

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**June 14, 2023**

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### GOVERNMENT

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, every day we see the Premier taking over his ministers' files, departments, legislation, and even policy. We are watching the erosion of democracy as New Brunswick parents are removed from education governance and New Brunswick patients have their voices quashed from health governance. The minister is now going to override municipal governance, and these elected officials no longer have a voice. We are witnessing the centralization of power into the hands of one man, and we are witnessing the frustration of Cabinet and caucus with the Premier's erratic control and secrecy. The Premier clearly does not trust his team, and New Brunswickers no longer trust him or this government. I ask the Premier to lay out for us how he sees New Brunswickers' and ministers' roles in the governance of this province.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is certainly an interesting question and an interesting way to do politics differently. We have seen in our province a status quo formula for a long, long time. But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The province is no longer in a status quo mode. The province has a way of thinking differently that is going to drive change that can meet the needs of New Brunswickers. Health is an example of that, Mr. Speaker. We go on talking about Health and how it has performed, how we have to make changes, and how we have to have better management of Health. Certainly, one of the members across the way would know well about what better management is required in Health.

In every aspect of this, the support of ministers to get a change in their department to make things happen is all part of the formula. But some people resist change. Some people say that we could just keep doing the same thing and it will all be better, it will all go away, and we will be just fine. Well, Mr. Speaker, health in the country is in crisis. That is why changes are needed. Changes are needed in order to have a look at our health care in its entirety, with Vitalité and Horizon working together to deliver the best health care in this country. We can do it, Mr. Speaker. Education is another one, and the minister is strong to make the changes necessary.

[Translation]

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The status quo is clearly not an option, but we are going to debate whether our system is now managed better, because we have a governance model that is taking away the voice of the public. The Premier says he has the support of his ministers.

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Personally, I would really like to know whom we should hold accountable for the lack of results from the health plan. The government had targets but did not reach them. Should we hold the Premier accountable? Should we hold the Minister of Health accountable?

The Premier is the one who fired the Horizon Health Network President and CEO, and his government was not able to fill the vacant positions within its new governance system, because nobody wants to take the job and work with people who can fire them at any time.

[Original]

So whom can we hold accountable for the failure of the health system to deliver on the health plan goals that this government put forward?

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take great offense to the fact that the member opposite is saying that the health goals are not being met. That is incorrect, and I am going to correct the record right now. I have, on paper, lists of some of the goals that have been achieved and some of the accolades from people who are saying that health care is actually turning around in the province. We know that there is more work to do, and we continue to do that work day in and day out. The commentary entitled “Public needs to know health care is improving”, by Norbert Cunningham, was printed just the other day.

Mr. Speaker, I find myself again having to keep the opposition on task or keep it accountable. Yesterday the member opposite, the Leader of the Liberal Party, said that the processing of Medicare applications was taking months. Well, here are the facts. The member opposite was talking in terms of weeks, but the reality is that those applications coming from outside Canada are being done within 24 days. Those applications coming from outside New Brunswick are being done within 23 days. We reacted, and we got the job done.

## EDUCATION

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that we can get a specific number from the Minister of Health. It is different from the one that we received yesterday.

But the Premier also mentioned education in his response. Back in March, the Premier himself, over the head of his minister, called for the elimination of Policy 713 and did not include the caucus in making those changes. Why?

For the *Education Act*, we saw a tabled document that had been sloppily drafted. Now we hear this: It is going to get pulled. It is going to come back. No, it is going to get pulled. Maybe we will get more time.

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There is a closure motion on the table to limit debate on an *Education Act*, on which there has not been consultation with stakeholders or thoughtful drafting. What is the chain of command? We are here to hold this governance model to account, so I would like the Premier to walk us through the chain of command that he uses between a department, the ministers, his Cabinet, and decision-making, because it is not at all clear that a good governance process is being followed.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important to understand that the governance process that is being followed is: How do we find better ways to get results? Every department is working with the ministers to achieve that, and the ministers are looking for options to do things differently. So, Mr. Speaker, in the discussion around Policy 713, it was: Okay, how do we get parents involved? Now, I would think that the Leader of the Opposition would be keen to have families and parents play a role in their children's upbringing, and that is the process that the minister is going through right now. He is not walking away and saying that parents are not part of the equation. I think that the Leader of the Opposition is well informed now about the interest that parents have in a policy that they had known nothing about.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is the balance that we are trying to strike. Having parents play a role in their child's future seems to be a novel concept, but it is one that our nation has been built on. So how do we make that happen, and how do we work to make sure that people are safe at the same time?

