



**May 13, 2025**

## CONTENTS

### NURSES

Mr. Savoie  
Hon. Mr. Dornan  
Mr. Savoie  
Hon. Mr. Dornan  
Mr. Savoie  
Hon. Mr. Dornan  
Mr. Savoie  
Hon. Mr. Dornan  
Mr. Savoie  
Hon. Mr. Dornan  
Mr. Hogan  
Hon. Mr. Dornan  
Mr. Hogan  
Hon. Mr. Dornan  
Mr. Hogan  
Hon. Mr. Dornan



Oral Questions / Questions orales

EDUCATION

Mr. Lee

Hon. C. Johnson

Mr. Lee

Hon. C. Johnson

Mr. Lee

Hon. C. Johnson

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Ms. Holt

Ms. Mitton

Hon. Ms. Holt

NB POWER

Mr. Austin

Hon. Mr. Legacy

Mr. Austin

Hon. Mr. Legacy

Mr. Austin

Hon. Mr. Legacy



Oral Questions / Questions orales

[Translation]

**NURSES**

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Today, we will continue asking questions about the situation regarding Public Health nurses.

[Original]

We want to start with this: How did we get here? How we got here was that the nurses contacted us to express worry and concern over workforce adjustments, redeployments, or job cuts, as they were explaining them to me. Nurses have told me very clearly that these actions will impact and are impacting health care. The Premier and the Minister of Health both admitted that there were redeployments. Now we have the head of the Nurses' Union saying publicly that there are no redeployments. We have two different things being said here, Madam Speaker.

For clarity for the nurses and for the people of New Brunswick who want to know what's happening in health care, can the Premier please get on her feet and say who is right and who is wrong? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, first, I'd like to acknowledge that this is National Nursing Week. To registered nurses and LPNs, we owe credit and thanks.

Our RHAs are following the collective agreement. Today, there has not been any change in any categorization, or whatever you want to call it, of the nurses and the LPNs who work in Public Health. We expect that, if there are proposed changes, the RHAs would advance them to our government before we would undertake or support any such changes. I am glad to say that as of today there have not been changes. Thank you.

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. That is not what the government members were saying last week. Both the Premier and the Minister of Health got on their feet and said: Yes, there were redeployments. Now, of course, we're worried about the semantics, the right terms to use, and so on and so forth.

Madam Speaker, this is exactly the same thing that's playing out in education. We have a government that is making choices and then putting them on others. The government members say: Well, we're going to distance ourselves from this; this is not us. Whether it's putting this on the districts and making them do those cuts... The Minister of Education is saying: Oh, no, that's not where we're going.



Oral Questions / Questions orales

The Premier has said: This is where you have to make changes; this is where you have to make cuts. Now the Minister of Health is saying: Oh, no, it is not happening. We have the head of the Nurses' Union saying they're just rumours. We have the Premier admitting that some nurses will be asked to move into different parts of the health care system.

Can the Premier get on her feet and admit in the House that RNs are being taken out of their jobs and made to work elsewhere? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, yes, I can confirm that we have not moved any nurses as of today. We have not. Whatever term you want to use, be it "adjusted", "redeployed", "staff mixes", or whatever term, nothing has changed as of today.

We expect our RHAs to present plans to us that will make care better and more efficient by using the right people in the right places. I am very much looking forward to that. That's our mandate. We will receive advice from our RHAs in due course. Thank you for drawing it to our attention.

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. While we're dealing with semantics, I think there's a very technical term for what we're seeing coming out of the government members right now: a flip-flop. That's a highly technical term that describes them saying one thing then and something completely different now. There's inconsistency all through this, Madam Speaker. It is not possible for this government to say that there are redeployments, and now there's not, or there are workforce adjustments, and now there's not. We just see this pattern of inconsistency continuing.

I'm asking the Premier to get up on this, but she won't. She doesn't want this to be connected to her, but last week the Premier said in the House that there would be strings attached to the \$5 000 retention bonus, a one-year return of service agreement, when the head of the NBNU said she was trying to remove the addition of a two-year return of service agreement. This week, we heard the head of the Nurses' Union say there are no workforce adjustments or redeployments, but now, we are hearing the government change. Will the government, the RHAs, and the union work with nurses so that they are included in the discussions about these changes that are now impacting nurses directly?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, yes, we will work with the RHAs. We will work with the Nurses' Union. We will work with the nurses when there are changes forthcoming. I'd like to remind this House that we have been charged with being efficient in health care in order to give the best possible service to our patients with the right nurse, LPN, or social worker at the right place at the right time, and we are quite proud of that. There are changes that we have asked our RHAs to consider, and they will come back to us with a very laudable plan. Thank you.



