

November 17, 2016

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le 17 novembre 2016

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10:06

Daily Sitting 9

Assembly Chamber,
Thursday, November 17, 2016.

(The House met at 10:06 a.m., with **Hon. Mr. Collins**, the Speaker, in the chair.

Prayers.)

Introduction of Guests

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: It is going to be a busy day for me today. I have many stakeholders that I would like to welcome to the gallery.

Plus tard, ce matin, je ferai deux déclarations ministérielles et je déposerai deux projets de loi. Alors, nous avons invité de nombreux intervenants et partenaires du ministère de la Santé.

We have many stakeholders and partners of the Department of Health in the gallery for various things that we will be doing this morning, but I would like to present them all to the Legislature this morning. In no particular because I do not want to get anybody frustrated, I will start with the Nurses Association of New Brunswick. Since my wife is a nurse, I figured that I could start with the nurses.

Alors, j'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à Liette Clément.

I welcome Jennifer Whitehead, as well as Janet Weber, who are here on behalf of the Nurses Association of New Brunswick. Thank you for being here.

Pour le Réseau de santé Vitalité, nous avons Jacques Duclos et Karelle Guignard. Merci beaucoup d'être là.

With Horizon Health Network, we have Jean Daigle.

Merci, Jean, d'être là.

With the Heart and Stroke Foundation of New Brunswick, there are two people that we can always count on to come out and support some of the great things that we do at the Department of Health, Kurtis Sisk and Dan Connolly. Thank you for being here as well.

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With the New Brunswick Lung Association, which is another very active partner that we have within the department, we have Roshini Kassie, Maggie Estey, and Monica Brewer. They have invited Wendell Betts, a citizen who is very active in supporting their association. Thank you to all of them for being here.

With the New Brunswick Medical Society, which I am sure is no stranger to the Legislature, we have the CEO Anthony Knight. Thank you, Anthony, for being here. We have an advocate for smoke-free places and a PhD student at UNBSJ who is just a bundle of energy and very passionate about what she does. Kerrie Luck, thank you for being here as well. As I said, I will have two statements and two different pieces of legislation. All these fine people are here to support that. Thank you very much.

M^{me} Dubé : J'aimerais simplement me joindre au ministre et souhaiter la bienvenue à tous ses invités.

I just would like to say welcome. I am not going to reintroduce all of you. Today is going to be a Health day, and I know that there is a lot of good news coming as well. We are going to continue to work together to make sure that we improve the health care system. I know that Horizon is here and Vitalité is here as well. Again, we need to work with different associations to make sure that everyone is involved. Everyone can work together and be focused so that New Brunswick is a better place to live healthily.

J'aimerais simplement vous dire merci de votre beau travail, au nom de l'opposition officielle et de notre chef, et vous souhaiter la bienvenue ici, à la Chambre, aujourd'hui.

Statements by Members

Mr. Wetmore: New Brunswick has endured two straight years of cuts from the Gallant government, and it looks as though more are on the way. In the first half of his mandate, the Premier has cut rural schools, cut Service New Brunswick offices, cut courthouses, cut tourism information centres, cut the Gagetown ferry, cut teachers, cut food and cleaning funding for our seniors, cut the bookmobile, cut customer contact centres, cut postsecondary education program funding in half, cut the tuition tax rebate, cut the Tuition Tax Credit, cut sitting days of the Legislature, cut arts funding, cut rural community college seats, cut silviculture funding, and the list grows daily. Our province is dying the death of a thousand cuts at the hands of the Gallant government.

Mr. Coon: This week, our Child and Youth Advocate and people across Canada have joined forces in educating children and youth about their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Today, I would like to bring the message a little closer to home. Many young people are working part-time or full-time for minimum wage. They are protected by provincial labour standards. Those could be strengthened. However, young people are generally unfamiliar with the protections that our provincial labour standards provide. I would like to see the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour initiate an awareness campaign targeted at young workers to inform them of their rights as employees so that they have the confidence to be effective advocates for themselves in the workplace. Thank you.

M. Bernard LeBlanc : Il se passe quelque chose de bizarre à la Chambre. Nous avons un nouveau chef de l'opposition officielle, ancien ministre des Finances, clairement entré en politique dans le but de s'occuper des finances publiques. Or, à la Chambre, depuis sa prise de fonction de chef de l'opposition, il ne parle presque plus de finances. Il veut surtout parler d'immersion et nous convaincre de laisser tomber une de nos principales promesses électorales, qui était également une des promesses électorales de son parti, lors des élections de 2010.

Je crois savoir pourquoi. C'est peut-être parce que, cette semaine, nous avons appris que, pour l'année en cours, le déficit a été revu à la baisse de 16 millions de dollars. C'est peut-être parce que, récemment, nous avons appris que, l'année dernière, le déficit a été finalement de 66 millions de dollars de moins que le montant prévu au budget en début d'année? C'est peut-être parce que finalement les finances ne sont plus...

Mr. Speaker: Time, member.

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10:15

Mr. Oliver: Too many New Brunswick families are living paycheque to paycheque. I would suggest to the members that they talk to any of the people in their ridings to confirm that. Many people are struggling because they are taxed out. The Gallant government has raised taxes and fees to the maximum and beyond. Just the higher gas tax and the HST increase have taken away all that many families had left over. Now, the Premier claims that he is going to take even more with his carbon tax. The Trudeau/Gallant carbon tax will increase the cost of food, heat, electricity, fuel, and many more essentials. Hardworking New Brunswick families just cannot afford any more tax. Families simply cannot afford the Gallant/Trudeau carbon tax. Thank you.

M. Guitard : Cet automne, l'opposition officielle semble avoir décidé de ne discuter que d'un seul sujet, soit la décision du gouvernement de rétablir en 1^{re} année le point d'entrée du programme d'immersion. Nous pouvons comprendre que l'opposition ne soit pas d'accord avec ce que nous faisons. Toutefois, l'attitude du chef de l'opposition officielle est surprenante. Il veut être perçu comme une personne qui tend la main à son adversaire, mais, finalement, il tente de le convaincre de faire le contraire. Il dit vouloir composer avec le gouvernement, mais il veut le contraindre à conserver le statu quo. C'est une démarche futile. Nous avons fait nos devoirs : Nous avons consulté les intervenants, nous avons pesé le pour et le contre et nous avons décidé

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de rétablir en 1^{re} année le point d'entrée de l'immersion. C'est ce qui se fait ailleurs au pays. Non, merci, nous n'adopterons pas la politique du chien qui court après sa queue de l'ancienne administration de cette province.

Ms. Wilson: What the Gallant government is trying to do the Anglophone school system is selfish, reckless, and irresponsible. The self-serving change to early immersion will have the system trying to deal with French immersion in Grade 1, French immersion at Grade 3 for two years, the grandfathering in of the current Grade 3 entry level students, finishing up students from the old Grade 1 entry point, intensive French at Grade 5, late immersion at Grade 6, plus compulsory French from Grade 3 to Grade 10 with experiences in French at Grades 1 and 2 and electives in French in Grades 11 and 12. We know the latest assessment results indicate a broken system. Just imagine what it will be like with all these additional challenges.

Mr. Chiasson: Our government recently released its economic growth plan. The plan was developed by listening to and engaging community leaders, youth, entrepreneurs, industry leaders, Aboriginal leaders, and many others. Some 22 opportunity summits were held to inform the plan. We listened to both challenges and opportunities that citizens presented. The economic growth plan outlines many opportunities for economic growth, including smart grid technology, cybersecurity, blueberry development, marijuana, and tourism. Our government is focused on growing the economy and creating jobs. That is why we will continue to work with industry and community leaders to develop these key growth opportunities. We have a plan, and our plan is working. We are listening to New Brunswickers and getting things done.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chiasson: Thank you.

Mr. K. MacDonald: There is a new angle to the latest provincial tour by the Gallant government. The Finance Minister will now be asking New Brunswickers if they want her government to kill jobs aggressively with its carbon tax or kill jobs gradually with its carbon tax. Here is the thing. The climate change committee did not recommend a carbon tax as the only solution to addressing emissions. Of 85 recommendations, the opportunity for another tax is all this government is discussing. The Gallant government had its heart set on taking more money away from hardworking New Brunswick families, and nothing—especially logic or common sense—will stand in its way.

M. LePage : Le gouvernement appuie le défi qu'ont lancé les médecins de notre province, par l'entremise de la Société médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick, de faire en sorte que le Nouveau-Brunswick se classe parmi les trois provinces les plus en santé d'ici 10 ans. La Société médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick a exprimé sa grande satisfaction à l'égard de notre engagement, car :

« C'est un virage incroyable de la part du gouvernement qui appuie une société en meilleure santé. » Les médecins du Nouveau-Brunswick se disent prêts à oeuvrer en partenariat avec le gouvernement. Nous accueillons leur déclaration très favorablement. Ensemble, nous optimiserons l'accès aux soins de santé, aux services des professionnels connexes, aux soins de santé primaires et aux soins palliatifs. Ensemble, nous relèverons ce défi.

Yes, we listen, and we get things done. Thank you.

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10:20

Mr. Jeff Carr: The member opposite listens, but he does not hear what is going on. That is for sure.

The Gallant government should be working hard to grow the economy and create jobs for our people. It is not. It is working hard on other things. The Gallant government is working hard against natural gas customers, removing their protection against skyrocketing rates and giving a Liberal insider a monopoly for his client. The Gallant government is working hard against our own natural gas industry, changing the rules to make sure that the industry stays dead and no jobs are created for our people. The Gallant government is working hard against the LNG export opportunity—an opportunity that is all but dead thanks to the highest taxes in North America and unfriendly government policies. Maybe if the Gallant government would get out of the way, 39 000 New Brunswickers could start working today.

Oral Questions

French Immersion

Mr. Higgs: The Premier has given two reasons for the irresponsible change to early French immersion: a report from 2012 and his own election platform. I have already offered my opinion on the 2012 report, that it was very narrow in scope and attendance was by invitation only. The Liberal election platform promise was another ill-conceived idea that was contrary to the 10-year plan, which was also an election promise. Let's pick the one that makes the most sense. I will vote for the 10-year plan.

I am asking the Premier to start looking forward rather than backward. Let's look at the current situation. Children in the Grade 3 immersion program have yet to complete it. Therefore, we have no complete data to support the decision to change the entry point. The Premier's own 10-year-plan author was not recommending this change. Karen Power said: Leave it alone. It will create chaos.

Once again, I will ask the Premier to put our children first and politics second. Will he put a halt to this change to early immersion?

Hon. Mr. Kenny: We are putting children first with our 10-year education plan. We are looking at investing the most in education, more than that government ever did. It is interesting that, today, the Leader of the Opposition is talking about trying to do things better. When the members opposite were in government, they cut in education. That is why we are in some of the predicaments that we are in right now. We are going to be honouring our political platform. Regarding letting New Brunswickers know, this is what we got elected on.

We all know, and even the opposition said, that earlier is better. Today, we see the opposition always trying to find a wedge issue and to fearmonger. We want to be able to advance our education system and have the best education system that we have ever seen in the province. That is what we are doing today. We have been talking to stakeholders with the extensive consultation that we have done in the past couple of years. We have done more consultation with teachers, parents, educators, and the business community, and we feel that we are doing the right thing to move forward.

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.

Education System

Mr. Higgs: It is really interesting that, with a program that existed and for which the results were not good at all, we are recycling it and putting it back in. Are we saying that this is progress? Is that going to move forward? Is it going to get different results? Do we do the same thing and expect a different result?

In less than three weeks, the 2015 results will be released from the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA. On December 6, we will get these results. This year, the focus of the release will be on science. PISA testing is done with 15-year-old students and gives us an indication of how our New Brunswick results in reading, math, and science compare with the rest of Canada and the rest of the world.

Needless to say, our New Brunswick results have been of much concern for a number of years, under various governments. The results tell us that we need to fix our broken system in order to give our children the education that they need to compete globally. Does the Premier agree that we need to fix this system to give our children the education that they need and the education that they deserve? Our standards need to be higher.

Hon. Mr. Kenny: We hear the Leader of the Opposition saying that our system is broken. Again, what we are hearing here today is a disgrace. We have improvements to make, and that is what we are doing. We have been very aggressive every day, saying that we are working on making improvements to our education system, not just in math and literacy but on many other fronts. We are investing more in education than any other government in history, and we are going to have the results proven in the years to come.

If we just sat on our hands on education, as the opposition did for four years, we would never get anywhere. We have to make bold decisions. That is why we are working with our teachers, we are working with all our community leaders, and we are working with different people. We are asking the opposition members to come work with us, but what we see here again today is that they are trying to divide and conquer. We think that this is wrong. We have to have respect for our communities. That is what we are doing, with the proper consultation—working with everybody to make sure that we have the best education system moving forward. Thank you.

Mr. Higgs: The offer to work together rings hollow. I have mentioned I do not know how many times in this House that I wanted to meet with the Premier and discuss how we can build a 10-year plan that lasts beyond elections. I make no excuses. I make no issue with the past performance of any government. We have an education system that is indeed broken. Teachers in the classrooms are telling me this. They are telling me this every day. I am getting new e-mails. You are seeing more letters to the editor. I am seeing it when I talk to teachers. They say: I cannot really talk about this, but this is a problem. I am hoping that the teachers will rise up and really say: I can fix this if you guys will just listen.

The Anglophone East district education council is another voice added to the chorus of concern over the latest provincial assessment results. In that district, less than 10% of the Grade 6 students met or exceeded grade-level math skills on a new provincial test. All the district schools fell below the 2016 provincial average on 20% and far below the province's target of seeing 85% of students working at or above grade level. Given the enormous public concern, will the Premier make a commitment today to make all the assessment information public?

