

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions



**June 15, 2023**

### CONTENTS

#### GOVERNMENT

Ms. Holt

Hon. Mr. Hogan

Ms. Holt

Hon. Mr. Hogan

#### SCHOOLS

Ms. Holt

Hon. Mr. Hogan

#### HOUSING

Ms. Holt

Hon. Ms. Green

#### COST OF LIVING

Mr. Legacy

Hon. Mr. Steeves

Mr. Legacy

Hon. Mr. Steeves

#### NB LIQUOR

Mr. D'Amours

Hon. Mr. Steeves

Mr. D'Amours

Hon. Mr. Steeves

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

### COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. D'Amours

Hon. Mr. Higgs

### PAY EQUITY

Ms. Thériault

Hon. Mr. Higgs

Ms. Thériault

Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace

### RECYCLING

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Mr. Crossman

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Mr. Crossman

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Mr. K. Chiasson

Hon. Mr. Holland

Mr. K. Chiasson

Hon. Mr. Holland

### GOVERNMENT

Ms. Holt

Hon. Mr. Higgs

Ms. Holt

Hon. Mr. Higgs

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

[Original]

### GOVERNMENT

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Mr. Speaker, it has been a rough time in the Legislature for the Higgs government over these past few weeks—or months, actually. It is showing in the legislation and the policy that this government is putting forward—or not putting forward, in some cases.

[Translation]

You have been in office for four and a half years. We might think that, after almost five years in office, we would not see so many mistakes and so much government incompetence.

[Original]

My colleagues are going to dig into some concerning instances of mismanagement of government programs and service delivery.

[Translation]

I myself have a few examples of legislative mismanagement to look at with you.

[Original]

I would like to start with the *Education Act*. Yesterday, the minister seemed quite adamant that we get that to committee. This bill was tabled on May 9. Why did the government not call it sooner to allow for a fulsome and healthy debate?

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been clear to me all week that, contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition is saying, the opposition has no intention or desire to debate the *Education Act*. They could have asked for that to come forward. I think that we actually asked to bring that forward, and we would have started.

I said in the press yesterday that I will stay Monday, Tuesday, or until the end of August talking about it. But they do not appear to want to talk about it in economic policy. They do not want to debate it. They just want to fire questions, innuendos, and falsehoods across the floor rather than sitting down and having a valuable conversation about it.

There are some extremely intelligent people on the other side. There is a great deal of knowledge around education. I would invite them to economic policy so that we could have that discussion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to jog your memory, our team is very keen to debate this bill. We put forward a motion to send it to law amendments so that we could have that fulsome debate and include people in the consultation and in the amendments for the bill that were not included in the drafting of the Act. If the government were interested in a rigorous review of the *Education Act*, why did it table a time allocation and closure motion, Mr. Speaker?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, it is not that we do not want to debate the education bill. We have had many, many, many opportunities to do so. You could have referred the bill to the Standing Committee on Economic Policy last week.

[Original]

Instead of that, they just want to play games. They do not really want to talk about it. They want to fire shots across the bow. They want to say all these things.

I know a number of the members across the way. Some I do not know that well, but I know that they are intelligent. I know that there is the expertise on the other side to have a fulsome discussion around the *Education Act*. Why they do not want to do that is beyond me. I just cannot figure it out. I have tried. I will try again, and we will see where we end up. They could have done that already. Thank you.

## SCHOOLS

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The next example that I have of incompetence in policy making is with Policy 713. As already noted, the revised policy needed to be corrected immediately after the minister's press conference. There was discrepancy between what the minister said and what the policy said. The advocate told us that the policy is discriminatory and open to a court challenge. But something really important was missing, and that was openness, transparency, and a comprehensive consultation effort.

The advocate flagged early—weeks ago—that the review process was deficient, but the government did not listen to his recommendation. Teachers' representatives were not included. Psychologists were not included, even though they were named in the changes. Education experts were not consulted. The process followed did not pass muster with members of Cabinet and caucus. If we are to expect more policy writing by the Premier and the minister, well, I have two questions: Can you explain your planned approach to future consultation? And can you explain for us why you chose not to engage in a fulsome consultation on this effort?

