate plan that is actually going to deliver. We are not even going to see climate risk assessments completed until 2025 and coastal defenses implemented until 2027. Will the minister fast-track this to protect New Brunswickers and their communities?

**Hon. Mr. Crossman** (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you once again for the question from across the way. Certainly,



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climate change is happening. Can we change it all overnight? No. Can we stop the rain? Can we stop the wind? I am working on it, member.

COP27 has been taking place in Egypt from November 6 to November 18. We were planning on going ourselves; but the cost was too great, and we would need more greenhouse gases along the way to get there. But our staff has been following it closely. We have great staff at the Department of Environment and Climate Change. As I mentioned before, they are working closely with the other Atlantic Provinces and the federal government as well.

What you are speaking of is of concern nationally and internationally. But given the significant distance and the cost associated with travel to attend COP27, we decided not to go—plus the extra cost was too great. Although no New Brunswick delegates are attending COP27 in person, I want you to know that New Brunswick is actively engaged with the Canadian delegation as well as with our members in the Atlantic Provinces. I believe that the Nova Scotia staff stayed home as well, as opposed to going. Our neighbours in Nova Scotia have taken a similar approach...

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

**Hon. Mr. Crossman** (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

### **OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT**

**Ms. Thériault** (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the official languages issue. My understanding of the Premier's response is that he does not want to remove the member for Fredericton-Grand Lake from the committee. He does not want to make this secret committee public. The *Official Languages Act* nevertheless takes precedence over all other Acts. It is the social contract of our province.

The Premier's actions speak volumes, but there is also the inaction of his caucus, whose members smile blissfully while applauding all of his actions. I would like the Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform to tell us his position on this. He is a minister who often interrupts us when we ask questions. He is there, and he is always talking. However, when he rises, he has a hard time finishing a sentence. He says he is a proud Acadian—well, Acadia is watching him. Is he going to break his silence and stand up for his people?

**Hon. Mr. Allain** (Moncton East, Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We hear the question asked by the



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member for Caraquet. Does she want Cabinet decisions to be made public, too? To what extent...

The *Official Languages Act* is one that we are currently reviewing in Cabinet. The Premier has very clearly said that a response would be provided before the end of December. I look forward to that discussion.

Please, if there are solutions or anything else that you can bring...

[*Original*]

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

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Allain** (Moncton East, Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question.

[*Original*]

(Interjections.)

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

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Minister of Local Government. Member for Caraquet. There will be a lot of time to discuss this later.

I recognize the member for Bathurst West-Beresford.

## GOVERNMENT FINANCES

**Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People in New Brunswick are still struggling and trying to figure out how to get by, and winter is coming. Meanwhile, the Minister of Finance announced another huge surplus for the provincial coffers last week. If you get a chance to read the minister's press release, you will notice that he is almost apologetic and tries to quickly list all the things that the government has done to help New Brunswickers, nine initiatives in bullet-point form. Actually, the Premier just did that, desperately, a couple of minutes ago. The Minister of Finance also points to the fact that expenses were over budget by \$179 million. This would be proof that the government is all about helping.



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However, for the better part of the year, we have been hearing from the Premier and the minister that inflation is going to drive up government costs and that they still have to be prudent. Let's clarify or get some clarity. How much of that \$179 million was due to cost overruns in departments, and how much was for new programs? How much was to help New Brunswickers who need it?

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the member opposite, thank you for the question. Thank you for talking about how I was apologizing for our surplus. No, no, no. If the member thought that, then he was wrong. I was not apologizing for a surplus. I was not apologizing for putting New Brunswick in a better place than it had been in. I was not apologizing for cutting taxes. Yes, I can reel them off again.

But do you know what? Some of the media out there are talking about this as well. *Acadie Nouvelle* is saying that we are lucky to have the surplus because it may see us through the recession.

(Interjections.)

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Yes, *Acadie Nouvelle* is saying that. You know what? We have GDP going up. We have net debt going down. We have positioned ourselves as best as we can to overcome the upcoming recession, and heaven help us if it is a financial crisis. But I was certainly not apologizing for doing what is right for New Brunswickers. I will never apologize for that. This side of the Legislature—this side—does what is right for New Brunswick.

**Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Again, Mr. Speaker, it was about helping New Brunswickers. That is apologizing for not doing anything.

Maybe the minister should read his own Q2 report. In fact, of the \$179 million, he reported \$81-million extra for COVID-19 programs and cost overruns in Health; \$57.5 million in carryover from federal programs in WorkingNB and cost overruns in PETL; \$15.9 million in higher operating costs in DTI; and \$12.7 million in higher costs in Justice and Public Safety, and there are more. With only what I listed, we are already at \$167.1 million of the increase in costs being attributed to overruns. Does the minister want to tell us again about all the extra initiatives that the government has helped New Brunswickers with? Can the minister really point to any original ideas that this government has initiated?

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Mr. Speaker, through you to the member opposite, thank you for the question. How about \$400 million for mini-splits and insulation? How about that? How about that? How about the food and fuel benefits that we gave to the lower class, the working poor? How about that? How about property tax cuts? How about personal income tax cuts for seniors and those with low income? How about more programs, which we on this side are talking about



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all the time? In Cabinet and caucus, we are talking about programs which are going to make a difference for New Brunswickers, which are going to make their lives better, which are going to see them through the winter and through this recession. Yes, this government works for New Brunswickers.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): That is the end of question period.