Oral Questions / Questions orales

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The minister is being very careful. He's being very careful to say that this will only be on a going forward basis, that nothing has happened yet, that this is all just going forward and the RHAs are going to present us with a plan. He's being very, very careful to try to distance the government from this when we all know that this is a result of the desire and the will of the Premier. This is what she committed to during this election cycle.

So I'm going to give the minister one last chance, because I'm not going to ask questions without already knowing the answers, Madam Speaker. I already know the answers. I'll give him one more chance. Is he going to admit that there have already been redeployments, that there have already been adjustments that are affecting and impacting nurses in the system? They've already happened. I have proof of them. He has one last chance. He's saying that this is only going forward. Has this already happened, yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, I'm inclined to sit down, since you already have the answers. That said, this is really about what's happening in Public Health and some of the other areas in our hospitals. We do respect the collective agreement, and we do ask RHAs to respect the collective agreement. We do work closely with our unions and our members, with our nurses and LPNs, and we will continue to do that.

But thank you very much for acknowledging that I am very careful in moving forward. I've been very careful for a long time in my career. Have I ever wavered from that? No. I continue to try to be very careful. Thank you for that.

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): That would be amusing, Madam Speaker, if we weren't talking about the seriousness of what is happening to nurses, who are at the core of everything we do in our health care system. The minister well knows that because he worked in it for decades. Notice that he didn't say that this time. This time, he didn't say that these things are happening going forward. He didn't say it. But now, I'm going to ask a very direct question of the minister.

What would the minister say if I told him that the entire IV team has been cut out of the Saint John Regional Hospital, that all those RNs who do that specialized work have been cut and reassigned or redeployed elsewhere in the health care system? Would he say that this hasn't happened and that it may only possibly happen going forward? We'll see how careful the minister is with this one. Or maybe it would be even better for the Premier to admit that the IV team has been cut, affecting nurses in the health care system.

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, I have worked in health care long enough that I have seen IV teams cut.



Oral Questions / Questions orales

I have seen the responsibilities of those IV teams passed on to nurses who work on clinical care units and develop a heightened level of expertise. That has happened in our past. I can't give you the dates or the times. We have made changes in our groups in our hospitals where we change responsibilities from one group to another group. Those have generally been well received. Thank you.

**Mr. Savoie** (Saint John East, Leader of the Official Opposition, PC): Madam Speaker, I told you so. A few minutes ago, he said that everything was going forward and that we're waiting on the RHAs, and now, well, it's happened. He won't say exactly when, but it's happened.

Do you know what these IV teams do? Nurses have a couple of chances for cancer patients, for babies, for people who have veins that are hard to find. These are nurses who are specially trained in this. I was a cancer patient, and I can tell you that, when they are looking for a vein, it's very, very difficult, and it is painful when they have to keep trying.

Now, these nurses are no longer doing these jobs. They are being moved to other places. I can tell you, specifically, that there is one nurse who was moved out and into a very specialized role for which she is untrained. She has now bumped somebody else. Will the minister or the Premier admit that this is having an impact and that this is happening right now, not going forward?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite. How you speak about nurses with specialized skills in terms of accessing veins is very truthful. It's a skill set that is not enjoyed by everybody in our system. When we decreased the activity of the IV nursing team and asked our clinical nurses on the floor to do that, we were very careful about making sure that they were capable of doing it.

At the end of the day, there are still some veins that are very difficult to access, and we do refer to experts within our nursing pool to assist with those. Some are more capable than others. Yes, that exists. We do transfer some of those skills to the nursing unit. When there are times when you cannot access a vein, we ask more expert nurses to do it. Thank you.

**Mr. Hogan** (Woodstock-Hartland, PC): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Keeping with the questions from the Leader of the Opposition through you, Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Health, were these nurses asked or were they told?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): **Madam Speaker** to the member opposite, we do respect the collective agreement. There are times when we encourage nurses, in collaboration with nurses and the union, to work in different areas. I'm not sure I would put a fine point on "asked" or "told", but we do respect the collective agreement. Thank you.





Oral Questions / Questions orales

**Mr. Hogan** (Woodstock-Hartland, PC): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The minister may not put a fine point on being asked or told, but the nurses certainly do. My friend and colleague, Ted Flemming, used the expression “Ready, fire, aim” when describing situations like the one the Minister of Health is in right now.