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

**Hon. Mr. Hogan** (Carleton, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, PC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, it is a pleasure to be on my feet answering questions.

I take great issue with what the Leader of the Opposition says. The original policy had consultations on and off for about three months. We did consultations. We did consultations with a wide variety of groups. I met with parents, I met with families, and I met with students. I met with teachers, the Child and Youth Advocate, and other key stakeholders. This did not just drop out of the sky. You know, we put a lot of effort into it. We were looking at only three parts of Policy 713, so I am not quite sure why we would go and do that for months and months and months. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

## HOUSING

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk a little bit about the incompetence of the government with respect to its current plans. There are a number of plans we could talk about. There is an energy plan, which includes a hodgepodge of other plans to respond to climate change. There is the health plan.

[*Original*]

I would like to look at housing. I believe the minister to be sincere in her efforts to get the housing strategy done and in front of this Assembly in a timely way; but the clock has been ticking since the time of her predecessor, and the housing crisis persists. I just received a call yesterday from Angela, who finally heard back from the Residential Tenancies Tribunal confirming that her 70% rent increase was approved. People continue to struggle with the cost of housing.

The minister put forward two pieces of legislation earlier this session. My worry is that with the strategy not yet tabled, the legislative changes are not going to come until next October and into 2024. Can the minister share how she will execute a strategy that will not be legislated until next year?

**Hon. Ms. Green** (Fredericton North, Minister of Service New Brunswick, Minister responsible for Housing, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process of putting together the housing strategy has taken months, and it has involved consultations with every stakeholder. I do not think that we have missed a stakeholder.

We had over 200 people together in a room to look at innovative solutions for our housing crisis here in New Brunswick, and there were some smart people in that room. They provided over 100 opportunities to address the housing crisis that we have here in New Brunswick, and we looked at all 100 opportunities and innovative solutions. We then

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

narrowed that down to the ones that will have the most impact and that we can implement in the timeliest manner. This housing strategy has things that we can do right now, and we will, Mr. Speaker—right now.

### COST OF LIVING

**Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, the team members on the other side seem to have found enlightenment this week. All of a sudden, they realized that New Brunswickers are struggling to make ends meet. This is, of course, while sitting on billion-dollar surpluses. Since our good colleagues' level of concern has increased, I will remind them that we introduced a motion in March to remove the provincial portion of the HST on electricity bills to provide some much-needed relief for those same New Brunswickers. Government members then amended the motion to "urge the government to study the possibility of removing the provincial portion of the HST". Power rates have now increased. We assume that they have now studied it. Can the Minister of Finance give us his final conclusion?

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite. Yes, power rates have increased. Fuel rates have increased. Everything has increased. What is it? The bottom line, though, is that things have increased because of a carbon tax that your federal kissing cousins have implemented.

Having said that, what have we done? What have we done since taking office? We will actually go back in time here a little bit, Mr. Speaker. Since 2019 we have raised the budget by 24%. That is from 2019 to 2023. We have encouraged construction. We have encouraged construction by lowering property taxes. So, yes, we are lowering taxes all the time. Year after year, this government is lowering personal income taxes. We are putting money back into New Brunswickers' pockets.

We are doing government the way that government should be done. The way that it should be done is this way—for the people. We are saving people money. We are not looking for a new way to tax. The feds are, and these guys are. The Gallant government did it. We stopped it, and we are reversing it, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst West-Beresford, L): Mr. Speaker, we know that the government has picked up this shiny new consultant who gave it one talking point, but the minister surely knows the difference between an electricity bill and a gas bill. I am asking about the electricity bill. His own government changed the motion to study it. He has had plenty of time. What is the conclusion? Will he take off the provincial portion of the HST on electricity bills?

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the honourable member is forgetting about the heat pump

## Oral Questions

program. I think that helped. I think that helped with people's electricity. I think that helped with people's electricity.

