

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions



November 17, 2022

CONTENTS

HEALTH

Mr. McKee
Hon. Mr. Fitch
Mr. McKee
Hon. Mr. Fitch
Mr. McKee
Hon. Mr. Fitch

NEW BRUNSWICK MUSEUM

Ms. Thériault
Ms. Thériault
Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace
Ms. Thériault
Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace
Ms. Thériault
Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace

NB POWER

Mr. K. Chiasson
Hon. Mr. Holland
Mr. K. Chiasson
Hon. Mr. Holland
Mr. K. Chiasson
Hon. Mr. Holland

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Gauvin

Hon. Mr. Fitch

Mr. Gauvin

Hon. Mr. Fitch

HEALTH

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Mr. Fitch

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Mr. Fitch

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Gauvin

Hon. Mr. Fitch

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. McKee

Hon. Mr. Fitch

Mr. McKee

Hon. Mr. Steeves

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

[Original]

HEALTH

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, sadly, it has been reported that there were four more deaths from COVID-19 this week. We have seen a number of cases—I believe that over 500 were reported this past week. We are up to over 603 deaths overall, an increase of 300 since February. But there is radio silence from Public Health with respect to COVID-19. We have many questions around the variants; the statistics in New Brunswick; the preparations, if there is a next wave coming; and the vaccines and boosters.

Some information was given yesterday after repeated demands from a journalist, but we continue to see a staffer from the Department of Health giving this information. We are seeing a flu epidemic and RSV. Where is Dr. Léger? He has not been available for public briefings over the past several weeks. Where is Public Health on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question today. I can assure the members opposite and the public that Public Health and the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health are present. They are engaged. They released a report yesterday. There are a number of items in that report that I could go over. I would be more than happy to reiterate what was released yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is not satisfied with the information that is sent out from the department, be it from Public Health or whatever... Again, the information is researched. Media write questions to us, a significant number of questions, and we do the research. We do the research to make sure the response is accurate when it is sent back.

Personally, I do not control the agenda or media availability of the Chief Public Health Officer. But I can assure you that for the information that is public, I am more than happy to reiterate it here in the House today and have a discussion on it.

[Translation]

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, what is disturbing is that Public Health is completely silent on COVID-19. Many questions are being asked, but Public Health is nowhere to be seen. As for us, we have always said people should follow Public Health recommendations, but it is the Director of Communications for the Department of Health who shares the information. People are not convinced.

Doubts are being raised about independence and transparency. Earlier this year, there was political interference. Then it came to light that some decisions were ill informed or not founded on scientific evidence. Experts in public health and epidemiology should be the ones guiding us by answering these questions, but where are they?

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

Public Health is responsible for providing clear guidelines on such issues, but there is total silence. Mr. Speaker, why are there no public conferences with people representing Public Health? Where are they?

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I can reiterate the information that was released from Public Health yesterday. If the member opposite has a question or has some concern about public or political interference, I think he should expand on that, because we have always followed the data and we have always followed the recommendations.

Here is some of the information that came out yesterday. A more extensive report was sent out, but I will hit on the highlights. The number of hospital admissions for COVID-19 is stable at 22 this week compared to 23 last week. The number of cases confirmed by PCR tests has moderately decreased over the past four weeks. The number of active hospitalizations has decreased to 29 this week compared to 33 last week. The number of deaths has decreased to four compared to seven last week. The highest portion of hospitalizations from COVID-19 is among individuals aged 70 to 89. Individuals who are unprotected by vaccine continue to have the highest rate of COVID-19 ICU admissions. Mr. Speaker, there is the information. What more does the member opposite want?

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, those are our statistics. They are not public updates. Where are the Public Health officials providing information around the transmission of new variants, the flu epidemic, and the respiratory virus? They need to be giving the public timely information—not after journalists keep demanding for information. They need to give this information to the public in a timely manner so that people can make informed decisions as to whether they want to protect themselves or protect others, but the information is just not there.

We know that the best line of defense is vaccines, so where is the awareness campaign? Vaccine boosters are at 25% right now. It would be very important and efficient for Public Health to come out with a public awareness campaign to increase the uptake in boosters. Why are we not hearing from Public Health on an important awareness plan? Why is Public Health not giving information to the public so that people can make informed decisions?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, Public Health has been consistent. It has been consistent for the last three years in talking to the public. It has consistently responded to every request it gets.