We have a unique use of the English language on the other side, Madam Speaker, with “redeployment”, “decentralization”. The Holt government has missed a couple of critical steps in their approach to redeploying nurses. First, nurses themselves said that there was no consultation and that this came out of nowhere. I’ve heard a recurring comment coming from New Brunswickers: You don’t treat people this way.

Another critical step that the Holt government seems to have skipped is to consider the consequences its actions may have. Can the minister explain any analysis done before the department started the redeployment process and what the projected impacts are for public health? Or, if this hasn’t happened, has the department started an analysis of what will happen?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, I take pride in our system and in being able to consider the consequences of moving nurses from one position to another position. Yesterday, I got caught up on the terminology of “redeployment”, “workforce adjustment”, or “skill mixes”. This is a learning curve for me, and the head of the Nurses’ Union was quite generous in teaching me about this.

However, we are very considerate when nurses change roles, whether it is something they want or something that they are encouraged to do. We want to be sure that they have their proper training, that we don’t have a negative impact on their lives, and that we give people options. At the end of the day, as long as we are respecting what nurses have negotiated, which is basically the collective agreement... Thank you.

**Mr. Hogan** (Woodstock-Hartland, PC): It is strange, Madam Speaker. The nurses who have contacted me believe this is already happening, and I don’t know why they would have a different opinion than the minister.

How will this impact the health care of New Brunswickers? When you make a change, there will be an impact. These nurses will be taken away from one group of New Brunswickers to serve another group of New Brunswickers. Think about how the cut to pharmacy clinics has had a negative impact on the health care of people with diabetes, asthma, and other chronic illnesses. It seems as though this change to public health will have another negative impact. What is the plan to replace these nurses the government is redeploying? There must be a carefully considered plan to replace them. Can the minister please share with the House the plan to replace these nurses?

**Hon. Mr. Dornan** (Saint John Portland-Simonds, Minister of Health, L): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, thank you for bringing this point up. What we do, we do for the well-



Oral Questions / Questions orales

being of New Brunswickers. The RHAs don't come to us with plans that say: We are going to do this, regardless of the consequences. We do things to improve the health of New Brunswickers. I am quite proud of that. We are putting the right people in the right place at the right time.

I'm also glad that you drew attention to the pharmacy pilot. We spoke with pharmacists. We spoke to the pharmacy association so that we can better use pharmacists to help us register patients and ensure they get the proper care and so that our pharmacists can be part of a collaborative care team looking after people with chronic diseases. The pilot taught us a lot of valuable lessons. We are moving ahead in our discussions with our pharmacists and with our nurses with a collective agreement. We are doing things that are meant to improve the well-being and health of New Brunswickers. Thank you.

**EDUCATION**

**Mr. Lee** (Fundy-The Isles-Saint John Lorneville, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. A recent news release states that "150 certified teachers currently in non-classroom roles will be redeployed into schools and classrooms to support students directly". This isn't transformational, nor is it addressing recruitment. This is simply taking from what already exists.

Is it now confirmed that those 150 positions are coming from district offices? Is it now confirmed that they are lead positions and mentor positions? If they are, how will those vacancies be filled, or will they? Will those 150 redeployed educators actually want to go back to the classroom? Is there a guarantee that they will?

If districts have the latitude to decide where their portion of the \$43 million is to be redirected, then that means they can decide where the money is taken from. Not all districts have the same view on this. Will all the districts be taking money from the same place? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. C. Johnson** (Moncton South, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the member opposite for the opportunity to talk about how we are bringing resources back into the classrooms and the schools, close to where students are, and about how we can better provide the supports they need to read, to write, and to learn all the important skills that they are learning in our education system. Thank you.

**Mr. Lee** (Fundy-The Isles-Saint John Lorneville, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I hope the government has taken and will take a step back to try to understand the impact of the loss of librarians and library workers. Is there any hope of this government recognizing its mistake in forcing districts to find areas to cut? What is needed is simply to ensure that our current and future students can expect the same level of literacy support. I would ask the Minister of Education to cite one example where cutting librarians and lowering standards





Oral Questions / Questions orales

have led to any sort of improvement in literacy and overall achievement by students in any jurisdiction at any time in history.

**Hon. C. Johnson** (Moncton South, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. In New Brunswick, we are going to increase literacy rates by investing in the schools and in the classrooms, where the supports are needed. This year, we are investing \$200 million more than the previous year. This includes targeted investments in educational assistants and academic support teachers. That is how we are going to increase literacy rates right here in New Brunswick.