But lowering personal income tax helps, lowering property tax helps, increasing the minimum wage helps, and the Emergency Fuel and Food Benefit—not once but twice—helps. There are the investments in public housing. We now have a Housing minister and a housing strategy and a way to move forward to grow New Brunswick. We have had problems from growth. We used to have challenges from decline. Now, we have challenges from growth. It is an exciting time for New Brunswick. We should all be happy that we are here, and we should all be happy that this government is in control of the purse strings. I can tell you that.

[*Translation*]

### NB LIQUOR

**Mr. D'Amours** (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Conservative government likes to blame others when it comes to tax increases. New Brunswick Conservatives are second to none, though.

New Brunswick craft alcohol producers will be hit with mark-up rate increases ranging from 14% to 165% in July 2023, a few days from now. It's not the 2% annual rate that NB Liquor had indicated to them, then. That is how the Conservative government is destroying this industry made up of small and medium-sized businesses. Is the Premier going to do the only acceptable thing and order NB Liquor to respect the original agreement of 2%?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address the member opposite and his question regarding a Crown corporation. A Crown corporation is run at arm's length from the government for a reason. For this Crown corporation, the reason would be for the setting up of liquor stores that are close to each other. Maybe you are picking favourites. Maybe you are picking favourites.

Do you know what? This government does not pick favourites. We have rules in place. We have rules in place for all our Crown corporations. We have rules in place for NB Liquor as well. We have rules so that Crown corporations make decisions through boards that are not affected politically. The Liberals may not believe that, but we on this side of the government—this Conservative government—believe in the independence of Crown corporations from the government.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

**Mr. D'Amours** (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the rhetoric was the same when the Premier asked the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development to intercede with the EUB. It was good for one but not for the other. The Premier and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board should therefore respond.

This Premier knows how to make drastic changes without consultation. He does not talk to his caucus about significant changes, but it does not matter. He does not talk to his Cabinet about significant changes, but it does not matter. He does not talk to industry about significant changes, but it does not matter. This is exactly what the Conservative government has done with New Brunswick craft alcohol producers.

Does the Premier think that by hoarding more money in the provincial coffers, at the expense of New Brunswick SMEs, this industry will come out ahead? The only one coming out ahead, Mr. Speaker, is the provincial treasury. Too bad for SMEs. Is the Premier going to be reasonable and call NB Liquor to order?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Steeves** (Moncton Northwest, Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, PC): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather ironic that the members opposite would be talking about our not doing enough stakeholder engagement and pushing things through. Does anybody else remember the fast-track of assessments? Hello. That was a mess.

But do you know what? We continue to help New Brunswickers. We continue to help New Brunswickers with our Enhanced Energy Savings Program, and we continue to help New Brunswickers by raising budgets. The budget for the Department of Health went up this year by over 10%—by 10.6%. And do you know what? We are not that far out with the budget. It is still the first quarter. The budget went up by 11.3% for the Department of Social Development, and the budget for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development went up by 9.4%. These are historic rises in spending, and these are coming from a Conservative government, which is spending money and also cutting taxes. Spending money and cutting taxes—do that.

[*Translation*]

## COMMUNICATIONS

**Mr. D'Amours** (Edmundston-Madawaska Centre, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of small and medium-sized businesses, it is really important to see just what contract this Conservative government is trying to get.

It will be recalled that, not long ago, the Premier told people who were asking for salary increases: Go out West. It will be recalled that, during the pandemic, when small and

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

medium-sized businesses were asking for assistance, the government did absolutely nothing. It let them down during the pandemic and is doing it again now.

Let's look at the situation, Mr. Speaker. Though we have communication firms in New Brunswick, the Premier decides to hire a firm from the West. What is the problem? Are our New Brunswick firms no good?

The question that must be asked is this: Did his cousin and friend Pierre Poilievre advise him not to hire a New Brunswick communication firm and instead hire a western firm to harm people and businesses in New Brunswick?

[Original]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of information covered in that. There was a lot of dialogue covered in that. I do not know whether the talk about SMEs... If that was talking about investment in the province and about small enterprises in the province, there is a piece of that. We have seen more interest in that regard than ever before. So I think that speaks for itself. When people come in and spend private money and want to set up here, that says a lot more than we can say here in the House.