Hon. Mr. Kenny: Again, we see here that he is saying that the system is broken. It is disgraceful to hear this every day from the opposition, talking about our teachers in the province. I have met with teachers. In fact, I was with teachers the other night, talking to them, and they do not really appreciate this. They have said to me: Yes, we know there are some issues right now. We know there are some challenges. However, they want to work with our government to move forward. We have met so many people. In fact, the Premier and I spent a full afternoon with teachers and principals from around the province, and they voiced their opinions. Yes, we have listened to what is taking place, but we made a commitment. We are moving forward with it this year, and we are going to work to put the proper resources in place and make sure that we have the best system possible.

I extend an offer to the opposition to work with me. I know we have had a few meetings before, but, here in the Legislature, getting up and grandstanding and saying that the system is broken is wrong. We need to work together to move forward. They have their opinion, but, at the same time, we cannot be degrading our teachers in this province.

Mr. Higgs: The facts speak for themselves. I am not talking about a system that is working and all the results show it. I am talking about a system that is obviously not working and all the results prove it. That is the reason. We want to talk about developing a 10-year plan that goes beyond elections. I am all for it. Let's do it. I am in. I will meet you anyplace, anytime.

The minister has said just recently in the Legislature: I do not know. Not everybody has to make good marks. Look at me. I am doing fine, and I did not make good marks.

We want better for our kids. It is not about mediocrity. It is about being the best. The education assessments that produced such troubling results need to be examined in great detail. How did we arrive at these results?

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Higgs: How did we arrive at this? For the umpteenth time, I understand that the whole assessment process was rejigged in the last couple of years. Will we continue to request an account of the standards that students fail to meet? Will the Premier agree to work with us to get this information so that we can move forward collectively in the right manner?

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Hon. Mr. Kenny: On one thing, we will agree. Yes, we will work with you, but, again, we see the negative attitude here every day. We know that we are at a point in time right now when we see assessments and, yes, we have to improve on them. That is what we are doing. We are working with stakeholders. We are putting the proper resources in place to be able to improve on that. We want to work with everybody in here.

The system is not perfect. We understand that. At the same time, we think that there are some great things happening in our education system throughout the province, in every corner of the province. I have had a chance to move about, to tour around the province, and to meet great leaders in our communities and in our schools. They take pride in what they do.

Yes, we know that there is some stress in the system. We understand that. That is why we are putting the proper resources in place. We are hiring teachers, and we are going to make sure that we have the best curriculum and the best resources in place so that we can get New Brunswickers to learn to the best of their ability. I do believe that, by working together with everybody in New Brunswick, we will have the best education system moving forward—no doubt.

Mr. Higgs: Does working together with everyone in the province include allowing the teachers in the classroom a voice so that they can be heard? If we are going to fix our education system, real teachers from real classrooms must have a voice. Classroom composition is an issue, and it must be addressed. Only classroom teachers can help us understand what the issues are with the composition and how to address this in the best possible way. The same holds true for the curriculum as well as for the resources. Only classroom teachers can provide information and the experienced advice on what is needed in the classroom. The solutions to so many challenges rest in the wisdom and experience of our classroom teachers.

Next week, the Legislature will be in recess. I will once again ask the Premier and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to sit down with me. Together, let's figure out a way to give our classroom teachers a voice. Then we move forward. Let's not put in an ill-conceived program without a plan—a program that we have already done before with poor results. Let's do it right together.

Hon. Mr. Kenny: I have sat down three times with the Leader of the Opposition, and I am going to get him to meet with us again and to meet with our department. Anybody from the opposition can come to see what we are doing in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Our plans were made with extensive consultation. We met with literally thousands of people to get their input on where we are moving forward. I agree with, somewhere, putting a 10-year plan in place to have that stability but also to have the flexibility so that teachers can take the best of their abilities throughout the province and share those ideas. For seven years, the principals never met because they muzzled the principals in this province. We invited them back to the table, and they totally enjoyed getting together to share those experiences.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Kenny: I will work with anybody to make sure that we can have the improvements in place. I will work with the opposition, and that is what we are doing. We are showing true leadership on education. We will invest the most in education. We are listening to what is taking place, and, together, we will have the best education system, no doubt.

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Mr. Higgs: We have had e-mails from principals, and here is a quote: "we were listened to, but not heard". I am not denying any past performance of any government. I am saying: Let's start a

new day. Let's listen to the classroom teachers in a meaningful way. Let's open their voices and say: Say whatever you need. Do not worry about your jobs. We want this fixed.

Let's decide what an educated student should look like and let the classroom teachers fix it. We have a golden opportunity to expand on your 10-year plan, to bridge the gap of the political process. Let's not lose it. Defer an election promise that was ill-thought-out and ill-conceived, that is without a plan, and that is going to affect—how many?—90, 100, or 200 teachers, who are going to lose their jobs. Is that how we want to start a new program, to have that in place?

Minister, the opportunity is right now for us to build an education system that we will both be proud of. Will you please join me? Let's make it happen.

Hon. Mr. Kenny: Again, this is a classic example of fearmongering, fearmongering, fearmongering. Every time, the members opposite talk about doom and gloom. Let's reverse it. Let's ask the opposition to work with us.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Kenny: We do have a golden opportunity. That is why we have consulted extensively throughout the province with leading experts and we have listened to teachers throughout the province. I get e-mails from teachers every day. I get e-mails from people from around the province with their concerns. We are listening to that, and that is why we are going to have the proper resources in place. It is going to take some time.

I believe that, by working together and not having the negative attitude here every day, which is reported in the papers and so on . . . That is the wrong approach. We thought that we were going to have a Leader of the Opposition with a different attitude, but it is back to the same old same old, just to try to get a headline. I want to work with the opposition. I invite you folks to work with us. I will have a meeting as soon as we can get together to talk with our department staff to see the wonderful things that the staff are doing.

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.

French Immersion

Mr. Jody Carr: The PC opposition has been working with the government. We have been working with the government on developing the 10-year plan. We applauded the government when it announced that it was going to develop a 10-year plan. We participated with the government. We appreciated that opportunity, and so did the people of New Brunswick. The disheartening point is that, as soon as that 10-year plan was released or not much longer after

that, the minister and the Premier dabbled their hands in the education system again and interfered in something that the teachers have said that they do not want at this point in time.

The big question that parents are asking is this: Why is the government making this change? What is wrong with the current Grade 3? Is the problem with the current Grade 3 about access and enrollment? We know that the access and enrollment have gone up. We had 700 more students last year alone. Is it because of results? Is that what the problem is with Grade 3? Well, we do not know because the results are not in yet. Can the minister tell us? What is the problem with Grade 3?

Mr. Speaker: Time.

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10:35

Hon. Mr. Kenny: We will say it again: We have let New Brunswickers . . . At least we are moving forward. We have the opposition saying that earlier is better. We worked with New Brunswickers to develop a plan. It was the former Minister of Education who actually commissioned the plan in 2013, with leading experts around the province stating that this is the way to go. We are looking at that. What we are finding here from the opposition is a divide-and-conquer attitude to find a wedge issue. We all know that we have improvements to make in our education system, and that is why we are working with our educators, with our public, and with our parents.

We will be moving forward with an extensive plan to improve our education system on all fronts. I do believe that, by working together . . . I will repeat it again because it is the most important thing. We have to have a positive attitude in the communities. When we have doom and gloom coming from the opposition every day, it does not help the attitudes around the province about our education system.

Mr. Jody Carr: In 2008, the Liberals said that the old Grade 1 program was not working. Then they changed it. The Liberals said that it was broken and it needed to be fixed. The Liberals made those changes, and the reasons that they made those changes were the lack of recruitment of bilingual teachers and the lack of support for struggling students. Now, they have come back and said: We will reverse that back to Grade 1.

At the same time, there is a growing list of those opposed to this change right now, including the west, south, and east school districts. Three of the four school districts have spoken publicly about this. We know that this change will require 200 English teachers to be put out of work. At the same time, the government cannot recruit the bilingual ones. According to the 2012 report, the recruitment of bilingual teachers was a problem then and is a problem now. What will the minister do specifically to make this plan work and to recruit the necessary teachers?

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Hon. Mr. Kenny: We are working with our Department of Education, we are working with our districts, and we are working with our teachers to take a look at where it is going to go in the upcoming year. We will have the resources put in place in time to make sure that we have implementation of the plan for Grade 1 French immersion.

Again, it was the former minister opposite who commissioned a report by experts around the province. What those members are saying here in the House every day is contradictory to what they were doing a few years ago. What has changed? It is very frustrating on this side of the House. We have the Leader of the Opposition saying: Work with us. We are saying the opposite: We will work with you folks if you work with us.

However, what we see here today is a doom-and-gloom type of opposition that is trying to fearmonger in New Brunswick. We want to put the positive out there that we have a good education system and that we have great educators in this province. We are going to work with them to make sure that we have the best education system in New Brunswick moving forward.

Mr. Jody Carr: I can tell the minister what has changed. What has changed is that the previous government listened to teachers and this government is not listening to the teachers. Despite politics, the teachers told the previous government: Do not change the entry point at this time. They also told this government the same thing, yet this government ignores it. It ignores this input from the consultation plan and from the 10-year plan. The government ignores this recommendation from the cochair. It is ignoring this recommendation from three out of the four Anglophone school districts.

At the same time, this 2012 report has eight recommendations yet this government has failed to tell this Legislature, the teachers, and the parents how it will make this transition work because it failed to provide the information. How can the government expect parents to trust it when it continues to ignore the input? The support was not there before. How will we guarantee that the support will be there now? How can they trust you?

Hon. Mr. Kenny: We talk about trust here. How can we trust the former minister who, with the Leader of the Opposition, cut education in every year of the four years that they were in government? They did not have a plan.

Right now, what you are doing is cherry-picking. You are trying to find a wedge issue here. You cut. You decreased by \$1 million. When you came to power, you had a 1% cut in the first year and a 2% cut in the next year. It is very, very interesting that these members have been trying to find an issue on which they could grandstand for the past couple of weeks in the Legislature.

We are working with New Brunswickers. We are working with the educators. We will have a plan for the next 10 years that will have stability and will give teachers the resources to do the best job to improve our results and to make sure that we have the best students in New Brunswick, in every corner of the province. I truly believe that, by working together and not fearmongering, we will have a lot better results.

Enbridge Gas New Brunswick

Mr. Stewart: I could not help but notice all the blood drain from the Premier's face yesterday when I started asking questions about Enbridge lawyer and unofficial member of the public service Len Hoyt. I saw the Premier give the Energy Minister a look that said: You get up. My knees have gone weak.

Of course, Len Hoyt has a government e-mail address as a member of the Executive Council Office, so there is no denying that fact. Of course, in a CBC story from January 2014, Mr. Hoyt is identified as a company lawyer arguing against Enbridge living up to the 20%-below-electricity-cost agreement. I am very concerned that the Premier is forcing New Brunswickers to pay Enbridge \$150 million because his Liberal advisor and Enbridge lawyer told him to. Is the Premier able to stand to address this?

Hon. Mr. Doucet: I am standing up, and my legs are not going shaky or weak this morning.

I find the questions from the members opposite interesting. Talk about doing things differently. Talk about doing things completely differently—ripping up contracts. In his member's statement this morning, the member for New Maryland-Sunbury mentioned changing the rules. The members opposite changed the rules, and that is why we were in the mess that we were in. That is why there is no longer a lawsuit of \$820 million, which would have had a tremendous amount of impact on our economy. It would have had a tremendous impact on education spending, health spending, infrastructure spending, and things like that.

However, the interesting part is Day 13. It has been 13 days since the deal was announced and the memorandum of understanding was announced. We are just starting to talk about it now. I am still not getting questions on it, which is something I do not quite understand.

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.

Mr. Stewart: What we and the citizens of New Brunswick are not getting is an answer to the question. The Gallant government members are defending the \$150-million gift to the client of their lawyer pal by saying it headed off a big lawsuit brought against the government by their lawyer pal and Enbridge, of which Len Hoyt now appears to be part. The appearance of this is

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just horrible. Launch a big lawsuit against the government, and get your own way over the taxpayers of the province.

If this is all it takes, perhaps Corridor Resources could hire Len Hoyt to launch a lawsuit for it so that we can get moving on natural gas. Could the Premier confirm whether all lawsuits must be at least \$820 million, or will he fold for less? Will he speak up to address this perceived conflict of interest against the taxpayers of New Brunswick?

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Doucet: I do not know where to begin. The fact of the matter is that \$820 million, an enormous amount of money, was going to be on the shoulders of the taxpayers if we did not settle down, settle, and have some discussions and dialogue with Enbridge on this file. Dialogue is important. I do not know whether any of those members over there have been in business before. However, if you have ever been involved in litigation, the first thing that comes up when you get to discovery is that they ask whether the parties have sat down to talk about this. That is before you sit in front of a judge. I think that is really important.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: The member for Oromocto-Lincoln will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Doucet: We have been willing to work together. It was a tremendous amount—enormous. I am really proud of the fact that our government sat down to talk about this and tried to get to the bottom of this. It was a mess. It was a mess that was going to cost every single taxpayer in this province a lot of money, whether or not they burn gas. Whether or not you burn gas, you were going to be responsible for this. I think it is important . . .

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.

Mr. Stewart: The first thing that you do is declare your conflict.

It is a scientific fact that natural gas is almost completely odourless. There has to be something added to natural gas to make it stink. In New Brunswick, we like to add the Gallant government and Len Hoyt. Then it really stinks. The government is giving Len Hoyt's client Enbridge a 50-year monopoly and removing pricing protection for gas customers. The hardworking people of New Brunswick will be hosed again. After 2020, gas rates can skyrocket.