Public Health's assessments and recommendations have not changed. The member opposite was talking about it, that your best defense is to get your shots—get your booster shots. People are empowered to assess their own risks, and if they wish to wear a mask, that is recommended by Public Health as well. That will reduce the risks of COVID-19,

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

regardless of what strain it is. You know, cough into your sleeves, and if you are not well, stay at home. Get your boosters. Wear masks when there are close contacts or when you feel uncomfortable.

The message has not changed. The message has not changed at all. It has been consistent. Public Health has been consistent, and that is the message that I am giving here again today to the members of the opposition and the public.

[Translation]

NEW BRUNSWICK MUSEUM

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick is the only Canadian province without a public museum celebrating its history and the cultures that make it up. The Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture has finally tabled a bill that clearly shows that the poor handling of this file is taking us back to square one.

Can the minister explain to us how this project, which had secure funding and was supposed to be the cornerstone of Saint John waterfront development, became a project with outside management, a much bigger budget, and still no real location four years later?

[Original]

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

[Translation]

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Does the minister consider this progress? Thank you.

[Original]

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace (Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Minister responsible for Women's Equality, PC): Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, do I consider this progress? Absolutely, this is progress. Over 30 years, we have had 44 versions of this museum created. I will tell you that we are getting this museum built, and that is something that was not done under the government a few years back. As far as starting from scratch, I think that the member opposite is clearly not aware of the work that has been done recently—certainly not in the past year.

We are empowering the board to finally get this museum built. The board is going to be able to do it in record time, and it will certainly involve the community in ways that we would not have involved it otherwise. This is a positive plan forward. I am incredibly excited about this news this week.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, if the minister thinks that I am not up to date on this file, she should inform us and tell us what the cost, location, and timeline are for this project. As I read the bill, it worries me that the *Crown Construction Contracts Act* does not apply in any way to this construction project, which is a major project. Why?

[Original]

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace (Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Minister responsible for Women's Equality, PC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that I have absolutely every confidence in this board of directors that exists. I would also like to say that the board has been asking, more than anything, to have a new facility in New Brunswick. The people of New Brunswick deserve to have this crown jewel in the province. Most certainly, we have an important story to share.

We have been waiting for an answer to the museum. The board that is in place will be following procurement legislation. It will also be adhering to trade agreements. There is no concern with that. This opens the door to having a process that allows the public to be engaged, to be involved in this project, which they have been asking for. We are very excited about this plan, really, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to talking about it more during the committee process. Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Thériault (Caraquet, L): So, we have a Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture who tables a bill and is not aware that the *Crown Construction Contracts Act* does not apply to this construction project. Am I really the one who is not up to date on this file?

During an interview with CBC, the minister said that she had to bend to the will of private interests. In fact, in the bill, the government is once again giving up all its powers regarding the design, purchasing, contracts, and construction related to the new museum. Madam Minister, who is pulling the strings on this file?

[Original]

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace (Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Minister responsible for Women's Equality, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we are certainly not reinventing the wheel on this process. It is something that we see. The Beaverbrook Art Gallery just went through this exact process. Right now, we can look across the country and see other projects that are being constructed in this exact same way. We are seeing this in Alberta with the Royal Alberta Museum right now. This is not a new process.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

Absolutely, legislation will be followed by the board members. They have important connections in their communities. This is the New Brunswick Museum, with board members spanning across the province, in all communities. This is a project that they are capable of. They want... They need a new museum. We all need a new museum, and this is the fastest way to get to the finish line, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

NB POWER

Mr. K. Chiasson (Tracadie-Sheila, L): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the Premier fired the CEO of NB Power and hired PricewaterhouseCoopers to review all of the operations of the Crown corporation. Since then, several important decisions were made without waiting for the report to be tabled and without notifying shareholders.

My question for the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development is this: Will he be transparent and release this report to share with New Brunswick taxpayers what NB Power is planning?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I certainly appreciate questions about this because this is a turning point in the utility's history. Never before have we seen such significant steps taken at the senior leadership level of the utility and had somebody with that level of third-party credibility coming forward to do a review and bring forward recommendations. We look forward to making sure that those recommendations are certainly put forward so that the province can see what we are going to do to make sure that the utility is on track and meeting all its goals and targets.