Talking about the advertising groups and looking across the country and seeing how we can determine what we have to talk about in terms of real issues... Mr. Speaker, I think we are finding that one of those real issues being talked about right now is the role of parents with kids. It has become a real issue, but there are so many more issues. We find that much of our media today has turned into an opinion. I guess that more and more people are turning to social media in terms of getting messages out that actually are said in the voices of those people. That means asking: How do you best do that? We are all learning from that process. It is a changing market and a changing level of interest and involvement, so we are working in that regard.

[Translation]

## PAY EQUITY

**Ms. Thériault** (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, next Monday, June 19, we will celebrate the 14th anniversary of the *Pay Equity Act, 2009*, in New Brunswick, which applies to the civil service, the hospital sector, the school system, and Crown corporations. That is 14 years of work in the Pay Equity Bureau by advocacy organizations such as the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity. Anyway, it is June 2023, and the situation needs to be assessed. Subsection 29(3) of the Act says that the Pay Equity Bureau shall submit to the Minister responsible for Women's Equality an annual report on the implementation and maintenance of pay equity.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

Now, the annual report has been submitted, but the problem is this: The annual report has not been made public. So, what is the point of producing a report that nobody can read? Madam Minister, could you commit today to making this report public?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question under advisement because I have not seen the report. If it is available and should be public, we will deal with that. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Thériault** (Caraquet, L): Mr. Speaker, obviously, making this report public would make it possible to ensure that commitments have been met, progress has been made, and deadlines have been met as planned. In short, the government is accountable to the people. To my knowledge, the Pay Equity Bureau is the only office that does not make its report public, so what assurances do we have that the Act is properly implemented? What assurances do we have that female-dominated jobs were assessed and the process is now underway? So, this kind of culture of secrecy and lack of transparency is being perpetuated.

Madam Minister, since you are the only one to have read the report—because the Premier has not seen it—could you tell us today what is in it?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace** (Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, Minister responsible for Women's Equality, PC): Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for that question. I also received a copy of the press release yesterday from the Coalition for Pay Equity.

This is a report that we commit to every year. We provide that report. Certainly, there is a lot of work that has been done in terms of education on pay equity in both the private sector and the public sector. We have an ongoing dialogue with the Coalition for Pay Equity. We most certainly have a lot to be proud of, especially in terms of working with... A lot of focus with our Pay Equity Bureau right now is in working with our new municipalities. We take a lot of pride in that. I think it is incredibly important. Thank you.

## RECYCLING

**Ms. Mitton** (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, one thing that I regularly hear from constituents and from people across the province is that they care about the three Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle. Last month a CBC article mentioned that Circular Materials had presented its plan under the packaging and paper products extended producer

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

responsibility program. A presentation to Fredericton city council stated that the plan was approved on May 1 and will begin to be implemented by November.

One of the concerns raised by councillors is that there is no clear timeline for when recycling programs will be offered to people living in apartments, which I know is a concern for many New Brunswickers, including tenants and students in my riding. Other than what was reported in the CBC article, New Brunswickers still do not know anything about the Circular Materials plan. Will the Minister of Environment release the plan so that all New Brunswickers will know what will be happening with the recycling of packaging and paper products in November?

**Hon. Mr. Crossman** (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from across the way. Once again, there is a lot going on in waste reduction. I cannot give you the timelines off the top of my head today, but I will certainly take the question under advisement and get back to you, member.

The department is excited to announce... The department released the solid waste strategic action plan last month. It should be posted online. I will double-check here today to ensure that it is, and I will get that link to you. The vision of the plan is to reduce the amount of solid waste going to the landfills in New Brunswick.

To get back to your question about container pickups at apartments, I know that in the Hampton area, for example, people in condos have a smaller pickup container that they can keep inside, not outside, and there is a biweekly pickup. Garbage is picked up one week and compost the other. I do wish that more places across the province would compost. Our children and family are used to this because they have been doing it for a long time. The long story short is to use the landfills, get more there, make it right, and make it better. Thank you.