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's go to Bill 46, which is going through endless debate here in the House rather than going to the economic policy committee. And why? Because they do not really want to know the facts and to talk about the details. It is just talk, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is absolutely right that we believe that families and parents have a key role to play in the education of their children, so can he tell us why he removed them from the governance of the education system?

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Leader of the Official Opposition for the question. You know, she has so many questions that she wants to ask in question period, yet the opposition members babble on continuously in here, trying to stall its moving forward into the economic policy committee. She could ask these questions there and get the answers and not be grandstanding here in question period.

Parents are not being removed from the education system. They are not being removed from the education of their children. We believe in the parents' right to be involved in their children's education, both in the *Education Act* and in Policy 713. If she actually read it, she would see that the DEC's are still going to be elected. The PSSCs are still going to be elected.

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The elected process is going to remain in place. I am not quite sure what she is talking about, Mr. Speaker, but I would invite her to send it to the economic policy committee where we can have a full debate.

### FRENCH LANGUAGE PROGRAM

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the minister read the *Education Act*, which I understand can be challenging, since it has been changing on the fly and has amendments coming, he would see that the authority of the DECs has been completely removed and the power has been put in the hands of the superintendents and the Premier to direct the education system, its curriculum, and its governance. There is a lot of secrecy happening in education.

You would well know that at the end of May, we had parents in Grand Bay-Westfield who were learning of the changes to French immersion in their schools. It was going to stop being offered as early French immersion here and stop being offered as late immersion there, and the students were going to be bused 85 km down the road to a different school. A few days later, after the parents wrote letters, magically, it flip-flopped, and those changes disappeared. Now, we have parents wondering what is happening with French language reform as emails land in their box saying that these reforms are underway.

Can the Premier answer a simple yes-or-no question? Can he commit that there will not be changes to French language learning in 2023-24?

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure who has not read what, but I do not see the word “Premier” written anywhere in the *Education Act*. I would invite the Leader of the Official Opposition to show me where that is written in there because I have yet to see it.

In terms of stripping the DECs of power, bring it to the economic policy committee. We can talk about what the actual powers of the DECs are and what they will be. Currently, the DECs are advisory. They each have one employee, who is the superintendent. They vote on the budget. They have no power to change it. They have no power to make any decisions on operational issues regarding how the district is run. That stuff is not really changing. The only thing that is really changing is that the superintendents will be employees of the department. The DECs are still going to be elected. They will still view the budget. They will still have recommendations...

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

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): The superintendents will be appointed. That is what your legislation says, I believe, unless there is an amendment coming that we have not seen yet.

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I asked a simple yes-or-no question. We had changes to French immersion being proposed in Grand Bay-Westfield and then yanked. Can the minister or the Premier confirm that there will not be changes to French language learning in the 2023-24 school year?

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am not exactly sure what the Leader of the Opposition is asking here. She talks about a couple of communities where there were not enough children registered to offer the French immersion program and the district made a decision. These things lie in the domain of the districts. They work with the community to try to see that we can continue to offer the program. I am not going to presuppose at this point in time what the districts are going to do.

I know that we are going to continue to look at a better way to teach French to our children because the results that we are getting do not suffice. We have a lot of room there for improvement. We have some working groups that are looking at a lot of different things. French instruction is one of them. It is not to do away with anything. It is about how we can improve it. I want to see more bilingual New Brunswickers. I have a personal story about that, and maybe I can tell it in answer to the next question.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A yes-or-no answer would have sufficed instead of a nonanswer.

(Interjections.)

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Yes, I feel the same way.

Municipal leaders have also lost faith in this government and in the minister. The Local Governance Reform process required building relationships, establishing trust, negotiations, and partnerships.

[*Translation*]

The reform had started well, if I may say so. However, when the time came to make decisions...

[*Original*]

With hard decisions, the Premier and the minister stopped communicating, dictated budgets, and chose to centralize power and decision-making. The mayors are on the front lines serving their communities. Our team wants to see a decentralized approach that gets as close to the communities as possible and empowers the municipalities to serve their

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residents. Instead, the government has tabled another improperly drafted Act that gives the minister powers to get into the back rooms of the municipalities and override their decisions. What steps will the minister or the Premier take to restore the trust that the government has lost with municipal leaders?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Allain** (Moncton East, Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform, PC): Mr. Speaker, throughout the process, we had a plan, the white paper entitled *Working together for vibrant and sustainable communities*. The whole plan is explained in the white paper, Mr. Speaker.