Why would the Premier do something like this, all behind closed doors and in a secret deal, after promising a new approach and promising to be open and transparent? Why was this secret deal cooked up for Len Hoyt's customer Enbridge? Will the minister get on his feet and tell us whether, in fact, Len Hoyt wrote this deal? Is this a conflict of interest?

Hon. Mr. Doucet: I am getting a lot of zest from the other side. They are definitely starting things off right. They are doing things differently, completely doing things differently. I guess that this must be their tactic.

The fact of the matter is that we just went through a Strategic Program Review where we were trying to find \$600 million in savings. Can you imagine? Can you imagine the world we would be living in if we lost this lawsuit and \$820 million was booked directly on the files, directly on the books of the province? Not many people in the province knew about this. They did not know about this lawsuit, but, if this came down and we had to pay out, everyone would know about it.

The fact of the matter is that we have had to clean up. We have had to clean up the Point Lepreau issue, the \$1-billion cost overrun. We have had to clean up the Coleson Cove issue, and that has been an ongoing thing for many years. Also, there is the \$150 million for Harbour Bridge. We can talk about that.

Mr. Speaker: Time.

Food Banks

Mr. Coon: In 2009, New Brunswick adopted a poverty reduction strategy, with the explicit mandate to reduce poverty in New Brunswick. Since that time, deep poverty has increased by 5%, and food bank usage . . . According to recent statistics—the latest evidence of this since the poverty reduction strategy was launched—New Brunswick's food banks have seen a 26% increase in the number of clients. That is an extra 4 000 people each month. Will the Minister of Families and Children explain his plan to help families living in deep poverty?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: Thank you very much for the question. Rather than referring to them as food banks, we like to refer to them now as food centres in which we educate those who, unfortunately, have to use food banks about good nutrition, providing counseling in terms of being able to cook and in terms of being able to develop community gardens in which they can produce their own food. We are making changes in terms of educating the public about the importance of food, especially for those who, unfortunately, have to use these food centres.

I am very, very proud of the new direction in which we are going as a government. It is a direction in which we are educating those who have to use it about the importance of good nutrition, the importance of being self-sufficient, and the importance of developing pride.

Mr. Speaker: Time, minister.

Mr. Coon: The fact remains that food bank usage has gone up by 26% since the poverty reduction strategy was launched and deep poverty has increased. Shawn Pegg, Director of Policy and Research for Food Banks Canada, was in the media this week discussing the annual survey and the results. According to him, people fall back on food banks for all kinds of reasons, including job loss, low wages, and sickness. In times of need, our social assistance programs are failing New Brunswickers, sending them to food banks across the province—whatever you call them.

Will the minister increase social assistance rates in the next budget so that those most in need have the resources that they need to secure healthy meals? That is the solution.

Hon. Mr. Horsman: It is a great opportunity to get up and talk about this issue with regard to food centres. Our government is going to focus on jobs and education because that is the foundation that is going to be helping and making sure that families are resilient. We understand that, if people can get jobs and better education, they will not have to rely so much on the food centres.

We continue to talk with food centres around the province, and we will continue to help them. We continue to pack groceries with the food centres. It is about education. It is about education about healthy foods rather than foods that are not so healthy for the people of New Brunswick. We will continue.

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I want the member opposite to know that New Brunswick is the only province in Canada that contributes to food centres. I wonder whether he knows that. I will ask the member to understand that we are helping people in this province and we will continue to do so because we want to move this province forward and make it the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

Mr. Coon: The minister does not seem to understand that poverty is increasing in this province, not improving. It is getting worse. There was a 4% increase in deep poverty, and the use of food banks is going through the roof. More families are having to depend on food banks because they do not have the money to feed their families.

The short-term solution for that is to increase welfare rates. The longer-term solution would be to adopt a basic income. The federal government is planning on adopting a national poverty

reduction strategy with a basic income guarantee pilot study in a number of Canadian communities. Will the minister agree to open negotiations with his federal counterpart to establish a basic income pilot in our province?

Hon. Mr. Horsman: I appreciate standing up here today. I find it ironic that members of the opposition are clapping for what the member for Fredericton South is saying.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Horsman: The members opposite are against minimum wage, and they made cuts to everything.

Again, we are working with these people. We are working with all New Brunswickers. Again, New Brunswick is the only province that is contributing to food centres.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: The member for New Maryland-Sunbury will come to order.

Hon. Mr. Horsman: We understand that jobs and education are key and are the foundation to helping people. We want to continue that. The member opposite knows that we are working hard. We are working hard with the federal government and the provincial government. Now, for the first time in a long time, all three levels of government, including municipalities, are working closer together to handle these issues. We are very proud of what we are doing, and we will continue to work hard for the people of New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

Statements by Ministers

Hon. Mr. Boudreau: I rise today to inform the members of this House that November is Lung Month as well as Lung Cancer Awareness Month. Yesterday, I had the pleasure of introducing a representative from Lung Cancer Canada in the Legislature, and today, I am fortunate to have representatives from the New Brunswick Lung Association here to mark the occasion. Every member in the Legislature received a handout with some very pertinent information, as well as a ribbon and a pin. I encourage all members to wear these throughout the month.

Les gens du Nouveau-Brunswick peuvent poser de simples gestes pour réduire le risque de contracter une maladie pulmonaire, notamment : éviter de fumer, éviter la fumée secondaire,

faire détecter la présence de radon dans leur domicile, éviter les agents carcinogènes au travail, avoir une alimentation riche en fruits et en légumes et faire davantage d'exercice.

À l'occasion du Mois du poumon, l'Association pulmonaire du Canada invite tous les gens du pays à apprécier chaque respiration qu'ils prennent. La campagne nationale de l'association, qui a pour thème Un monde, un souffle, vise à susciter des conversations sur l'importance de la respiration. Elle contribue à financer la recherche sur les maladies respiratoires afin de sauver des vies, grâce à des efforts novateurs qui placent la respiration à l'avant-plan.

For more information about this year's Breathing as One campaign, I encourage all members to visit <www.breathingasone.ca> or <www.lung.ca>. Again, I want to thank the stakeholders who are here with us today and have taken some time out of their busy agendas. These people believe in this cause, and we certainly do as well. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Members, was the correct one handed out? Okay.

Mrs. Dubé: I received two minister's statements, and it was not the right one.

Cela me fait plaisir de me lever à la Chambre également.

As I said earlier, it is certainly an honour to have these people in the gallery and to talk about lung cancer and the importance of having a pan-Canadian campaign to truly make a difference.

Cette année encore, cela me touche peut-être plus particulièrement, parce que deux personnes de mon entourage très proche viennent de recevoir un diagnostic de cancer du poumon.

I have two friends who were just recently diagnosed with lung cancer. It is certainly a shock when you hear that. They are not the only ones in New Brunswick, and they are not the only ones in Canada. This is a big issue, a big concern, and this is why the work of the association has been doing is so great. It is so important.

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We need to continue being nonpartisan about it, as I said, and just work together. We need to make sure that we support, as much as we can, the Medical Society, its research, and certainly all the support that it has been providing for the families and the health care workers in the system as well. I would just like to join the minister.

Je veux certainement me joindre au ministre afin de continuer à travailler sur ce dossier extrêmement important, et ce, non seulement pour la recherche du cancer du poumon mais aussi pour toutes les formes de cancer. Même si beaucoup de progrès ont été faits, il faut continuer à aller de l'avant, car, la maladie, elle, progresse rapidement.

Mr. Coon: I would like to thank the Minister of Health for deciding to recognize Lung Month in his ministerial statement in the House today. It is an important month, and it is an important issue. Lung disease and lung cancer affect everybody's extended family. I appreciate the minister bringing this to the House in his statement today. I also want to acknowledge the incredibly important work that groups such as the New Brunswick Lung Association and Lung Cancer Canada do for all of us, really—for all of us. These organizations work hard and do excellent work. I certainly support all their efforts.

It is important that these organizations have the means to continue on with it. I am sure that there are all kinds of opportunities for partnerships between the provincial government, the federal government, and the nonprofits to extend this work into the future. Thanks again to the minister for recognizing Lung Month this morning, and thanks to all the folks from the nonprofits who came out this morning to show their support. Thank you.

L'hon. M. Boudreau : C'est avec grand plaisir que je prends la parole aujourd'hui à la Chambre pour annoncer qu'une entente-cadre de principe sur les services de médecin a été conclue entre le ministère de la Santé et la Société médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick.

L'entente de principe concerne les médecins salariés et rémunérés à l'acte. L'entente doit maintenant être ratifiée par la société médicale. La Société médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick informera le gouvernement lorsque la ratification sera assurée.

For obvious reasons, we are not able to disclose any further details on the tentative agreement that was signed with the New Brunswick Medical Society until the ratification process has been concluded. However, I want to thank and commend the bargaining teams from both the New Brunswick Medical Society and the Department of Health for their hard work and professionalism on this file, including the New Brunswick Medical Society's Chief Executive Officer, Anthony Knight, who is here with us today. From what I can see, I think that he is trying to grow a moustache for Movember. Thank you, Anthony, for being here. I also want to point out Mark Wies, our assistant deputy minister, who led the team at the department. I want to thank them for their hard work. I look forward to sharing the outcome of the ratification process with New Brunswickers in the near future. Thank you.

M^{me} Dubé : Nous avons dit que ce serait une journée ayant trait à la santé aujourd'hui. Comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, cela me fait plaisir d'accueillir la Société médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick, représentée par M. Knight, que tout le monde connaît ici, à la Chambre.

Cela me fait plaisir d'entendre qu'il y a effectivement une entente entre le gouvernement et la Société médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick, qui sera entérinée par l'ensemble des médecins de la province.

Cela nous donne la chance de remercier les médecins pour leur travail extrêmement important. Ils ont à coeur leur travail et oeuvrent aussi en équipe avec les infirmières praticiennes et les autres professionnels de la santé. Je peux vous dire que le travail d'équipe fait une différence. J'ai eu l'occasion de travailler avec les professionnels de la santé, et ils ont de plus en plus cette perspective, surtout en ce qui a trait aux soins primaires. Si on veut donner un meilleur service aux gens de cette province, le travail d'équipe doit être présent. Aussi, les médecins doivent prendre l'engagement d'être de plus en plus disponibles dans la façon de livrer des services, afin de se rendre accessibles aux gens de la province pour ce qui est des rendez-vous, par exemple.

Alors, nous allons attendre les détails de l'entente, mais nous voulons féliciter le travail qui a été fait par la Société médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick et par le gouvernement, dans le but de toujours mieux servir la population. Merci.

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11:00

Mr. Coon: This, indeed, is good news. Of course, it is tentative good news, subject to ratification, but the minister acknowledged that in his statement. I want to recognize the work of the staff of the Medical Society, as well as the work of the department staff—the ADM—that was done to reach this agreement. The Medical Society does quite impressive work overall on behalf of New Brunswickers. I think we are all familiar with its efforts to advance preventative health care in the province to make New Brunswick one of the best provinces in terms of health and to raise our standing in Canada, which is great. It has some great ideas and some great programs. This is great news that removes that little uncertainty that some people might have had in terms of how this might pan out. I look forward to the ratification results and hope that there is support for the tentative agreement. Thank you.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

(**Hon. Mr. Boudreau** moved that Bills 18, *An Act to Amend the Smoke-free Places Act*, and 19, *An Act Respecting Nurse Practitioners*, be now read a first time.)

Bill 18: The proposed amendments to the *Smoke-free Places Act* are another step forward in realizing the commitment that our government made in *Moving New Brunswick forward* to bring us closer to a smoke-free New Brunswick. They will serve to prevent further amendments to the definition of “smoke”, continue efforts to denormalize smoking, and reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.

Plus précisément, les modifications de la loi interdisent de fumer une substance destinée à être fumée dans un endroit où les produits du tabac ou les cigarettes électroniques sont actuellement interdits. Elles incluent la propriété d'une régie régionale de la santé dans la liste des endroits où il est interdit de fumer.

On this point, again, I want to thank the two RHAs that are here. They have really led the charge on this. Some of the advocates are in the gallery today. I thank them very much for their work. This legislation is going to solidify the commitment that both RHAs took. Thank you.

Projet de loi 19. Les modifications proposées du *Règlement général 2002-27* pris en vertu de la *Loi sur les régies régionales de la santé* et de la *Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil* sont nécessaires pour accroître l'autorité des infirmières praticiennes au sein du système de soins de santé du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Les modifications serviront à améliorer l'accès aux soins primaires en maximisant le recours aux services de professionnels de la santé conformément à l'engagement que nous avons énoncé dans notre plateforme électorale en 2014.

Specifically, the proposed changes will grant nurse practitioners the ability to apply to the RHA board for appointment to the medical staff and for privileges to admit patients to the Extra-Mural Program, as well as to use diagnostic services in a hospital facility or community health centre. The changes will also provide nurse practitioners the ability to complete and sign the medical certificate of cause of death portion of the death registration form.

Again, this is with the great collaboration of our RHAs, the Nurses Association of New Brunswick, and the nurse practitioners. I thank them for being here. We want to make sure that we are expanding the role of each and every one of our health care professionals. Thank you.

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11:05

(**Mr. Coon** moved that Bill 20, *An Act to Amend the Political Process Financing Act*, be now read a first time.)

Continuing, **Mr. Coon** said: This bill seeks to eliminate donations from corporations and trade unions to political parties. There is widespread concern among New Brunswickers that accepting political donations from corporations influences the decisions of governments. My bill is the first step in removing corporate influence from our democratic process in New Brunswick. I look forward to seeing the bill debated and passed into law in this session. Thank you.