**Ms. Mitton** (Memramcook-Tantramar, G): Mr. Speaker, we already know the timeline. We actually just do not know what the plan is. We need transparency, and we need to know what the Circular Materials plan is.

I have also heard that the plan is to include beverage containers in the new extended producer responsibility program. As the Minister of Environment knows, the Environmental Trust Fund is funded through the Beverage Containers Program. In this year's budget, the revenue for the Environmental Trust Fund from the Beverage Containers Program is projected to be \$350 000 compared to \$9.5 million in previous years. This leads me to believe that what I have heard is true, but we do not know because we have not heard from this government or from the Minister of Environment as to what the plans are. Can the Minister of Environment confirm that the Beverage Containers Program will be ending? If so, where will funding for the Environmental Trust Fund come from in the future?



# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

**Hon. Mr. Crossman** (Hampton, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, PC): Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. The program will not be stopping. Money will continue. We do see its importance, and the money will come along the way. It may not be directly through the Environmental Trust Fund as it has been, but we certainly want to take part.

With respect to some of the goals that you are asking about, the goal is that by 2030, New Brunswick will achieve an annual reduction of 40 000 t of solid waste being disposed of at the regular regional landfills. It will create a foundation that helps us to achieve further reductions in the future.

As you mentioned, the focus on the circular economy and the extended producer responsibility program is certainly important. The department has added programs for paint, oil, glycol—which you mentioned—electronics, packaging and paper products, pharmaceutical products, and medical sharps as well. The department will continue to explore options and to add new designated materials using this waste-diversion approach. I know that in our local area, electronic items are collected, which is great because it gets them off the streets. I think that recycling is getting bigger and better to allow people to return their containers to the site. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY

**Mr. K. Chiasson** (Tracadie-Sheila, L): Mr. Speaker, the government has been patting itself on the back for over six months, saying that its energy efficiency program is the solution to help New Brunswick homeowners reduce their energy consumption and power bills and to enable the Crown corporation to better manage energy demand.

However, I learned last week that the funds allocated for the 2023-24 fiscal year have been exhausted and that homeowners who have already applied and been approved for a subsidy must now wait until April 1, 2024, to be considered for a heat pump or insulation.

If that is the case, does the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development plan to inform people on the waiting list today that there is no assistance available this year?

[*Original*]

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, it is a pleasure to hear the member ask an original question. Yesterday, in the House, we spent two or three hours discussing a bill, and the member opposite repeated the same question over and over again. If it was not the same question over and over again, it was a question that had already been asked by another member on that side of the House. In fact, at one point I referred to them as “Pete and Repeat”. That is how we were continually going and recycling questions.

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

You know, I find it very interesting that the member opposite put so little effort into a committee, where we were talking about something that was important, and was taking the time in economic policy. When we sit and have conversations here about the work of the Legislature... I heard this through member statements all week long, with the members saying: We want to get to the issues, we want to talk about the bills, and we want to talk about the *Education Act*. But they are going to take up time in economic policy and not deal with issues in a timely fashion. Are you serious about dealing with the *Education Act*? Do you really want to put it on the table?

**Mr. K. Chiasson** (Tracadie-Sheila, L): Mr. Speaker, how did I know that the minister was not up to date with the numbers for the heat pump program? I know that the Premier talked on CBC this morning. He announced that there is going to be a shuffle this coming month—so no sweat, the next minister will actually get up to speed on this.

I did prepare numbers for the minister. Since the launch last year, NB Power has received over 20 000 applications. With a budget of \$10 million per year and the capacity to have installed 2 000 heat pumps in that same year, it is not hard to figure out that the government undershot big-time in its projections. Mr. Speaker, will the minister and the Premier commit to injecting additional funds into the energy program this year so that we can move the needle in the right direction and help New Brunswickers?

**Hon. Mr. Holland** (Albert, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development, PC): Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I have gone through a half a dozen Liberal critics, so if the Premier chooses, I guess it is good that they might get another minister.