I would also like to take a moment to have a conversation with the member opposite about the concern he stated over the report being started and our doing things. I am very confused about that. I think that the members opposite—and I am sure that the province of New Brunswick—are very excited that the utility has identified \$50 million in savings, has come out with home-heating efficiency programs, and is here to do the work.

Mr. K. Chiasson (Tracadie-Sheila, L): Mr. Speaker, on September 29, 2022, the Lieutenant-Governor signed an order in council stating the following:

Under subsection 44(1) of the Electricity Act and sections 4 and 5 of the Provincial Loans Act, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council authorizes the following:

(a) the raising of sums of money, by way of a loan or loans in the manner provided by section 4 of the Provincial Loans Act, an aggregate amount of not more than Canadian

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

\$200,000,000 which the Lieutenant-Governor in Council considers necessary for the benefit of the New Brunswick Power Corporation under subsection 44(1) of the Electricity Act

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Energy Development is this: Why is the province of New Brunswick loaning NB Power a total sum of \$200 million?

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member opposite, if you look at the question... Now, a question from the opposition is usually meant to be salacious and is usually trying to cast a disparaging view toward the government. Let's look at what was in that question. If I could get the member opposite to read it again... He would probably have to read it again, because I am quite confident that someone in the back wrote that for him. It was very technical, and it had lots of listings within the legislation that exists.

What he is doing is talking about existing legislation. At many different times throughout many different years and in the course of doing regular business, there is an exchange back and forth between the government and the utility on a variety of different financial components. The member opposite is quite frankly and quite obviously trying to create some sort of salacious story here by talking about existing legislation. I certainly hope that we have some more subsections that he can refer to in his third and final question.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Mr. Oliver): The member for Tracadie-Sheila, please speak through the Speaker, at this end of the Chamber.

Mr. K. Chiasson (Tracadie-Sheila, L): Mr. Speaker, NB Power has a debt nearing \$5 billion. It is planning to spend \$4 billion on the refurbishment of the Mactaquac Dam, it is increasing electricity rates by 8.9%, and it is providing a multimillion-dollar preretirement package to employees. My question to the minister is this: With NB Power struggling to manage its debt, can you explain to the people of New Brunswick what expense this \$200-million loan is covering?

Hon. Mr. Holland (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I think that over the remainder of my career in the Legislature, I am going to adopt the practice of highlighting the details of these opposition questions. I do not know whether anybody else heard the statement, but he said that we are planning on spending \$4 billion on Mactaquac. Did you hear that, folks? Have we talked about that? Have we committed to that? No, of course not. Also, he said that NB Power is going to raise its rates by 8.9%. The last time I checked, there had not been any indication that that had been approved.

The member opposite is taking great liberties to presuppose outcomes in an effort to create fear, doubt, and instability regarding something as important as our public utility. I think that the province of New Brunswick is outraged at the making of cheap shots in an effort to

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

create instability within something as important as our utility. Let's start talking about what is being done, and let's start talking straight here.

(Interjections.)

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

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2020-25 Overcoming Poverty Together plan clearly states that we need to address mental health and addictions services.

[*Translation*]

In fact, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to addictions and mental health problems, as we saw—and we do not have to look back to the tragedies we have gone through here in New Brunswick over the last few years—response and wait times are critical. We are talking about life and death here. Again, I repeat that prevention is clearly the best way to avoid these tragedies.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Social Development is this: Could she tell me how long wait times were for mental health services and addiction treatment in 2020 and how long they were for the same services in 2022? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Original*]

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much. Just for information purposes, mental health and addiction are under the Health Department, so I will take that question.

But I want to clarify something from a little earlier regarding Public Health and the question on the variants. In a seven-page release from Public Health on Tuesday—to the questions this morning based on this—there was a random sample of COVID-19 variants, BA.1, BA.2, BA.3, BA.4, and BA.5, with 94% of the samples being BA.5 and 5% being BA.4. Anyway, that was just to clarify that for the leader.

To the very important question from the member opposite on mental health, addictions, and wait times, there has been a significant amount of work done specifically on wait times in mental health and addictions. It varies day-to-day based on exactly what kind of service you are looking for. We have moved ahead with having availability—trained professionals available—in emergency rooms, and I will pick that up after.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that wait times for mental health services and addiction treatment are not getting shorter. This government is said to want to invest \$32 million to build a prison.

For the past five years, this government that has not done much with the mental health file. This is about a centre of excellence for youth mental health, addiction problems, and people who are in the streets because of mental health problems and addiction.