Notices of Motions

Mr. Higgs gave notice of Motion 8 for Thursday, December 8, 2016, to be seconded by **Mr. Crossman**, as follows:

Whereas the recent assessment results indicate that the majority of Grade 12 students, who started in the Grade 1 Immersion program, have utterly failed to meet the expected outcomes; and

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Whereas those assessment results indicate that not even 42% of those tested met or exceeded the Advanced Proficiency level, when the provincial target was 85%; and

Whereas those assessment results indicate that a large percentage of the students who started the Grade 1 Immersion program either dropped out of the program or no longer met the program definition by the time they reached Grade 12; and

Whereas a number of those Grade 12 students who dropped out of the program or failed to meet the definition under Policy 309 took the assessment test anyway—but that these results are not publicly reported; and

Whereas the Gallant government made a political promise during the last election campaign to reinstate the Grade 1 French Immersion despite these completely dismal assessment results and without having any evidence concerning the new Grade 3 Program; and

Be It Therefore Resolved That this Assembly urges the government to put a moratorium on reinstating the Grade 1 French Immersion program; and

Be It Further Resolved That this Assembly urge the government to release their transition plan to reinstate Grade 1 French Immersion program so that parents, teachers, administrators, and students can judge whether the plan addresses the serious failings of the original Grade 1 program.

Motion 9

Mr. Keirstead gave notice of Motion 9 for Thursday, December 8, 2016, to be seconded by **Mr. Jody Carr**, as follows:

Whereas the Select Committee on Climate Change worked diligently to consult with New Brunswickers, stakeholder groups, and experts, on developing a plan to address climate change; and

Whereas the Committee made a recommendation to “Develop a made-in-New Brunswick carbon pricing mechanism, as opposed to having one imposed on New Brunswickers by the federal government”; and

Whereas the Committee recommended this mechanism be conditional upon:

a. Directing all revenue from carbon pricing to a dedicated climate change fund, not general revenue;

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b. *Undertaking a detailed analysis of the social, financial, economic, and environmental impacts of the various climate pricing mechanisms and revenue investment options.*

c. *Protecting low-income New Brunswickers;*

d. *Including all economic sectors;*

e. *Considering the approach taken by neighboring jurisdictions;*

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f. *Developing the mechanism with the engagement of all concerned interests; and*

g. *Ensuring the carbon-pricing mechanism is outlined in legislation and receives public consultation through a committee of the Legislative Assembly.*

Be It Therefore Resolved That *this Assembly urges the government to meet all of the conditions recommended by the Committee before imposing a new carbon tax or carbon pricing mechanism on the already over-burdened taxpayers of New Brunswick.*

Thank you.

Avis d'affaires émanant de l'opposition

M^{me} Dubé : J'informe la Chambre que, comme je l'ai dit hier, cet après-midi nous allons débattre de la motion 2, qui porte sur le moratoire sur les taxes ; la motion 5, qui porte sur la sylviculture, et la motion 4, concernant la vérificatrice générale. Voilà ce que sera notre ordre du jour pour la journée de l'opposition, aujourd'hui.

Notices of Motions

Hon. Mr. Doucet gave notice of Motion 10 for Wednesday, December 7, 2016, to be seconded by **Hon. Mr. Boudreau**, as follows:

THAT unless otherwise provided by Standing Rule or Special Order of the House, the Legislative Assembly adopt the following sessional calendar upon resumption of the Third Session of the Fifty-Eighth Legislature on December 6, 2016:

Tuesday, December 6 to Friday, December 9, 2016, inclusive;

Tuesday, December 13 to Friday, December 16, 2016, inclusive;

Tuesday, January 31 to Friday, February 3, 2017, inclusive;

Tuesday, February 7 to Friday, February 10, 2017, inclusive;

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*Tuesday, March 14 to Friday, March 17, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, March 21 to Friday, March 24, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, March 28 to Friday, March 31, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, April 25 to Friday, April 28, 2017, inclusive; and
Tuesday, May 2 to Friday, May 5, 2017, inclusive;*

THAT during certain weeks in which the Assembly is adjourned, the following dates are available to the standing committees to meet to consider bills, estimates and the public accounts of various government departments and Crown corporations;

*Tuesday, January 17 to Friday, January 20, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, February 14 to Friday, February 17, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, February 21 to Friday, February 24, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, February 28 to Friday, March 3, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, April 11 to Thursday, April 13, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, April 18 to Friday, April 21, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, June 6 to Friday, June 9, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, June 13 to Friday, June 16, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, September 26 to Friday, September 29, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, October 3 to Friday, October 6, 2017, inclusive;
Tuesday, October 10 to Friday, October 13, 2017, inclusive,*

THAT notwithstanding the above dates available to committees, that the chairs of standing and select committees may continue to call meetings with appropriate notice on dates of their choosing;

THAT when the Assembly adjourns on Friday May 5, 2017, it stand adjourned until Wednesday, November 1, 2017;

PROVIDED ALWAYS THAT if it appears to the satisfaction of Mr. Speaker, after consultation with the Government, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during any period of adjournment, Mr. Speaker may give notice that he is so satisfied and in such notice shall state a time at which the House shall meet, and thereupon the House shall meet at the time so stated and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time, and

THAT in the event of Mr. Speaker being unable to act owing to illness or other cause, either of the Deputy Speakers shall act in his stead for the purpose of this order.

Government Motions re Business of House

(Hon. Mr. Doucet moved, seconded by Hon. Mr. Boudreau, that when the Assembly adjourns at the end of this sitting day, it stand adjourned until Friday, November 18, 2016, at 9 a.m., and that, when the Assembly adjourns on Friday, November 18, 2016, it stand adjourned until Tuesday, December 6, 2016.)

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Hon. Mr. Doucet: I am glad I did not have to repeat that motion.

It is the intention of government that bills introduced today be called for second reading on Tuesday, December 6, following which Bills 16, 15, and 17 will be called for second reading, following which, pursuant to Standing Rule 42.1, all bills that receive second reading today will be referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Policy. Following this, at 2:30, the House will proceed with opposition business as per the agenda.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to recess today at 11:45 for an event in which I believe all parties will be taking part.

Mr. Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

Debate on Second Reading of Bill 16

Hon. Mr. Fraser, after the Speaker called for second reading of Bill 16, *An Act to Amend the Crown Construction Contracts Act*: I stand today as Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to speak with regard to *An Act to Amend the Crown Construction Contracts Act*. As you know, this bill was introduced yesterday at the request of NB Power. I will be moving a motion to send this amendment directly to the law amendments committee.

L'entreprise de service public a réitéré au gouvernement qu'il s'agit d'une mesure législative importante au moment où elle envisage de nouvelles possibilités. Les changements donneraient à Énergie NB une plus grande souplesse en ce qui concerne la négociation de contrats pour des projets de construction d'envergure et complexes.

Those are projects that require special processes for planning, financing, and implementation. NB Power is simply seeking the ability to negotiate less expensive contracts that will flow from both parties agreeing to share the risk inherent in these large and unique projects. One of those opportunities includes a long-anticipated renewable energy request from the state of

Massachusetts. NB Power has the potential to undertake major projects in hydro, tidal, and wind power to bid on this opportunity, but not without changes to this legislation.

I know that NB Power's CEO, Gaëtan Thomas, is willing to come before a committee of this House to explain the Crown utility's interest in the proposed amendment.

Depuis plusieurs années, le gouvernement provincial demande à Énergie NB de fonctionner comme une entreprise. L'entreprise de service public dit qu'il lui faut les changements en question pour y parvenir. Si Énergie NB peut convaincre les législateurs de la nécessité du projet de loi, il sera adopté. Dans le cas contraire, il ne le sera pas.

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The amended draft bill also expands the scope of the exemption to include other parties which have been approved by NB Power's board of directors, or in connection with an energy infrastructure project of any entity in which, directly or indirectly, the Crown, in right of the province, holds an interest. Although the bill is being presented at the request of NB Power, there are also minor amendments being proposed that were part of the original package that will improve the work that the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure is doing.

Plus de 20 ans se sont écoulés depuis les dernières mises à jour importantes de la *Loi sur les contrats de construction de la Couronne*. Les modifications proposées moderniseront la loi et le règlement général.

These amendments will address challenges with the Act and will ensure that it is up to date when it comes to technological and business-related references. It also updates the names of some entities that have changed names. This would modernize the Act, provide administrative efficiencies, and also bring the *Crown Construction Contracts Act* in line with the *Procurement Act*.

It also modernizes the allowed systems of communication. The existing Act was written at a time when telegrams and telex were used in everyday business. It does not refer to e-mail or facsimile.

This bill would also move the standard form contracts and machine rental rates to government administrative policy. This will allow us to simplify the process required to update and amend these very complex documents without losing government oversight.

Pour ce qui est d'Énergie NB, je sais que M. Thomas a hâte de se présenter ici pour répondre aux questions devant un comité de la Chambre.

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Going forward, NB Power would be exempt from nonroutine capital projects. These are unique projects that cannot be packaged into tenders like routine projects.

La nouvelle version du projet de loi inclut en outre une définition visant à préciser en quoi consisterait un « projet d'immobilisation non courant ».

For the record, a nonroutine capital project will be defined as “a non-recurring capital project or a capital project that is carried out at intervals of five years or more, but does not include an annual maintenance project”.

L'exemption ne s'applique qu'aux projets d'immobilisation non courants et aux activités d'approvisionnement qui ont reçu l'approbation du conseil d'administration d'Énergie NB.

This exemption parallels a similar exemption that already exists in the general regulation of the *Procurement Act*. It will enable NB Power to identify the best economic option for NB Power, with consideration of risk and the board of directors' mandate to operate NB Power more like a business. These nonroutine circumstances may include joint ventures, strategic partnerships, and financing arrangements with third parties.

I think that it is worth stating again that the exemptions will be vetted by the board of directors of NB Power. That board is composed of qualified and experienced individuals who are tasked with weighing these important decisions. These nonroutine circumstances may include joint ventures, strategic partnerships, and financing arrangements with third parties. Stakeholders will still be consulted, and a MEC will be brought to the Board of Management.

De plus, un ensemble de modalités types pour les cautionnements d'exécution et de paiement sera créé.

This will address problems encountered in the past where, upon breach of contract, and as a result of the absence of such obligations, government had to prepare and sign a new completion contract with an alternate contractor instead of a surety. It would set standard obligations that all bonds must include in relation to sureties on contracts administered by DTI. By allowing Crown entities to negotiate with low or sole bidders, this improves fairness by giving all bidders notice of the possibility of such negotiations. It should also result in lower project costs, in keeping with this government's commitment to good economic stewardship.

This practice is already used on the building side and eliminates ambiguity. The *Procurement Act* specifically permits this. The *Crown Construction Contracts Act* and its regulations do not specify. We want to be very clear about this.

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The exemption that has garnered the most attention is, for certain, the exemption involving nonroutine capital projects for NB Power. The proposed exemption applies only to nonroutine capital projects and procurements which have been approved by NB Power's board of directors. In the case of a project valued at more than \$50 million, the matter will also be reviewed by the New Brunswick Energy and Utilities Board.

Je crois comprendre qu'Énergie NB a consulté les parties prenantes et que le processus se poursuit. La société de la Couronne aura davantage l'occasion d'aborder le bien-fondé du projet de loi lorsque ses représentants comparaitront devant le Comité permanent de modification des lois.

I look forward to this bill, *An Act to Amend the Crown Construction Contracts Act*, coming forward to the law amendments committee for further discussion to address questions that all honourable members of this House may have.

Proposed Amendment to Motion for Second Reading of Bill 16

Hon. Mr. Fraser moved, seconded by Mr. Chiasson, that the motion for second reading of Bill 16, *An Act to Amend the Crown Construction Contracts Act*, be amended as follows:

by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following:

Bill No. 16, An Act to Amend the Crown Construction Contracts Act, be not now read a second time but that the order for second reading be discharged and the subject matter of the Bill referred to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments.

(**Mr. Speaker**, having read the proposed amendment, put the question, and the following debate ensued.)

Debate on Proposed Amendment

Mr. Jeff Carr: Forgive me if I take a few moments to address the comments of the minister. On this side of the House, we are happy to see this piece of legislation go to the law amendments committee so that we can get into some more questioning to help us better understand some of the issues that we have, that the ratepayers have, and that the taxpayers have. I do have to point out that the minister has clearly said that if all legislators in this House and of this Assembly are not convinced that this is the right way to go with nonroutine contracts and nonroutine tenders, it will not move forward.

It now falls upon NB Power to do the government's dirty work, to get this legislation through, and to convince us that it is the right way to go. It also has a responsibility to convince industry in New Brunswick that it is the right direction to go in. While we are not opposed to doing business a little differently, or to improving the way we do business, we still have grave concerns. For the past four or five months since this piece of legislation left the Legislature, neither the government nor NB Power has really done any work on this or moved forward until just this past Monday. Three days ago, NB Power decided that it needs to start consulting with industry and with the opposition, and maybe even with government. We are not sure why. It has not done anything with it until now.

We are looking forward to getting into law amendments, getting to the question, and getting to the heart of why this legislation needs to go through. We are also looking forward to seeing whom it will and will not protect going forward. We do not need the Auditor General looking into another Atcon, another boondoggle, or another money pit later on down the road, whether it is 5, 10, 15, or 20 years down the road.

Hon. Mr. Fraser: With all due respect, the member opposite is doing a debate on second reading. A motion is on the floor to dispense with second reading of this bill and to move this bill directly to the law amendments committee. The opposition is well aware of this. It knew that we were going to do this. This is not an opportunity for the member to make a political statement or a political speech. We have a motion on the floor to move, and that is what the motion is for.