**Mr. Lee** (Fundy-The Isles-Saint John Lorneville, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is a quick recap: Our provincial achievement assessment scores are low, the benchmarks for success are to be lowered, librarian positions have been cut, money is to be redirected from district budgets, 150 certified teachers are being redeployed with no guarantee that they will accept or want that transition, Anglophone school districts will see centralized child and youth teams disbanded, and the ISD model will be decentralized. All the while, the government is running a \$600-million-plus deficit.

So, my question to the Speaker... Pardon me. My question to the minister... I love you, Madam Speaker, but to the minister, has any data about the impact of these cuts and reductions in standards been gathered or anticipated? Lowering standards and cutting a district's budget because of your own government's shortfall says that you are doing the opposite of educating.

**Hon. C. Johnson** (Moncton South, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the opportunity to remind everybody that we are digging ourselves out of a hole. The rates have been decreasing for the past number of years. To do that, we are listening. We have consulted with teachers. We have heard from parents. We are listening to everyone.

To illustrate this, I would like to share a quotation that illustrates our vision:

*Putting certified teachers in front of children should be our first obligation. They are who we need to have in front of children to give them the best opportunity to get the best education possible.*

This is a direct quote from the former Minister of Education, the member for Woodstock-Hartland.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

**Ms. Mitton** (Tantramar, G): Madam Speaker, New Brunswickers may be surprised to learn that nobody in the provincial government is in charge of public transportation. This has resulted in poor or non-existent intercity bus and rail services to connect our communities. As a result, there is nobody at the table to negotiate fixing the rail line between



## Oral Questions / Questions orales

Campbellton and Sackville so that trains can travel faster than cars, enabling commuter rail to connect the north and south. There's nobody in charge of implementing affordable intercity bus services, such as the "toonie transit" that exists to connect regions in Prince Edward Island. Public transportation was completely absent from the Liberal election platform, the government's throne speech, the budget, and the Premier's mandate letters. Will the Premier give the mandate to improve interregional public transportation in the province to one of her Cabinet ministers?

**Hon. Ms. Holt** (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much to the member opposite. This was part of a good conversation that I had with your colleague yesterday, because, as you say, there are opportunities to engage with groups such as VIA Rail and CN, which we do through the Premier's Office, through the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and through the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

When it comes to public transportation, as you're probably aware, that mandate has been given to the regional service commissions and is supported by the Minister of Local Government. There are different people in our government who hold responsibility for making sure that both public and other transportation infrastructure are being maintained and developed while we focus on the priorities that New Brunswickers articulated clearly to us, such as improving their health care system and access, making sure they can live affordably in New Brunswick, and making sure that we have an economy that is growing. We're balancing those priorities across our team.

**Ms. Mitton** (Tantramar, G): Madam Speaker, one of the top things that came out of the health care report that the previous government did was that transportation was essential for health care. At a climate change meeting in my community last night, public transportation and the need for provincial interconnection came up repeatedly. The Premier just listed several different ministers and departments that kind of have a role to play, but no one is in charge of public transportation. ESIC actually wrote a report seven years ago called *From Surfaces to Services: An inclusive and sustainable transportation strategy for the province of New Brunswick*. Seven years later, it hasn't been implemented because no one is in charge. Will the Premier fix this by giving the mandate specifically for public transportation in the province to one of her Cabinet ministers?

[Translation]

**Hon. Ms. Holt** (Fredericton South-Silverwood, Premier; Minister responsible for Official Languages, L): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Right now, the Cabinet team is wonderful and each of its members is strong. The Cabinet team is much stronger than the previous Cabinet. I have full confidence in each team member's work. The team is in a good position to get the work done.

With regard to the transportation file, as I said, there are several stakeholders. Among the ones I didn't mention is the RDC, which takes on responsibilities in the file. The example of



Oral Questions / Questions orales

the Minister of Social Development, who is responsible for the ESIC, was already mentioned. Right now, there is no question of creating a new department responsible for public transportation.

[Original]

**NB POWER**

**Mr. Austin** (Fredericton-Grand Lake, PC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. We know NB Power ratepayers are struggling under the burden of increasing rates with no end in sight. NB Power's massive debt, aging infrastructure, and government's aggressive environmental regulations have all created this perfect storm that is ballooning costs, which will inevitably be passed down to customers. Can the Minister responsible for Energy just give us a high-level view of what he plans to do with these massive challenges facing NB Power and ratepayers?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst, Deputy Premier; Minister of Finance and Treasury Board; Minister responsible for Energy; Minister responsible for the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, indeed, there are currently many challenges to deal with regarding NB Power.