The minister has taken a bit of time to answer the question from my colleague from Moncton Centre. So, I am once again asking for a few more details. I know the answers we are given sometimes refer to an opposition member, but these details are not exclusively meant for us. They are for the people who need them and are listening, and for the media that will revisit these questions. So, I am asking my question again: How long were wait times in 2020 compared to those in 2022? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, again, I want to talk about the importance of this topic. We have done a significant number of projects that have reduced the wait times, depending on where the member opposite wants to go and what he wants to talk about. If it is about having access for mental health and addictions issues in the emergency room, we have added, I believe, 27 people to address those issues, for people who present themselves with symptoms at the emergency room. Also, when we look at the one-at-a-time therapy that is being offered to youth and adults, we see that this has significantly reduced wait times over the time frame that the member opposite wants to talk about. There is the step-up therapy that I highlighted last week in the federal-provincial-territorial meeting in terms of New Brunswick leading the way in having Integrated Service Delivery for youth in New Brunswick. This is addressing the needs, but we know that they are large and the work is not done. We continue to work very hard on that.

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, for two weeks now, pediatricians have been seeing more cases of the common respiratory virus, called RSV, than they have seen in the last three years. In addition, a particularly virulent strain of influenza is circulating, and everybody is wondering what to expect with COVID-19 this winter.

On the news this week, I saw the federal Chief Public Health Officer and the medical officers of health for Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Saskatchewan,

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

and British Columbia address the public. However, here in New Brunswick, Public Health is still missing in action. Will the Minister of Health commit to ensuring that Public Health informs New Brunswickers of the situation regarding RSV, influenza, and COVID-19 in the province over the next week?

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much. Again, I appreciate the question, and I am trying to provide the information for the members opposite.

On Tuesday, a report was released. It was seven pages, and it had not only a provincial scan but also a Canada-wide scan and an international scan on COVID-19 and on some of the other issues that are going forward. RSV is not a reportable disease, as are COVID-19, monkeypox, or some of the other very contagious diseases, but things are changing. Dr. Léger actually made a presentation at the FPT meeting last Tuesday in partnership with Dr. Theresa Tam. It was very well received from ministers right across the territories and the provinces.

Public Safety and Public Health continue to be present and to be engaged. Again, I do not control the media availability of individuals such as...

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

Ms. Mitton (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, what we are saying is that the public needs to hear directly from Public Health. What we are saying is that Public Health is absent. We need leadership. Where is it? We need a press conference.

When you add RSV, influenza, and COVID-19 to the human resource crisis that we have in health care, there just is not extra capacity in the system right now. Hospitals across Canada are being overwhelmed by these three viruses. Pediatric units, in particular, are being strained, including here in New Brunswick where they are at or near capacity. We do not even know, as the minister just said, how many cases of RSV there are in New Brunswick because Public Health does not track this.

So, what are Public Health's projections for hospitalizations from these viruses this winter? What is Public Health's plan to protect the most vulnerable and ensure that our hospitals are not completely overwhelmed by the triple threat of RSV, COVID-19, and flu this winter? We need more than a report. We need a press conference.

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Again, Mr. Speaker, we are more than happy... I am sure that Dr. Léger will be out in the media in the not-too-distant future to alleviate some of the concerns of the members across the way.

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

But there is no secret. We know that the triple threat has been headed our way, including various respiratory illnesses such as RSV, influenza, and typical flu-like symptoms. The whole system has changed, and that is why we are preparing. We are preparing to make sure that we are recruiting, whether it is for health care workers or for internationally trained nurses. I know that we are adding seats along the way.

The member opposite is wanting something now and immediate, but, again, Public Health is engaged. I have talked about the report and about some of the other initiatives going forward. The message has not changed, that people need to take the precautions: They need to get vaccinated, they need to wear a mask if they want to, they need to wash their hands, and they need to cough into their sleeves, if need be. So, again, the message is clear. We are prepared, and we are moving forward...

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

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Gauvin (Shediac Bay-Dieppe, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, when we talk about addictions and mental health challenges, the best thing is always prevention. Yesterday, my colleague from Tracadie-Sheila alluded to helping people on the back end. Over here, all help is welcome. All help is always welcome.