022

11:30

Mrs. Dubé: On a point of order, this is a debatable motion. I advised the Government House Leader that we wanted to have one speaker on it. I appreciate that you gave that opportunity. It is a debatable motion. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The debate is to be contained within the amendment, but we have allowed a little bit of flexibility on that. I would ask you to please stick to the amendment now with regard to sending it to the law amendments committee, as opposed to the entirety of the bill at this point.

Mr. Jeff Carr: I appreciate that. Thankfully, you preside over this Legislature and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure does not. He does not get to stand up to say who gets to speak or not.

Mr. Speaker: Member, please provide debate on the amendment.

(Interjection.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jeff Carr: I will continue on that track. My comments were purely the reasons we are in favour of going to the law amendments committee and the reasons ratepayers and taxpayers are contacting us. There are concerns in the industry. We are very happy that this is going to the law amendments committee so that we can get into those questions and we can have those questions answered. This is a short debatable motion, as you said. I will leave it at that, but I just wanted to make my point that I am very happy that you are the person who oversees this Legislature. Thank you very much.

Proposed Amendment to Motion for Second Reading of Bill 16 Adopted

Mr. Speaker read the proposed amendment as follows:

by deleting all the words after the word “that” and substituting the following:

Bill No. 16, An Act to Amend the Crown Construction Contracts Act, be not now read a second time but that the order for second reading be discharged and the subject matter of the Bill referred to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments.

Mr. Speaker put the question, and the proposed amendment was adopted.)

Debate on Second Reading of Bill 15

Hon. Mr. Arseneault, after the Speaker called for second reading of Bill 15, *An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission and Workers’ Compensation Appeals Tribunal Act*: I am pleased to stand in the House today for the second reading of Bill 15, *An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission and Workers’ Compensation Appeals Tribunal Act*. The proposed amendments will accomplish three objectives. First, they will address unintended consequences of amendments passed at the completion of Phase 1 of the *Comprehensive review of New Brunswick Workers’ Compensation legislation*, including the omission of the Appeals Tribunal’s ability to hear reconsideration. In addition, these changes will enhance the Workers’ Compensation Appeals Tribunal provision to allow for the delegation of authority from the Chair to administrative staff.

With respect to the procedures related to the Appeals Tribunal decisions, if the commission is not in attendance at the hearing, then it cannot appeal the matter to the Court of Appeal. Standing should be given to the commission to go to the Court of Appeal to argue the correctness of its policy, even though it was not at the hearing in front of the Appeals Tribunal.

Aussi, les modifications proposées amélioreront la structure de gouvernance du conseil d’administration composé de parties prenantes afin de maintenir l’expérience et les connaissances des membres et d’assurer leur transmission aux nouveaux membres du conseil. La disposition prévoyant que tous les membres du conseil d’administration résident au Nouveau-

Brunswick fera en sorte que ceux-ci seront bien renseignés sur les questions locales et régionales pouvant avoir une incidence sur Travail sécuritaire NB.

La prolongation du premier mandat de tous les membres du conseil d'administration, pour le faire passer de quatre à cinq ans, permettra d'accorder plus de temps à l'apprentissage qui est nécessaire en raison de la complexité de l'organisme.

Par ailleurs, le fait de pouvoir renouveler deux fois le mandat des membres pour une durée de trois ans chacun au lieu de leur accorder un seul mandat de quatre ans favorisera la contribution continue des membres qui connaissent bien les enjeux et les processus.

Le fait de permettre aux membres du conseil de continuer à y siéger après l'expiration de leur mandat tant qu'une autre personne n'a pas été nommée assurera la continuité des travaux pendant la période de transition.

Grâce aux modifications, Travail sécuritaire NB aura l'autorité de conclure des ententes avec d'autres autorités législatives dans le but d'accepter et de placer des fonds.

023

11:35

Finally, these amendments will provide clarity over financial matters, including the calculation of the rate of return on pension funds. This will ensure that the rate of return on each worker's account in the pension fund will be equal to the overall rate of return of the pension fund. Thank you.

Mr. Oliver: I thank the minister for introducing this bill. I know that there is a lot of housekeeping involved with this bill. For the most part, we are very supportive of what is taking place. There are certainly some questions around what the bill is intending to do. Sometimes we question why we need to extend terms beyond what the norm has been in the past.

With regard to one of the sections of the bill, WorkSafeNB has the authority to enter into agreements with other jurisdictions. From experience, we know that our investment team at WorkSafeNB has done an admirable job. It has been doing this operation for a number of years. As I said, this is a housekeeping correction, and we have to make sure that we have the legitimacy to do it. I know that it was brought to the attention of the board by our vice-president of finance on a few occasions. It is good to see that this is moving forward.

I would say that while this is a good modernization of the legislation, it is unfortunate that, at this point, we are looking at a 33% increase in the compensation benefit rates. I trust that the corporation has a system in place that will monitor this, and that we can look forward to controls being put in place that will help industries afford to continue with their mandated coverage. It is very troubling for municipalities and corporations right now to see that a rate that has been going

down steadily over the past number of years is now jumping by a third. I know that it is going to be a hardship on many of them. We were able to keep the rates affordable for employers, including municipalities, as I said.

I am sure that there will be lots of questions when this bill moves into committee. We want to make sure that the changes that are being made are in the best interests of not only the workers but also the industries that are supporting the workers. We do not need to see changes made that will restrict growth in our communities.

Also, I would like to suggest to the House that, at this point, we are going through a process of hiring a new CEO and president of the corporation. I trust that the government will allow the board to do the hiring for us, much as has been done in the past with the New Brunswick Liquor Corporation. This is to show that the strength is really with the board and that it is making the right choices. I believe that when I look at Horizon Health Network, this was the same thing that was allowed there.

Also, I would like to see that, with the vacancy at the vice-chair's position, the government would move on making that appointment as well so that we can have some . . .

(Interjections.)

Mr. Oliver: It is done? Thank you for that.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Oliver: There was a very quick response on that one—as usual, yes.

Anyway, for the most part, we certainly support this bill and the changes that are being made. We look forward to working with the government on making sure that WorkSafeNB continues its operation and moves forward, to the benefit of all our employers.

The other thing that I would like to point out is with regard to the PTSD bill that we passed last year. Again, I would like to congratulate our member for Gagetown-Petitcodiac on that. I hope that the board will look at extending those benefits beyond just the first responders that we have at this time.

With that, thank you very much. I look forward to the committee.

November 17, 2016

Daily Sitting 9 / Jour de séance 9
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le 17 novembre 2016

Second Reading

(**Mr. Speaker** put the question, and Bill 15, *An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission and Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal Act*, was read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Policy.)

024

11:40

Débat à l'étape de la deuxième lecture du projet de loi 17

L'hon. M. Landry, à l'appel de la deuxième lecture du projet de loi 17, *Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'organisation judiciaire* : Je me lève ce matin à la Chambre pour présenter en deuxième lecture la *Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'organisation judiciaire*.

Le projet de loi contient des modifications visant à assurer la communication appropriée avant qu'un juge de la Cour du Banc de la Reine puisse être réaffecté. En vertu de ces modifications, le juge en chef de la Cour du Banc de la Reine devra consulter et obtenir l'accord du juge concerné et du ministre de la Justice et de la Sécurité publique avant de réaffecter le lieu de résidence d'un juge. Ces dispositions sont semblables à celles qui existent dans la *Loi sur la Cour provinciale*, depuis 1987, visant la réaffectation des juges de la Cour provinciale. Des mesures législatives semblables sont également en place dans de nombreuses autres provinces.

Mr. Speaker: Members, it is close to the time that we had talked about breaking. Pursuant to the Standing Rules, we are going to take our lunch break now. We will come back at one o'clock.

(The House recessed at 11:41 a.m.)

The House resumed at 1:13 p.m., with **Mr. Albert** in the chair.)

025-030

13:13

Bill 17

Mr. Flemming: I would like to ask one of the pages to please indulge me and bring me one of these little platforms. I live in a world of bifocals now, so I have to adjust things a little closer. My next step will be trifocals, they tell me. I am not sure what that is.

I rise in the House today speak again on *An Act to Amend the Judicature Act*. We all go back to the old Yogi Berra expression "déjà vu all over again". I know that we are in a world where recycling is very popular, but here we are again.

I do not want my friend, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, to think that I am picking on him. I may sound as though I am reverting to messages of condolence, but I am not. I am going to offer him my condolences. The Attorney General, in the last session, had the responsibility for the *Judicature Act*. He saw this coming, and he immediately booted it over to the poor member for Fredericton North, who was going along, minding his own business, and then had this dropped on him. Again, he, being the good soldier that he is, took one for the team. He was battered, bruised, and beaten, but I am sure he is greatly relieved that he no longer has this regrettable piece of work.

Now, unfortunately, as the ball continues to be kicked down the field, my poor friend, the now Minister of Justice and Public Safety, has to take this piece of work. Now, it is his job to take one for the team, and it is his job to do the bidding of the Premier's Office, for reasons which neither he nor I can particularly articulate. In any event, I want the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to know that, in the words of the former President Bill Clinton, "I feel your pain." This is not personal. You just drew the short straw, and, unfortunately, you are the front of the government.

You are not a lawyer. That is not your fault, and that is nothing to apologize for. Not being a lawyer, goodness knows, I know there is truth to that. This particular subject delves deep into our legal system and our legal tradition, and the minister is at a disadvantage.

The only other lawyers over there are the Premier and the Attorney General. The Attorney General and his staff want nothing to do with it. I would ask: If the Premier has this so dear to his heart, why does he not lead on it? Why is he hiding behind the executive branch? Why is he dropping this unfairly on one of the most honourable members in the government, the present Minister of Justice and Public Safety? I want to say that because I have regard for the minister. I consider him a man of integrity, and I am saying that I am convinced that this is not his doing.

Therefore, I want to be on record as saying the minister is like . . . Remember when we were kids? You used to get the blowup Popeye the Sailor Man with the sand at the bottom. You would hit it, and down it would go. It would go up and down, up and down, and up. Well, that is what the Premier is trying to turn the minister into, and it is unfair. It is improper. It is wrong. It is cowardly, and it is despicable.

If the Premier feels so strongly about this, then I suggest that he stand up and lead the legislation. The legislation does not come from the Department of Justice and Public Safety. It does not come from the Attorney General's Office. It comes from the Premier's Office. To inflict this on the minister is, as I said, not only unfair but also cowardly.

032

13:20

Some people may question why someone could get so animated and so upset about something that may appear to be all that insignificant as where a judge lives, but this is much deeper than that.

All democracies exist and have their basis in what is called the separation of power. It goes back to the *Magna Carta*, where one particular group was not going to dominate all aspects of government. Separation of power is often used with the historic principal of *trias politica*, the three levels of government in politics. It is used as a model for the free state. It is used as a model for democracies.

As a matter of fact, it even predates the *Magna Carta*. It goes back to the ancient Greeks, who were the inventors of democracy. The ancient Greeks realized that the state needed to be divided amongst various branches. Each branch is independent of the other. Each branch has specific powers and responsibilities, but it is essential that the powers of one branch of government are not in conflict with, nor are they to influence, the powers of another branch.

You cannot have government, true democracy, with the branches of government interfering with the others. The typical divisions of power that have evolved from the ancient Greeks and the *Magna Carta* to the Westminster system, as we know it, is the typical division between the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch. The legislative branch enacts the law, the executive branch carries it out, and the judiciary branch interprets it.

This is in stark contrast to totalitarian systems of government where all branches of government are fused into one power base, whereas the system that we know, that we embrace, and that we are so proud of and so blessed to have is a system where these three branches of government are separate.

Separation of power very often refers to the division of responsibilities into distinct branches of government. The key is that the separation of powers limits—limited government is what we have—any one branch from exercising any core function or influence onto one of the other branches of government. The intent, then, is to prevent the concentration of power, and it provides for the checks and balances which any true and properly functioning democracy must have.

033

13:25

The history of checks and balances goes back to the earliest times when democracies and the people stood up against the monarchy. These early people realized that one of the great gifts that people have or that can be bestowed upon them is to elect their own government, to pass their own laws, and to have their own judges, each independent of the other. This reduces the danger

of the misuse of political power and provides the checks and balances for a properly working and properly operating democracy.

These principles exist in the Western World as we know it. They go back to the writing of Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, John Locke, and many of the great minds who wrote much about these types of responsibilities.

The great French philosopher of the Enlightenment, Montesquieu, wrote one of his great treatises in 1748. It was called *The Spirit of the Laws*. One of the essences of Montesquieu's statement was that separation of power was hand in hand with freedom. One of the quotes from Montesquieu's treatise in *The Spirit of the Laws* says: "the independence of the judiciary has to be real, and not apparent merely." The judiciary is seen as the most important of all the powers because of its independence. That was 300 years ago.

The system of checks and balances allows for a system based upon the regulation so that one branch is limited to its areas of authority and would not transgress those areas without trespassing in an area where it has no place to be.

These systems of government are clearly seen in the United States Constitution. The United States Constitution is the basis of many, many democracies around the world today. The United States Constitution breaks government into three classes. There is the legislative branch, which we know as the Congress, which is the House of Representatives and the Senate. They have checks and balances even within the legislative process. In the United States, Congress may pass a bill, but the Senate can veto it.

There is the executive branch, the President of the United States. Congress can veto things that the President does. The President also has the power to veto some things that Congress does. We have all watched the news from time to time, and we hear whether or not the President is going to veto something that was passed by Congress, and Congress has the power to veto something that the President does. It is power in the hands of the people.

034

13:30

When the United States Constitution dealt with the judicial branch, the power to veto and the power to meddle were never given. The President cannot veto a decision of the judiciary. Congress cannot veto a decision of the judiciary. It can change the law—and it is entitled to do that—but it cannot veto it. The judiciary was that special level of government that stood above the comings and goings of politicians. Judges are usually appointed for a lengthy term. Sometimes it is for life, and it is sometimes to age 75.