This appears under section 1.5, “INDEPENDENT MUNICIPAL COMMISSION”: “At various times in the past, the idea has been raised of having an independent commission to review, assess and possibly rule and/or make recommendations on matters affecting the governance and administration of local governments.”

Mr. Speaker, there are no surprises here. It is in our plan—it is in our plan. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition has no plan, and I do not believe she has read the white paper. That is what frustrates me, because we held good public consultations. Unfortunately, some opposition members were not present, but we held consultations and talked to people. So we developed a plan and are following it. Thank you very much.

[Original]

### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to health care. Time will tell when it comes to the improvements in the health care system. For the sake of New Brunswickers, we on this side of the House sincerely hope that the improvements that the government is allegedly making will create improvements for New Brunswickers.

We still continue to see long waits in emergency rooms and difficulties in accessing primary care, and this government is moving at a snail’s pace when it comes to opening up collaborative practices. We continue to see long waits for elective surgeries despite the efforts. We see missed targets from the health reform plan over and over again.

Our questions today are with respect to governance. This government is looking for nothing more than a power grab by removing elected members from the boards. Government is making them the scapegoats of its mismanagement. Government made the decision to fire the CEO, which cost \$2 million, and it is now on its third Health Minister in four years. Mr. Speaker, how is the government going to rebuild trust in health care decisions following this rash of knee-jerk reactions? When this is nothing more than a power grab...

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

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Well, Mr. Speaker, Bill 39 passed here in the House. You know, when the member opposite says that time will tell, well, time is telling right now.

We are making investments in health care. We are getting results in health care, and we are improving access to surgery and access to primary care. Our plan has five pillars. When it comes to the part of our plan about access to surgery, recent improvements have been made for accessing hip and knee surgery that cut the number of people waiting for more than a year from 700 in 2022 to roughly 400 in May. Mr. Speaker, at the current rate, no one will be waiting more than 12 months to have a hip or knee replacement in the next year. Those are results. Those are results. That is part of a plan, that is part of the investments, and that is part of having frontline workers who are working very, very hard, which we on this side of the House appreciate.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on. I would be more than happy to talk about more successes in health care in New Brunswick.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. McKee** (Moncton Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, the government's decision concerning the boards of directors of the health networks undermines the democratic process, and we see that in every field that affects us today, Mr. Speaker.

Qualified members elected to these boards represented the regions. Let's not forget that the irresponsible decision to fire the President and CEO cost the government \$2 million. The President and CEO and elected members are the scapegoats in this matter. They are the ones who have been pushed aside, because the way this government is governing has led to weaknesses in the health system. In the last four years, there have been three different Ministers of Health, who are all sitting next to each other today.

Mr. Speaker, the government is being asked to ensure that members are elected to the boards of directors to represent the regions. These people, who represent their communities, can bring ideas forward to the boards of directors. What will this government do to restore confidence in its governance decisions?

*[Original]*

**Hon. Mr. Fitch** (Riverview, Minister of Health, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Again, we are receiving a significant number of applications for the board positions. We have passed Bill 39, so progress is ongoing, and it is not solely in health care. We are working with other departments, too, when it comes to the Department of Social Development and the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

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I can look at the expansion of the extra-mural program that enhanced clinical services for special care homes. It expanded to 65 locations in the past 10 months, and that program saw an 85% reduction in nonemergency visits to emergency rooms. Mr. Speaker, that is a significant diversion from the emergency rooms, and again, it is freeing up that space for people who are having a threat to life and limb. When we look at the diversion to some of the other clinics or to eVisitNB or we look at Tele-Care 811, we see that these will allow an emergency to go where it needs to be—in the emergency room—and allow primary care to be received out in the community. That is progress, that is moving forward, and that is getting results.

### EDUCATION

**Mrs. Landry** (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): Mr. Speaker, with the proposed elimination of the district education councils in the Anglophone sector, parents are worried that the minister's reason is to control and censor sexual orientation and gender identity education and to eliminate French immersion. Yesterday, the MLA for Gagetown-Petitcodiac said in an email statement:

*I am concerned if this new governance model is enacted, there will be no limitations to where a Premier could have direct interference, including areas like curriculum, policy, finances or even staff hiring and disciplinary practices*

Why does the Premier need to centralize power to have this level of direct interference in our school system?