[Translation]

However, once again, I remind you that prevention is always the best course of action. We are talking about a centre of excellence for mental health. The \$32 million invested in the construction of a prison here in Fredericton would have been more than enough to build a centre of excellence for mental health in the Moncton region, where the needs are among the greatest in New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, helping people with mental health and addiction issues should always be top of mind, because, if they do not get help from the start, they sink into helplessness. Then, it is very difficult to find a way out.

I want to get as detailed an answer to my question as possible. What initiatives are being put forward to reduce wait times so that people living in those conditions stop suffering? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Original]

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Again, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to mental health and addictions, there have been a number of initiatives. It varies depending on just which particular sector we are looking at. If a person is suffering from mental health issues or addictions and is homeless and living on the street or in one of the centres in a

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

city, there is a significant amount of work that is being done there. If a child, youth, or young adult is looking for some help or assistance, a significant amount of work is being done there. For people presenting at emergency rooms, extra staff has been added. The availability of one-at-a-time therapy has helped many, many people, and that has been going on too. I announced \$500 000 for Atlantic Wellness in the city of Moncton to help provide services free of charge to high school students, so, again, they can get that...

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on, but we know that the work is not completely done. We continue to do that work.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, we know that this government loves to take money from the federal government for different programs and pad its surplus with it. We have seen that throughout the pandemic, and it continues today. Now, it is going after the federal government for more health money when it has left \$41 million of federal money for surgical backlogs in General Revenue. Recently, the government indicated, well, we are allocating that.

I want to know what new initiatives are on the table. We heard a little bit about a Bathurst clinic. They talked about \$6.4 million for rural hospitals. But, Mr. Speaker, this is not about taking money from the federal government, putting it into their existing budget, and taking their money out and padding their surplus. This is money that should be for new initiatives to make a difference for New Brunswickers. Where is this money, the federal money for surgical backlogs, being invested? What are the initiatives that are going to make a difference for New Brunswickers?

Hon. Mr. Fitch (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is a great question. I am very happy to speak on that because I was at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting a week ago Tuesday. Minister Duclos was there. You are right. The Premiers from across Canada have asked for a meeting with the Prime Minister, and that is to increase the Canada Health Transfer. The contribution from the federal government has fallen to 22%. The Premiers are asking for 35%. I can assure the member opposite that all the money that comes from the feds for health in New Brunswick will be spent. It will be spent, and we will probably go over the budget that was given to us.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the members opposite are telling us right now that they will support a supplementary estimate for the Health Department in New Brunswick. I can say this now: The needs are great, and the commitment from this government to meet those needs has never been stronger. We will continue to do the work. We will continue to help the province.

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

Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Oral Questions

Mr. McKee (Moncton Centre, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, I guess that I look forward to getting the supplementary estimates and seeing where the \$41 million has gone. But, at the same time, I struggle with this government's approach to health care. On one hand, the government members are hoarding huge surpluses—\$408 million, \$777 million, and now \$774 million over the past three years—almost \$2 billion. They are saying, on one hand, that money is not going to fix health care. Then, on the other hand, they are going after the federal government for—what?—\$500 million more. They could have made a difference over the past three years, but they sat on their hands. Now, they are pinning this on the federal government, to give them the money to make a difference, Mr. Speaker.

I want to know what their plan is for this federal money that they are going after. Do they have a plan? Will their budget increase from \$3.2 billion to \$3.7 billion, or are they just going to take that money and take their provincial dollars out of it? I want to know this: What is this government's plan for new health transfer money from the federal government in order to make a true difference for New Brunswickers?

Hon. Mr. Steeves (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do you know what? I will answer the member opposite by saying that we follow best practices. We absolutely spend the money where it has to be spent. We make strategic spends along the way. Do not worry. We are taking care of it. The Minister of Health is absolutely in control of that situation.

Now that I have answered that and I have about 44 seconds left, I do want to bring up one other thing, Mr. Speaker, and that is a new article that came out in the *Financial Post*: "Fraser Institute: New Brunswick's Blaine Higgs is Canada's most fiscally responsible premier". That is unbelievable. Is that not something?

I still have about 24 seconds, do I? How about this:

Because of the Higgs government's restrained approach to spending, New Brunswick has had budget surpluses for four years running... All other provinces chose to borrow money and dive deeper into debt.

Except New Brunswick. Still 9 seconds. How about this:

The Higgs government's approach to government finances stands out among the provinces. There are key lessons all premiers should learn from New Brunswick's...

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

The time for oral questions has expired.