The United States Constitution even has sections in it where Congress and the executive branch are not allowed to meddle with what a judge makes. Did you know that the President of the

United States and the Congress of the United States cannot order a judge to have a 5% pay cut? Do you know why that is? It is because of the independence of the judiciary and the inability of the executive or legislative branch to exercise influence over the judicial branch.

That same principle exists throughout the world in terms of the three branches of government. Australia, France, Britain . . . Even when Hong Kong got its first independence in 1997 . . . This is Communist China. The Sino-British Joint Declaration provided for Hong Kong to have three branches of government—the legislative, executive, and judiciary. A bunch of communists even got that right.

India's system of government succeeded when British rule ended. It did the same thing. As ironic as it is, and as nonsensical as it is, even Iran has a Constitution that has three levels of government—executive, legislative, and judicial. This is so fundamental, so basic, so completely part of the fabric of our system that to mess with it and to frig with it is completely improper. It is outrageous, and it is wrong.

It is only where judges live. People say that it is no big deal. It is the tip of the iceberg that gets people in trouble. They do not see what is underwater. It is what this represents. There is an old Arab proverb that says: When the camel sticks his nose into the tent, you have to whack him hard and whack him fast because if you do not, you are going to end up living with a camel. The purpose of this is to stop this. End it. Whack the camel in the nose. Stop this complete, complete and total attack.

The arrogance of the Premier to think that he could throw something such as this into the Legislature—that he could disregard human history, human democracy, and the principles of government and of a free people and throw it out the window. The audacity of the man. The audacity to think that he could do such a thing on a whim. It shows his lack of appreciation of history, his lack of appreciation of the law, his lack of appreciation of the democratic process in which he was elected and in which he took office.

035

03:35

Judicial independence is the concept that the judiciary needs to be kept away from the other branches of government and the other branches of government are to be kept away from the judiciary. The courts should not, the judiciary should not, judges should not, ever be in any type of situation where they could be, perceived or otherwise, subject to improper influence from another branch of government. Judicial independence is vital, it is fundamental, and it is the basis of what we are all doing in this building.

I can remember that, even back when I was in law school, one of the things that was said—and I remember it from notes that I had and from talking to some younger lawyers—was that judicial

independence is the core value of our justice system. Let me repeat that: Judicial independence is the core value of our justice system. Those are profound words: “core value”.

Canada has always had a level of judicial independence. It was enshrined and entrenched in the Constitution. When I was in school, I knew it as the *British North America Act*, which is now the *Constitution Act, 1867*. Judges were guaranteed independence, specifically in sections 96 to 100 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. These included rights to tenure, the right to salary, the right not to have their salary messed with, and those rights were also enshrined with respect to criminal law in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Things like tenure, financial security, and administrative control are also dealt with in *Valente v. The Queen*.

I am not sure that what is being done here is even legal. The year 1997 saw even a greater shift toward judicial independence as the Supreme Court of Canada found in a constitutional norm guaranteeing judicial independence to all judges, including civil law court judges . . . It is implied in our system of government. It is the norm in our system of government. It is our system of government.

036

13;40

Judicial independence is critical. The judicial branch is and must continue to be independent. Decisional independence means that a judge needs to be able to decide a case solely on the basis of the law, on the basis of fact, and without any fear, any concern, any apprehension, or any penalty in their decision. Toe the line or I will transfer you. Could you imagine that? The government decides where judges live, saying: Oh, I did not like that case. You had better be ready to call Wally the Mover if you do not go my way.

That is terrible. It is terrible. We have this Act about which the Premier said, last session: It is not that big of a deal to me after all. It is not something that is that important. We are not going to hang around for that.

He pooh-poohed it and let it go, and it died on the Order Paper. It appears to me as though somebody took him to the woodshed between then and now. I have a pretty good idea who was cracking the whip, so does everybody else in this province, so does the Law Society, so does the Canadian Bar Association, and so does everybody over there. The poor Minister of Justice has to take it in the chops.

We know that, just on the surface, there are several controversial items. The Chief Justice is prepared to go to court to ask for documents to be released since the government, so far, has refused a great many of them. CBC News has been following this and has been unable to get any kind of an answer as to why this is being done. Various other media outlets have been doing the same thing.

We know that, on the day that the bill was announced last session, provincial officials in the Premier's Office were scrambling around for its urgent introduction to the Legislature. We know this from documents that have been released under the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. If it is so insignificant, it is just such a nothing that does not amount to a hill of beans, and it is just a minor issue, why is the executive branch of government, the Premier's Office, objecting to the release of information requested under the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*? If it is insignificant and a minor housekeeping issue, why would you not release all the information on this insignificant matter? Why would you not release all the e-mails? If it is not a very big deal, that is a good question, is it not? If it is so insignificant, what is with the secrecy? Where is the new transparent government that the Premier chirped about all through the last election?

037

13:45

The bill simply was dropped from the sky. As lawyer Michael Bray put it, the bill dropped from the sky. Officials in government began to discuss this on January 24—12 days. Legislation with respect to the Attorney General and the Department of Justice generally comes from the department. The seminal office for this was not the Attorney General's Office, and it was not the Department of Justice. We know that. This is a product of the Premier's Office. The Premier's Office wants this to happen. If it is so insignificant, so minor, and housekeeping, what is the Premier doing with it?

I was the Attorney General. I was a minister. If I had a minor housekeeping issue to do, I never interacted with the Premier's Office about it. Why does the Premier's chief of staff, Jordan O'Brien, have all these e-mails from officials at Justice and the Office of the Attorney General, discussions, and everything else like that? Housekeeping? At the highest level of the executive branch of government? They insult the intelligence of the people of New Brunswick and call it housekeeping. It is insulting. They must think we are stupid.

There were various descriptions of this. They tried to play with words. They used the benign explanation that, oh well, they do it in some other provinces too. There was a case once in one of the other provinces where a mean-spirited Chief Judge transferred a judge that he did not like from southern Alberta—I think it was Calgary—way up to northern Alberta. He did it because he was vindictive. He did not like it. That is the problem that Alberta had, and that is the problem that they dealt with.

I ask the government and the minister: Name me a time when this has been a problem. When has a judge in New Brunswick been transferred against his will or improperly? It is with cooperation of the Chief Judge and the judge. There is no manifest problem to fix. This idea that judges have to be in one place and everything else . . . I practiced law enough to know. You would go to court, and you would have no idea which judge was going to be there when you went in. You did not know who was going to be there. It could be vacations, or it could be other trials. They could

bring in a judge from Bathurst to Saint John to hear this trial because one trial here got canceled and this one is going on. There is no expectation that lawyers know exactly which judge they are going to have.

(Interjection.)

Mr. Flemming: The system always worked. There has never been a case in which a judge who asked to move was not allowed if there was a vacancy, an opening, or things like that. There is no problem here that needs to be solved. My friend the Attorney General whom I like and respect is a man of significant legal training and talent. He is smart too. He transferred . . . He got out of this. He moved that entire *Judicature Act* from the Attorney General's Office, where it belonged and where it always had been, to the Justice Department. My theory is that he is too credible a man to have anything to do with this. I think the solution was . . . He has principle. He is not going to touch this nonsensical thing. He is a member of the bar. He is a respected academic. He is the Attorney General. They moved it to somebody like the poor member for Fredericton North who got dropped out of an airplane without a parachute when this thing hit him and his friend behind him.

038

13:50

(Interjection.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Flemming: I will not comment about the member from Restigouche. His comments generally speak for themselves.

Why was it all moved around? Why are there all these e-mails? On the day it was introduced, it was transferred to the then minister. The government is in such a hurry to do housekeeping. When are you in a hurry to do housekeeping? Officials from Justice, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Premier's Office sent dozens of e-mails, and they were scurrying around to prepare a bill and to change authority for it and getting Cabinet involved. All that happened in two or three days over housekeeping. They must think I am as dumb as the guy I am looking at.

The other thing we know is that there is a cloud of secrecy around this bill. There is a cloud of uncertainty. Nobody knows where it came from. Nobody knows the real reason. I think that a lot of us do. I think they all do. Hypothetically speaking, if I had a devious mind, I might come to some conclusions, but I do not.

However, I also know that there are very serious constitutional issues here. This bill was introduced with little or no notice to the judiciary, no notice to the legal profession, and no notice to the public. Second reading was rammed through. Was that for housekeeping? I question the

constitutionality of what the government is trying to do. I am concerned about the troubling influence and trespassing on the independence of the judiciary. This is not a step that anyone with any legal or judicial history would take lightly. The bill seeks to dismantle hundreds of years of legal precedence and independence. It is improper. It is unlawful. It is arrogant. It is an attack on our system as we know it. The only thing that exceeds this government's ignorance is its arrogance. Thank you.

Mr. Coon: Well, here we go again.

(Interjection.)

Mr. Coon: No, he was one of the great communicators. His line was: "There you go again." I guess I could say that.

There you go again. We have been down this road before. I made some false assumptions, as it turned out, that, when I moved to set this bill aside at third reading, the pause we had on it meant that government would come back with a revised bill that would address the problems I and my colleagues in the official opposition raised about this bill interfering with judicial independence. It seems to be as clear as the nose on one's face.

039

13:55

I say "Here we go again" because we have been down this road, in the case of *Mackin v. New Brunswick (Minister of Finance)*.

In 1995, the New Brunswick Act to Amend the Provincial Court Act ("Bill 7") abolished the system of supernumerary judges and replaced it with a panel of retired judges paid on a per diem basis.

There are lots of details to that, but Judge Mackin—and, in fact, Judge Rice—felt that that was a direct interference with their judicial independence. They went to court—in fact, Judge Mackin went all the way to the Supreme Court. Sure enough, he won. Bill 7 was brought forward in 1995, and when the decision was rendered by the Justices of the Supreme Court on February 14, 2002—Valentine's Day—the Supreme Court felt that Bill 7 was unconstitutional and that Judge Mackin was correct.

We are facing the same situation. It looks like we are going down the same road here. I just want to read a little bit from the decision of the Supreme Court Justices.

Judicial independence is essential to the achievement and proper functioning of a free, just and democratic society based on the principles of constitutionalism and the rule of law.

I want to remind the House that this is part of the decision that was rendered in the Supreme Court, by Supreme Court Justices, as a result of a bill that was brought before this Legislative Assembly in 1995. At the time, judges were arguing that it was unconstitutional. It finally ended up in the Supreme Court, and, indeed, the Supreme Court found it unconstitutional. The decision went on to say:

The general test for judicial independence is to ask whether a reasonable person fully informed of all the circumstances would consider that a particular court enjoyed the necessary independent status. This requires independence in fact and a reasonable perception of independence.

This requires independence in fact and a reasonable perception of independence.

Only objective legal guarantees are capable of meeting this double requirement. Judicial independence has individual and institutional dimensions . . .

The Supreme Court pointed this out. In fact, it identified the three essential characteristics in its decision—financial security, security of tenure, and administrative independence. Certainly, this bill, in my view and in the view of others, interferes with at least the administrative independence of our judicial system.

The constitutional protection of judicial independence requires the existence in fact of these essential characteristics

—the Supreme Court Justices wrote—

and the maintenance of the perception that they exist. Thus, each of them must be institutionalized through appropriate legal mechanisms.

The situation seems so clear to me. This bill should not have come forward in its current form. It could have been brought back with a requirement to consult with the minister . . . I forget which one. It is not the Attorney General, but the Minister of Justice. By all accounts, that would have been acceptable to everybody. Consultation—good. It does not interfere with judicial independence. It is the reasonable thing to do.

The bill did not come back that way. It came back in its earlier form. It is perplexing. There was plenty of time to think this through, to reflect on it, and to consider the views that had been expressed publicly by such August bodies as the Canadian Bar Association and others around this matter. Yet, the bill came back in its original form. A journalist asked me why the other day. I said: I have no idea. It does not have any logic to it. There is no logic attached to coming back with the same bill, given the concerns that have been raised over and over from various corners. Yet, it came back in its original form.

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14:00

My colleague, the member for Rothesay, covered a lot of ground. I certainly do not want to tramp the same ground. Although he did a great job, it would be a pleasure to tramp that same ground. However, in terms of efficiency in this House and time, I have made my point here at second reading. It defines well why I cannot support this bill at second reading. Thank you.

Mr. K. MacDonald: I want to rise and offer a few comments on this bill. Just before I do, I want to welcome the guests to the gallery. Until 2:30 p.m., we will be debating this bill, and then, it is my understanding that we will go to the tax moratorium for half an hour. Then, at three o'clock, we will be debating the bill on silviculture, just to give you a bit of an idea of the timeline.

Having said that—and I thank you for that indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I certainly want to talk about the bill that is before us right now. My colleague from Rothesay did a wonderful job, as he always does, in outlining the history that has led us to this point. I believe that he may have started back around the 13th or 14th century, and he gave us a very good grounding.

(Interjections.)

Mr. K. MacDonald: I missed that. We actually started the briefing in 600 BC, and the member brought us up to the present day. From 600 BC to the present day in 40 minutes is a pretty good overview from our legal professor in the room.

The member outlined a number of issues that we need to be concerned about. From my perspective, I should start right off the bat by saying that I only ever took one legal class in university, and that was quite a few years ago.

We talk about different bills in this Legislature, and, over the course of the past day or so, I heard the analogy of the iceberg and the fact that sometimes we only see 10% to 20% of that iceberg. The other 80% to 90% is under the surface. So often in this Legislature over the past few years, that seems to be the case. The Liberal government will bring in a bill, and it will not take the time to explain the bill in its entirety. The government will just say: This is a good thing for the people of New Brunswick. Let's work out the details at a later point. All too often, unfortunately, the devil is in the details. When we are pushing back on some of this legislation that is coming before us, it is because the government has not taken the time to look at the full implications or the full ramifications of a bill before it comes to this Legislature.