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. Conspiracy theories abound. There is no intention here to do anything untoward or underhanded. The DEC's will still be in place. They will still be elected. They will still have influence over what happens in the districts. They will still have influence over what the superintendents choose to do. They will still be involved in the hiring of their superintendent. They will still be involved in the evaluation of their superintendent. They are still key partners in education, just as the PSSCs are key partners at the school level in education.

This idea that, somehow, we are going to do all this stuff because we are changing some minor parts of a bill... I do not know where this comes from. It may play well on their side of the floor, but, really, conspiracy theories do not work for me. Thank you.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Landry** (Madawaska Les Lacs-Edmundston, L): So, Mr. Speaker, if there is no change, I do not understand why the minister wants to send this bill to the Standing Committee on Economic Policy. In fact, we should have sent it to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments. However, Mr. Speaker, with decision-making centralized in the hands of the

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minister and the Office of the Premier, the appropriation of powers, the micromanaging, the changes to the school curriculum, the lack of confidence in staff and teachers, the lack of psychology and social work resources, and a collective agreement that is still being negotiated, it is total chaos in the New Brunswick education system. Mr. Speaker, what do the minister and the Premier intend to do to restore stability to the New Brunswick education system?

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): In response to the member opposite, through you, Mr. Speaker, I must say that things are really odd this morning. The opposition wants to ask questions about the bill before us that is, for lack of a better word, stuck in the House, because opposition members do not want to—they do not want to—send it to the Standing Committee on Economic Policy. We saw that yesterday and we will probably see it this afternoon and for the rest of the day. Opposition members do not want to do it. They really do not want to discuss it. However, they do want to ask questions and talk about conspiracy theories, but, actually, they do not want to discuss the bill in committee. Come on, stop doing what you are doing and refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Economic Policy. Thank you.

[Original]

### FUEL PRICES

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, late last year this government used its majority to adopt a bill that I called an Act respecting the interests of Irving Oil. It contained an amendment to the *Petroleum Products Pricing Act* that created a carbon adjustor, which was a gift to Irving Oil. The only reason—the only reason—that the price of gas is going up by 8¢ per litre in July is what the Premier did, and that was to implement what Arthur Irving asked him to. This Tory carbon adjustor enables Irving Oil to take money out of our pockets and keep it, rather than having the company use its windfall profits to clean up its gasoline and diesel products, as required by Canada's new Clean Fuel Regulations. These regulations were designed to ensure no immediate impact on fuel prices, but the Tory carbon adjustor is ensuring that we are paying an extra 8¢ per litre in July.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us how many meetings and phone calls he has had with Irving Oil representatives, including Arthur Irving, since the 2020 election?

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, how dare the member opposite try to turn something as important as a protection measure for small businesses in New Brunswick into some sort of big conspiracy theory about Irving? It is very frustrating to see misleading conversations like that take place.

How many small businesses would the member opposite be in favour of seeing shut down? Is he going to come with us when we go to put a lock on the door? Will he say, I am sorry,

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but because of my narrative and my myopic focus on taking a shot at Irving, I did not care enough and my words got your business closed? How would the member opposite feel about that? Mom-and-pop shops, small convenience stores with a gas pump out front—that is what built the entire province.

There are large petroleum companies here in New Brunswick. They can handle the absorption of a great deal of stuff that small businesses cannot. The member opposite needs to get out of the ideology of the... I am just speechless. I am so frustrated. I am so frustrated by the member opposite's lack of concern...

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Thank you, member. Sit.

(Interjections.)

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

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, the federal government negotiated with the industry for seven years to ensure there were many ways to comply with clean fuel regulations. The federal government negotiated with the New Brunswick Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development and his counterparts in Atlantic Canada to give them what they wanted. They asked that the implementation of the Clean Fuel Regulations be delayed two years, until 2023, and that the production of heating oil be exempt from these regulations. All of these requests were accepted, Mr. Speaker. Why is the Premier fearmongering now, Mr. Speaker, when the government got everything it wanted?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, there is only one person in this House right now trying to spread fear, and that is the Leader of the Green Party. It is the Leader of the Green Party, because when we talk about New Brunswick and the years that it has taken to talk about what the Clean Fuel Regulations mean in terms of the impact on New Brunswickers... It is one thing to talk about that.