At the end of the day, whoever is in this seat will stand and talk about the initiatives in this province that are actually moving the needle forward. You might say that it is an underfunded program. We agree that we need to find more revenue for it. But I will tell you what: if it is one dollar, then that is one dollar more than the previous government put into energy efficiency for New Brunswickers.

At the end of the day, we know that it is a significant task to make sure that we fund those types of programs. We are going to work in conjunction with the Department of Finance and with other areas to make sure that we find all the possible avenues to do it. Now, if we were dealing in a situation where New Brunswickers were not so unfairly disadvantaged by the federal carbon taxes, we might not have such a difficult situation. But we will do everything that we possibly can for New Brunswickers.

(Interjections.)

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

# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

### GOVERNMENT

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard a lot of conflicting information today. We have seen some contrasts that I would like to point out to try to gain clarity on what direction this government is taking.

We had the minister describe an extensive consultation process for the housing strategy that was clear and visible. It took many, many months, and it engaged lots of people, including members of this team. At the same time, we had the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development describe a consultation process that was not clear. It took a matter of weeks, none of us were able to participate, and the output was incomplete, to be generous. I am wondering whether the Premier could describe his approach to consulting the public and New Brunswickers on important pieces of legislation.

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I love these little summaries of what the Leader of the Opposition thinks that she has heard, of what she thinks she believes in, and of what she thinks she knows.

What we do know is that Bill 46 has been in front of this House since early May. What we do know is that the last several weeks have been spent just talking about it, but not talking to learn about it. There have been no real questions, except for delays. There has been all kinds of posturing here in the House, and there have been endless dialogues and endless accusations in every direction from the opposition. There have been all kinds of criticisms. But the last thing that they really want is to learn about the actual bill itself.

We saw the questions that the minister talked about in energy, and we saw the same thing in health—repeated, repeated, and repeated. There is no willingness to learn. There is no willingness to do politics differently. The only willingness is to continue to stay here and make a mockery of the legislative system, which we are trying to improve. That is what the goal is over there, Mr. Speaker. That is not doing politics differently. That is just reinforcing the same old Liberal process.

**Ms. Holt** (Bathurst East—Nepisiguit—Saint-Isidore, Leader of the Official Opposition, L): I am going to start off my last question with a few positives and a positive for the Premier. I appreciate very much that he committed to share the Coalition for Pay Equity report and to make that transparent to the public. Thank you for that. I also appreciate the Minister of Environment's response to the member on the other side and his sharing that information as well. That is constructive, and it is helpful.

Now, I am going to change tacks. Mr. Premier, you stated yesterday: I cannot walk away from a situation that we left in chaos. Chaos is right. Your shock-and-awe approach of blowing things up without a plan and of strong-arming your opponents to get them into a



# Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

## Oral Questions

weak position is creating chaos in Education, in Health, in Local Government, and in this Assembly. Everyone is showing you the door, yet you insist on hitting the wall.

There have been some interesting musical quotes this morning, so I am going to quote Dr. Taylor Swift, who says: You know when it's time to go. Will the Premier take responsibility and acknowledge that he is the cause of the chaos?

(Interjections.)

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

**Hon. Mr. Higgs** (Quispamsis, Premier, Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, PC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the calm demeanour and the tone that the Leader of the Opposition has now put forward in a very respectful and appropriate way.

But there are hundreds of thousands of parents out there who want to be involved with their kids. We have learned that—not only in New Brunswick but also right across this country. When an area is found where parents need to know what is happening with their kids and the support is overwhelming, am I prepared to go the distance on that topic? Yes, I am, Mr. Speaker. I am prepared every day to take the stand for parents. I think that it is important to the very foundation of our society.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals can continue to volley—volley—these issues and to try to make more chaos. That is what we are seeing—not doing politics differently, not being willing to discuss real issues, but playing the games that have always been played by the Liberal opposition and certainly by the Greens as well.

Am I prepared to walk away from that? No, Mr. Speaker, I am not.

**Mr. Speaker** (Hon. Mr. Oliver): The time for question period is over.