There are all kinds of examples of that, just in the past year or so. Now, we, as taxpayers in the province of New Brunswick, have started dumping hundreds of thousands of dollars into the marijuana industry. We found that, in the speech from the throne, the second-largest paragraph outlining the future of economic development in New Brunswick talks about marijuana. We have not been given the details around how taxpayer money is going to be invested in that

industry, and we have not really had the discussion as to whether taxpayer money should be invested in that industry.

We hear that massive increases in workers' compensation are just around the corner, that it is going up 33%, and yet we have not had a discussion in this Legislature around that issue to better understand the details that have led up to such a massive increase in the province.

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14:05

We could talk about all kinds of other examples. We could talk about taxation policy and how the government is arbitrarily increasing things like the land transfer tax, or how we are now the most highly taxed jurisdiction in North America. In North America, New Brunswick is the most highly taxed jurisdiction, yet the Liberals continually say: Give us the money, and we will work out the details later. They are addicted to taxation.

In the committee that was looking at climate change, all kinds of ideas and recommendations were put out there to change behaviour. The one that they immediately grabbed onto was the carbon tax. If there is any way the government can find to increase taxes in New Brunswick, that is exactly what it is doing. We heard the chairman of the climate change committee say that the government wanted to establish a pot of money for projects, but I think that what might actually have happened was that maybe the words were transcribed incorrectly. Maybe the government wanted to establish a fund of money for pot, because that seems to be where much of its activity is gravitating at the present time.

Those are the reasons we are concerned about the 90% of the iceberg that we do not see. I could talk about other things like assisted death in the province. They want us to wholeheartedly endorse it without giving us a description and an understanding of the regulations or the parameters that are going to be around it. Several years ago, there was a Liberal Cabinet minister in a federal election—or not a Cabinet minister then, but a member of the opposition—who said that Liberals do not believe in giving money back to the people from whom it is collected because the people do not know how to spend it as well as the government knows how to spend it. I think that that speaks volumes about what a Liberal truly is, and I think it is the motto that governs the members opposite.

Getting back to the 90% of the iceberg that we cannot see with this bill, with *An Act to Amend the Judicature Act*, has there ever been an instance of a complaint from a judge in the province as to how the process was working? I believe the answer to that is no. There has never been an instance where a judge has complained about the process.

I think we have to ask ourselves: Why, then, has it become such an urgent issue in the province? For the listeners here today, it is very simple. I will give you two names. I will give you Jolène Richard and André Richard, two people I believe are looking for judicial appointments here in

New Brunswick. These two people happen to be quite closely affiliated with Dominic LeBlanc. We know that Dominic LeBlanc is running the province. It is common knowledge, no matter where you are in the province. Dominic LeBlanc is calling the shots. This Premier is not calling the shots. This Premier is in lockstep with Dominic LeBlanc.

When the Premier cannot take the heat—and that is often the case—he gets the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie to stand up and spew some kind of rhetoric to hide the actual facts about what is going on. The minister does a great job.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. K. MacDonald: Yes, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that. It was getting difficult to hear because of the ruckus on the other side of the room.

Dominic LeBlanc has some judges that he wants to appoint in New Brunswick, and the framework as it currently exists does not allow for that to happen. Just to give you an idea of how the system currently works, at the present time, Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John are the positions that everyone seems to want. At least that would be the indication that I have seen so far.

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14:10

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. K. MacDonald: A justice is appointed to one of the communities outside those three that I have mentioned. Then, at the very first opportunity, six months later, the judge will move from one of the outlying areas into one of the main centres of New Brunswick. That system, which is controlled by the Chief Justice, does not work—does not work—for Dominic LeBlanc and the Liberal Party of New Brunswick. They want to change it. They want to have a situation where they have a mechanism to control that decision and to effect change on that decision. That is not the case in any other jurisdiction, to the best of my knowledge. We want to do it here because this Premier thinks that he was elected king of all he surveys. Look at the member for Miramichi Bay-Neguac shaking her head as though in agreement.

(Interjection.)

Mr. K. MacDonald: Pretty likely you are allowed to talk about other members. When did this rule come into the House? She is a former Deputy Speaker.

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Le vice-président : Je demande aux parlementaires des deux côtés de la Chambre de garder le silence quand un député parle.

The member for Fredericton-York has the floor. Let him speak.

Mr. K. MacDonald: It just goes to show that these members opposite think that they can bully the opposition. We cannot be bullied. They all have a lot to say. I hope that when we have the debate on silviculture in the House in a few minutes' time with regard to their decision to cut silviculture funding, I hope that they are as quick to stand up and talk then. They will not. They run away from the issues.

The Attorney General ran away from this issue like a scalded cat because he knew that it was not the right thing to do. They had to have somebody to ram it through the House, so they gave it to the old bulldog. He is pushing it through. Some issues need to be talked about. This government and this minister positioned it as housekeeping, but it is very significant.

The member for Rothesay did a wonderful job talking about the three branches of government—the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government—and about how the judicial branch needed to have its independence. The executive branch—the Premier and his Cabinet—wants to take the power away from the legislative branch.

We see all kinds of examples where they have done that over the past few years by changing the rules of this House to curtail the number of days that we actually sit in this Legislature. The executive branch is trying to control the legislative branch, and it is now trying to take control of the judicial branch. That should concern each and every New Brunswicker. When judges are appointed in the province, the government and the Premier will meddle in those fine details of where they are going to be located.

It creates a situation where, potentially, this is something that you could even hold over a judge. I am not saying that that is going to be the case, but it very well could be. That is what concerns us. The members opposite want to have their hands in absolutely everything associated with anything that they touch. There is no such thing as an independent branch of government or the independence of third-party organizations or NGOs. They want to control absolutely everything.

(Interjection.)

Mr. K. MacDonald: They are control freaks. That is what we are trying to say on this side of this House.

We have a number of items that have been identified by Michael Bray as issues that should be of concern to the people of New Brunswick with regard to this bill. Certainly, one of the very first things that comes to mind on his behalf is that the bill was seemingly dropped from the sky. Before a bill makes it into this Legislature, there is a detailed process that it has to go through. This was a matter of 12 days. Twelve days before the bill was introduced in the Legislature, the discussions around this bill began.

Why such a sped-up timeline? If this is only housekeeping, why did it need to happen so fast? What was the urgency around the issue? I have already told you what I believe the urgency is. They want to get this framework in place so that when the people Dominic LeBlanc wants to have appointed as judges here in the province are appointed, they will be able to accept the appointment in the locations and communities that they want.

Every time we give this bunch an opportunity to have input into decisions, they take advantage of the responsibility with which they have been entrusted. I think again of the Atcon situation. They gave money to the Atcon Group and said: We want you to pay New Brunswick contractors. Robbie did not want to do that. Robbie wanted to pay the people that Robbie wanted to pay, so he went back to government. Shawn Graham came back and said: No, no, you only have to pay the accounts that are in dispute. The province, under the Liberal government, allowed the Atcon Group to determine which accounts were in dispute. If Robbie Tozer did not want to pay a bill at a local gas station, a local restaurant, or a local hotel, all he had to say was: I'm sorry, that account is in dispute. He did not have to pay it, and he could move on to the ones that he wanted to pay because he wanted to keep the Deh Cho Bridge, in the Northwest Territories, moving forward. The people of New Brunswick gave him the money to be able to do that.

That is the legacy of this Liberal government, and many of the people who were intricately involved in that decision are still there today. That is going to haunt this Liberal administration for many years to come.

I think we need to get back to the bill. We have talked about the fact that the bill was seemingly dropped from the sky. It was 12 days—12 days—before it was brought to the House that they started talking about it. That is virtually unheard of. Give me another example where that happened.

One of the other elements of great concern on behalf of the province is the high level of political involvement. Normally, the department responsible will work on the particulars of a bill. It will maybe go back and forth between Justice and whatnot, and the bill will move forward without high-level interaction on the part of the Premier's Office. The chief of staff in the Premier's Office, Jordan O'Brien, was exchanging e-mails with the Department of Justice and the Office of the Attorney General from the very first day of discussions, on January 24. That leads me to

believe—and I think there is a very good case being made—that this bill originated in the Premier’s Office. Ultimately, they were taking their direction from Dominic LeBlanc to make this happen and to make it happen quickly.

Different descriptions have appeared of the involvement of the Attorney General. The Attorney General was involved until he kind of removed himself from the situation. The same day Bill 21 was introduced—February 5—the Gallant Cabinet transferred authority from the *Judicature Act* and from the then minister to the new minister, who was the member for Fredericton North.

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14:20

Clearly, a set of legal eyes . . . The Auditor General, while he is not my favourite cat in the House, is a well-respected lawyer with a good set of legal eyes and, I understand, a brilliant legal mind. He took one look at this bill and realized that he could not move forward with it and that he would be compromising his professional designation, compromising himself to bring this forward. It was transferred but, clearly, the fact that he removed himself from this equation is some way, shape, or form an indication that there is something wrong with the way that this all transpired. One thing that I will say about the minister is that he never shies away from a fight. He may have cost us over \$100 000 on the busing issue, but he does not shy away from a fight. Why did he shy away from this particular fight? That is what I would like to know, and that is what many would like to know here in New Brunswick.

The government was in such a hurry. Officials from Justice, the Attorney General’s Office, and the Executive Council Office exchanged dozens of e-mails as they rushed to prepare the bill. A number of these e-mails were described as regarding the urgency. Why would there be such urgency? Why is there such urgency for a bill that is supposed to be just housekeeping? That goes back to my earliest comment about the iceberg and the fact that you only see 10% to 20% of the iceberg. What is in that remaining portion of the iceberg underwater, looming to affect the people of New Brunswick, looming to affect the judges of this province?

As the member for Rothesay said, we are throwing out hundreds of years of precedent in doing this. Why would we stick our necks out that far as a province? Why would we take such a step? Again, I believe that it is because of the Dominic LeBlanc factor here in New Brunswick. Dominic LeBlanc is controlling the strings of this government. Like little dolls, like little marionettes, they are dancing along. See? One of them in the back is doing it even as we speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know that it is true. You have been around this House a long time, longer than I would have liked. However, you have been around for a long time, and you know what is going on in this House. You know the players who are in the front benches right now, and you know that something is going on.

Why does a housekeeping bill have to move this quickly? Why does a housekeeping bill have to be transferred from the responsibility of one minister to another on the day that it is brought into

this House? Why are the judges lining up in opposition to what is happening here? It is because no one was consulted.

We have a great leader, the MLA for Quispamsis, who is doing a wonderful job of bringing the issues to the forefront. If you traced each issue . . .

(Interjections.)

Mr. K. MacDonald: I did support him on the third ballot. Yes, I did.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. K. MacDonald: See, this is what a Liberal does. Liberal do not want to talk about the issues. Liberals do not want to have the hard discussions about why they are bringing a bill into the Legislature. Liberals can only bark and distract. That is all they know how to do. We have it right here from the Minister of Education himself. He said: "I am not the best person in literacy or mathematics, but I have managed to win a few elections." By his own admission, we are not dealing with the sharpest tacks in the box. The only way that they can take their eyes off the issue at hand is to bark insults across the House.

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14:25

The fact of the matter is that this piece of legislation was rushed through. It was rushed while being prepared. The Premier's Office had all kinds of input into how it was being designed, which is highly irregular. The fact that it was rushed to the degree that it was rushed is highly irregular. The fact that, on the day it was brought into the Legislature, the Attorney General ran away from it and the responsibility was transferred to another department is highly irregular. The fact that the judges are expressing concern about a piece of legislation that governs them . . . They have not been talked to.

(Interjections.)

Mr. K. MacDonald: That is where I was going. That is where I was going when I talked about our great leader.

When our leader brings up a question in this House and you trace the issue back to its origins, you find that it is because this government did not consult. These government members think that they know what is best for everyone, and they just go ahead and do it. When it does not work out for them, they bully and try to intimidate. When that does not work, they come into this Legislature and change the law. They changed the law to limit the number of days that we have

in here in the House. They changed the law for the judges. They change laws left and right, wherever they see fit without any concept of the long-term ramifications to the province.

We have a Premier who makes changes to economic development in New Brunswick each and every day, and he has absolutely no idea of the long-term ramifications that are going to occur because of the changes. When he increases the HST, when he increases land transfer tax, when he increases every other tax . . . We are the highest taxed jurisdiction in North America. That is the legacy of this Liberal government. It is shameful.

When we look at the issues that have been flagged by the lawyer of Court of Queen's Bench Chief Justice David Smith, we see the fact that the bill was seemingly "dropped from the sky", to use his own words. We see the issue of such high-level political involvement being flagged as a reason for concern. There are the differences in description, how the bill was changed, and how the Attorney General was involved and then, at one point, removed himself from the equation altogether. Why was the government in such a hurry?

We have to ask ourselves: Who did the government members consult? They did not consult anyone. They do not consult anyone on economic development. They have meetings around the province that are by invitation only. They do not consult when they go ahead with different policies in different departments. Our leader has been doing a great job of bringing many of those examples to light.

What is the reason? What is the hurry to have this particular bill go forward if it is not to help Dominic LeBlanc and his soon-to-be-appointed appointees? Frankly, I am not interested in doing anything to help Dominic LeBlanc change a system that has withstood the test of time just because he wants to reward some people who were on the bus. You will find that that is the motivating factor behind pretty much everything this Liberal bunch does. It is to help out somebody on the bus. It concerns me greatly.