I think the member opposite did a good job laying out what happened with the government in the file. However, that wasn't the government now in office. Rather, it was the previous government, which didn't do much over the past six years. We could give all kinds of examples. Let's take Mactaquac as an example. The previous government had approved a project in 2016, but it took six years to re-evaluate and redo a study to arrive at exactly the same conclusions as it got previously. Since then, the cost of the project has climbed astronomically.

There is also Point Lepreau. When our government took office, the Point Lepreau Generating Station wasn't functional. There are still renovations to do. Nothing was done at the Point Lepreau Generating Station during the mandate of the previous government.

I could talk about the rate increases. I guess the next few questions from the members opposite will give me regular opportunities to address the topic.

[Original]

**Mr. Austin** (Fredericton-Grand Lake, PC): Madam Speaker, contrary to the minister, we actually did a good job on Lepreau when we were in, but the question wasn't about what we are going to do. It was about what they are going to do. They are in government now.

Let's look at the report. I know they like to study things and study them to death, so let's look at the report that they are putting out. It's supposed to be completed in 12 months.



## Oral Questions / Questions orales

How many reports have we had at NB Power? Well, we have had NB Power's own internal auditing report, which happens on a yearly basis. We have had the Auditor General reports, which now take place every year. Over the past six years, the Auditor General reports have included NB Power. We have various other reports on major projects, such as Mactaquac and Lepreau. We had a very extensive independent report on NB Power by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2023. We also just had the recent report released here a couple of weeks ago from KPMG, another report. Madam Speaker, if reports could produce electricity, we'd never pay for power again. We've studied this thing to death, and now the government is trying to put it on another report. What's the government going to do—?

**Hon. Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst, Deputy Premier; Minister of Finance and Treasury Board; Minister responsible for Energy; Minister responsible for the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. On this, the member and I agree. Too many reports, especially under the last government—a ton of reports. The problem, no action—no action. Nothing was done, no execution. What's going to come out of this report is a clear plan on what we're going to do, and we're going to act on it because it's time to move on.

Now, I didn't get a chance to talk about rate increases, because that is a very, very important fact from the previous government about what's going on. There was a mandate from the previous government to reduce NB Power debt by 2027. Then it realized that would increase rates too high, so it was pushed to 2029. It was just arbitrary. There was no rhyme or reason to it. The previous government was just pushing it out and making blustery kinds of announcements that it was going to get it done. All that happened during those six years is that the debt went from \$4.7 billion to \$5.3 billion. That's what got accomplished during that government—almost \$600 million in debt. Congratulations.

**Mr. Austin** (Fredericton-Grand Lake, PC): When the minister is referring to \$600 million in debt, I think he's talking about his own budget right now.

You know, this government does a very political job of trying to pin everything on the previous government. It must have forgotten that its members got elected to govern. That's what they're here to do. The questions we ask are about what they are doing with NB Power today. They talk about this report that's supposed to come out in 12 months.

Well, again, I've cited, just very briefly, multiple reports.

We know everything there is to know about NB Power. We've studied this thing to death. We know it has massive debt. We know there's aging infrastructure that has to be fixed. We have Mactaquac, which is a major project looming. We still have issues with Lepreau. We understand that. But my real question is... The Premier said it herself. Government doesn't want to kick the can down the road, but that's exactly what it's doing by having us wait 12 months for another report. What does the minister really think he's going to get out of this report on NB Power that we don't already know?



Oral Questions / Questions orales

**Hon. Mr. Legacy** (Bathurst, Deputy Premier; Minister of Finance and Treasury Board; Minister responsible for Energy; Minister responsible for the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, L): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Speaking of political statements, during question period last week, there were comments about public accounts, and the Leader of the Opposition was talking about NB Power bonuses, although they don't exist. The exact comment was: The actual reason I asked those questions was to dispel. He said to go check Hansard, so I did. I checked the video. Here is the exact comment that was said in public accounts: I know there are a lot of folks here who, you know... We could go really deep in terms of bonuses being paid and so on and so forth. This is hitting home for the people.

That is exactly what was said. Stop making noise and making it crazy out there for our employees. NB Power has to go out there and do a good job. We don't need this kind of noise.

[Translation]

**Madam Speaker** (Hon. Ms. Landry): Question period is over.