This is a federal policy that does not take regional distinctions into consideration. We do not have a subway network here in New Brunswick. We do not have public transportation that goes from one end to the other. The person, the man, or the woman who has to get up, pack a lunch, and go to work has to drive the same distance every day. These Clean Fuel Regulations are idealistic. It sounds great if you can hop on a subway, head down there, collect yourself, and then get on an electric bus in a major city or something like that. We want to aspire to that, but we do not have that here in New Brunswick. What we do have is



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an unfair regulation that is going to cost New Brunswickers more to get to work. That is not fair.

**Mr. Coon** (Fredericton South, Leader, G): Mr. Speaker, the Premier opposes market-based approaches to cutting carbon pollution. He is opposing this regulatory approach that provides refineries with the least-cost opportunities to produce cleaner fuels through a whole menu of compliance options. He opposes public investment in public transportation so that we can get from here to there in this province. But, Mr. Speaker, he was happy to create the Tory carbon adjustor to provide Irving Oil with a potential windfall. When the company finally chooses to innovate, as Irving Oil is bound to do, and to profit from complying with the Clean Fuel Regulations down the road, it could end up pocketing buckets of our money, gifted to it through the Tory carbon adjustor. If this happens, will the Premier make Irving Oil give the money back to New Brunswickers?

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think that my colleague has covered very clearly what that means to retailers and how it protects retailers in this change. But I think that the Leader of the Green Party needs to understand that the situation here with this refinery is such that the actual federal rules have denied the carbon credits that would have actually allowed the company to put in major investments in cleaner technology. They have denied carbon credits. Some 80% of the volume does not qualify, Mr. Speaker, because it is an export refinery.

Now, what does that mean? It means that, ultimately, an owner of this refinery could say: I do not need to be in New Brunswick. I will buy from India. I will buy from somewhere where there are no regulations. That is what the Leader of the Green Party would consider to be success. That is not going to be success, so how do we change that? First, we recognize where the refinery is with respect to the environmental standards. The members opposite would find out where it is, and it is certainly the top refinery in the country. Let's work to provide cleaner operations here, but let's not be negatively impacted by the federal rules that now exist for our own industry right here in New Brunswick.

[*Translation*]

## EDUCATION

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think education is one of the provincial government's most important responsibilities.

[*Original*]

I am a mom to three kids who are all in elementary school right now, and I think that the work that teachers do is some of the most important work done in this province. So, the

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*Education Act* is a critical piece of legislation that needs time and scrutiny. If the Minister of Education desperately wants this to be debated in committee, then why did he vote against our motion to send it to the law amendments committee?

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition knows full well, we can debate this bill in the economic policy committee. I do agree with her that education is extremely important in our province. It is the foundation of our future. It is the foundation of our province. It is where we get our young entrepreneurs. It is where we get our doctors. It is where we get our professionals. It is where we get our blue-collar workers. Without education, where would we be?

All that I have heard this week has been, Yes, we want to talk about education, but we do not really want to talk about it. We do not really want to send the bill to economic policy so that we can have the discussion. That makes me wonder what the goal is, other than to spread innuendos that are incorrect and that make people think that it is something that it is not.

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): I am happy to clarify, Mr. Speaker. The government drafted an education Act but did not consult with any of the stakeholders, such as the folks at the Teachers' Association and Inclusion New Brunswick—people who care very deeply about the *Education Act*. The law amendments committee would give us a chance to rectify the government's lack of consultation and would let people who have expert points of view on this legislation into the process rather than centralizing power in a secretive drafting process that the Premier and the minister have put in place.

The changes to the *Education Act* give the minister and, by default, the Premier the power to change things like Policy 713, and we see what happens when they do that. The revision to Policy 713 has created more questions than answers. The minister's comments do not match what he has drafted. Teachers are left asking themselves, What are we to do? Can the minister confirm now that teachers will be able to use students' pronouns in the absence of a policy that does not address this question?

(Interjections.)

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): Thank you, members. Members, thank you. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the member opposite. You know, I have been pondering this all week. Children are sent to us by their parents at a young age. They are entrusted to the education system so that we can educate them. Teachers go well above and beyond every day, through more than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. It

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would be nice if we could stick with the basics, but we feed them, we clothe them, and we look after their social needs.

All week, I have been hearing, yes, we believe in parents, but let's not tell them stuff. I have a problem with that, Mr. Speaker. I do not think that we should be hiding information from parents. We should work with our young people to get them to a place where they can talk to their parents, but I do not think that we should withhold information. Thank you.