I know that we have already agreed to switch from this bill to another at an agreed upon time. I believe you are telling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my time to speak on this particular bill at this particular time is winding down. If we are moving to the next part of the day, I would like to reserve the right to come back to continue with the remainder of my time on this bill because there is still much that remains to be said. Respectfully, if you are telling me that I can do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will respectfully sit down.

Le vice-président : Étant donné que le temps alloué pour les affaires émanant de l'opposition est maintenant écoulé, conformément à l'ordre du jour, la Chambre reprend le débat sur la motion 2.

Debate on Motion 2

Mr. Jody Carr, after the Deputy Speaker called for continuation of the debate on Motion 2: I will carry on the debate on Motion 2, which was moved by my colleagues from Saint John and from Riverview, with regard to the increases in taxes in the province. We have heard of a long list of reductions and service cuts. In addition to that, we have received a lot of income tax increases in the province. We are urging that the government place a moratorium on any further tax increases. We have seen tax increases on income tax, business property tax, gas tax, diesel tax, tobacco tax, corporate income tax, and property transfer tax, which means that the tax has been doubled to sell your house. There have also been increases to the bank tax and the harmonized sales tax. The Tuition Tax Credit has been eliminated. A sugar tax is being considered, and also the carbon tax is going full steam ahead under this government.

These impositions on the fiscal capacity of our families are a huge concern. The opposition brings this forward to have this discussion around how much more the public can absorb in tax increases. At the end of the day, someone needs to pay these taxes. These taxes go to the government. If we saw better, prudent management, people would be more in favour of that in terms of seeing better quality of services. At the same time, we see all these increases and a lot of wasting of money. It is money that we cannot account for and that the government cannot account for.

In the last couple of days, we heard a lot of concerns raised with regard to the potential conflict of interest with the Enbridge Gas deal. It is a multimillion-dollar deal. We have received public information that the same person has a high-level position in the Executive Council Office and is a lawyer for Enbridge. Some concerns are there around the potential conflict that the government must account for. It has failed to account for this potential conflict. It has failed to explain what this deal was and whether it is in the best interest of taxpayers.

We have had people such as the Auditor General carry forward a review of the Atcon deal. This is another arrangement by a Liberal government with regard to the \$70 million of taxpayer funding. Because of the public, and because of the opposition and others who continue to push forward on getting the details around these secret deals, these details are able to come to light. That is why our Energy Critic will not rest from asking these important questions. As much as an individual may be worthy of great respect, when it comes to the multimillion-dollar finances of the province, as well as the actions of this government, it is the role of the opposition to ask the questions on behalf of taxpayers.

At the end of the day, it is the taxpayer who pays our bill and pays for the services. When you are asking taxpayers to pay even more on other taxes, you need to account even more stringently for the spending and finances that you are putting out. It would not be unreasonable for us to ask

these questions to make sure that multimillion-dollar budgets are being spent to the fullest adequacy and that full accountability and transparency are in place. If the government were to receive questions around a multimillion-dollar deal, rather than chastising, the government should be welcoming the opportunity to be transparent and to clear up any type of perceived, apparent, or real conflict of interest. That is a huge concern.

With regard to the carbon tax, we have not had a chance yet to really speak about the climate change committee. Certainly, our membership on the committee was a valuable one and one that we really appreciated participating in. The chairperson of the committee from Carleton and other members of the committee, such as the member for Fredericton South and our other colleagues from the Liberal Party . . . I believe that we had a very good committee. It was a good committee that looked at a lot of . . .

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14:35

Hon. Mr. Arseneault: On a point of order, we can keep going on and on. The opposition is wasting the Legislature's time. We have a very important bill on the floor of the Legislature about the *Judicature Act*, and here the member is talking about carbon tax. He is talking about Enbridge. There is a forum for that to happen. If he wants to ask questions in question period, he can do it, instead of going on with the same rhetoric, as the Leader of the Opposition has been doing each and every day. I would urge the member to stick to the bill, because we will stand up each and every time.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: State your point of order.

M^{me} Dubé : Mon collègue s'en tient certainement au sujet dont nous discutons. J'aimerais aussi indiquer au ministre qu'il s'agit de la journée de l'opposition. Donc, c'est notre journée et notre agenda, n'en déplaise aux parlementaires du côté du gouvernement. Certains propos sont peut-être difficiles à écouter, mais nous sommes sur le sujet, et je vous demanderais de laisser continuer notre député.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Jody Carr: Oh, wow. Of all the members to stand up on a point of order to the member for Oromocto-Lincoln—his nemesis, so to speak. He is not even on the right order of business in the Legislature. That has to be hard to take. I know that the member is paying careful attention even as we speak regarding the motion we are on, regarding tax increases, regarding climate change. To be two items past the *Judicature Act* . . . He has certainly had a lot to say himself about the *Judicature Act*. Most members of the Legislature would require resignation for speaking vigilantly against the justices of the province.

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While we are focused on the business of the people of New Brunswick, while we are focused on real policy, while we are focused on real change in the opposition . . .

(Interjections.)

Mr. Jody Carr: I take it as a compliment, actually. That is the sad part.

With regard to the taxes, it reminds me of something my grandfather told me. We have probably all heard this before, but I remember my grandfather telling me. It was the first time I heard it. I was in university. I had just started at university; it was before I went into politics for the first time.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Jody Carr: That was quite a few years ago, yes. It is one thing when the people in front of me are at me, but when they are behind me and at me, I really have a lot of questions to ask there.

What I want to say is that my grandfather was quite involved in politics. He was involved with the *équipe rouge*, or red team, in the fifties and sixties, with Dr McGrand and Bill Duffie, as a member of the Legislature. He was involved. I would go out to his place in Tracy, New Brunswick. He was a man who worked on the railroad years ago between Fredericton Junction, Saint John, and McAdam. He had an accident on the railroad and hurt his arm. He fell on his arm, and eventually cancer came into his arm. He had to have his arm amputated. In those days, we did not have Medicare. Also, through circumstances, he ended up raising four children on his own as a single dad with one arm. His working arm had been amputated. At the same time, he was involved in politics quite a bit. He always provided great courage, encouragement, and wisdom.

It was from him that I heard for the first time that the only things that are certain in life are death and taxes. We have heard that a number of times since then. Of course, people have heard it, but I remember the first time I heard that. I was just awestruck at how amazing that was and how brilliant my grandfather was, with that line that the only things that are certain are death and taxes.

Certainly, that has never been more true than it is today, in this Legislature, with this government and its love for taxes. That love for taxes is great. It is a concern that we have because of someone needing to pay for this. When we had our discussion in the climate change committee—and I had started to talk about that before being interrupted by the member for Campbellton-Dalhousie—we talked about a lot of issues around the climate. We all agreed that reducing emissions in New Brunswick is a priority. It is something we need to continue to work at.

The climate change effects are real. However, at the same time, there is real opportunity. It was a very good committee. The chairperson of the committee did an excellent job of facilitating getting the feedback.

A concern and issue of contention was the carbon tax. I appreciated all our openness to have good frank discussions about this. The member for Albert and I had great concerns about quickly imposing more tax on the people of New Brunswick. The committee agreed to some stipulations and conditions that we had heard from the public and sectors in the province with regard to ensuring that there is an economic impact assessment before any new tax, like a carbon tax, is put in place. This would make sure the stakeholders were involved with developing such a tax, and this would make sure that we consider what our neighbouring jurisdictions are doing with regard to a carbon tax. This would look at our already large capacity of taxes in terms of gasoline and diesel.

We would often say that we have to remember who is paying these taxes. While it is easy to snap on another tax for the taxpayer to pay because the system is set up to collect taxes, we have to be very vigilant in the capacity that people have or do not have to pay. Someone has to pay for that, and it can really have an impact on our economy moving forward. That is why we are concerned about any additional taxes being raised. We need to make sure that we understand the impact on people. We have to understand who is paying for this. When you are dealing with many millions of dollars coming out of the tax economy, that needs to be considered.

While we agree with initiatives around reducing emissions, we are pleased with the progress that has happened over the past 10 to 15 years. We have a huge and hefty target going forward, to reduce by 10 million tonnes by 2050. There is great opportunity.

The quick and easy answer is always to slap on another tax or to increase the tax. However, to do that without close consideration of the economy and people's ability to pay, we are going to continue to have further erosion. While we continue to push down on people and their ability to grow our economy, we will have even more pressure on our government services. This includes things such as our silviculture program. When these taxes are being considered, we want to make sure that the due diligence takes place. That is why we put this motion forward, to encourage the government to take it easy on the taxes it has increased already. We already have some of the largest taxes in North America and some of the highest gas and diesel taxes, which some would already call a carbon tax.

I asked: What is the purpose of a carbon tax? Why would we put forward a carbon tax? Some people have said, in answer to this question: Because everyone else is doing it. Another reason that some people will give is that the federal government is making us do it. A third reason for a carbon tax that I hear from people at times is that we need the money. That seems to be an easy

answer all too often. We need the money, so let's put a tax. However, there is already a budget of \$8 billion or \$9 billion. People are taxed, taxed, and taxed. People need to see relief on their taxes. They want good service, but they have to pay a reasonable price. It is getting to the point that things are way too expensive and cost way too much.

We are putting this motion forward today to finish this debate in the next 19 to 20 minutes to ask for a sober second thought around the tax regime in New Brunswick before any other tax, like a carbon tax, gets put on. Make sure there is due diligence. Make sure you do your economic analysis. Make sure you understand fully who is going to pay. Unfortunately, too often, it is so easy to make the little guy who is barely able to make ends meet now pay. We are urge all our members to support this motion, to support a moratorium on any future tax increases. Thank you.

049

14:45

L'hon. M. Melanson : Merci de me donner l'occasion de prendre la parole sur la motion 2.

It is a pleasure to get up today and speak on Motion 2. Over the past little while, I have been listening to the opposition regarding Motion 2 and regarding the fiscal situation of our province and the challenges that we have as a society in terms of our finances. I have to admit that, after listening to what the members opposite have to say, I do not know where they have been over the past two years. I suspect that they have been in caucus and, really, talking to each other. I suspect that. However, they have not been talking to New Brunswickers.

Since we took office, we have had a financial situation that we have had to deal with. We had a structural deficit of, on average, \$400 million per year. We had a situation where the economy was stagnant under the former government's lack of leadership during the four years that it was in government. We had a situation that we had to deal with. I am proud, as a member of this government and this caucus, that we took the bull by the horns, actually went forward with a very challenging situation, and were solution-oriented in how we approached dealing with that situation.

Before we were able to table our second budget, we embarked on a complete, exhaustive, and very engaging Strategic Program Review. Unlike the previous government, where its reviews were done within caucus, we actually went out and talked and listened to New Brunswickers. It was led by Minister Boudreau, and I was obviously involved, as well as MLA Harris—now a minister—and the entire caucus. We went out and discussed, listened, and asked New Brunswickers what their ideas were for how we could deal with this situation.

We could not and we cannot keep borrowing every day for daily needs. At some point, the banker will call and say: This is it. As with any personal budget, if you keep borrowing for your daily needs, it is going to come to an end. When we embarked on this yearlong Strategic

Program Review, New Brunswickers told us: You have to deal with this issue, and you have to resolve the challenges that we have, but do not do it as the previous government did, which was cut, cut, and only cut.

If the opposition members had participated in these sessions across the province, they would have heard the same thing. They would have heard New Brunswickers telling their government: Have a balanced approach. You absolutely have to look at the expenditures. There are always, always ways to improve, to be more efficient, to be more productive, to have programs that are better formulated, and, obviously, to use those dollars more wisely. That is why, in the solution that we brought forward, 50% of that solution was about finding efficiencies. New Brunswickers gave us very good ideas of what those efficiencies would be.

We went through every single program, making sure that if a program did not fulfil its mandate for today's needs, we got rid of it. If there were programs that had to be repurposed for today's needs and future needs, we did that. If there were programs that were good, respecting their mandate, and fulfilling people's needs, we actually enhanced some of them. That is how we were strategic—by having New Brunswickers give their ideas on how we could address the situation.

On top of that, New Brunswickers were also telling us . . .

Chaque fois que nous avons rencontré les gens du Nouveau-Brunswick, ils nous ont dit qu'il fallait investir dans l'éducation, car c'est le futur de notre province, et notre prospérité en dépend. Par conséquent, une chose est claire : Nous devons investir dans l'éducation.

Si vous avez lu le dernier budget, vous verrez que l'éducation est notre priorité. En effet, notre gouvernement est celui qui aura investi le plus en éducation.

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14:50

Aujourd'hui, nous avons visité une école où l'on a parlé des festivités du 150^e anniversaire du Canada. Ces enfants sont fiers d'être des jeunes du Nouveau-Brunswick, mais ils sont aussi fiers de voir leur gouvernement investir dans l'éducation.

Les gens de cette province nous ont aussi dit qu'il fallait protéger les soins de santé. Comme vous le savez, le Nouveau-Brunswick compte une population vieillissante ; c'est une réalité. Cela dit, les besoins en matière de soins de santé augmentent continuellement, et c'est un défi que nous devons aborder. Il faut aussi assurer aux gens de cette province que les fonds sont en place et que les soins de santé sont protégés partout dans la province, et ce, non seulement dans les villes mais aussi dans les régions rurales.

I only hear the opposition members focusing on one issue, which is taxation, but not focusing on the decisions that we had to make. They were tough and difficult. It was about finding

efficiencies in the approach and the solution that we presented to New Brunswickers. I think that it is unfortunate because people want to see investment, and they also want to see the benefits of paying their taxes, which means investment in education, protection of health care, and economic growth. That is what they were asking us to do. That is exactly what they were asking us to do.

On top of that, when we laid out that plan, the credit rating agencies, which are the ones that decide how much interest we pay on the dollars that were borrowed over the years, gave us a complete pass. They understood that we made decisions to address our fiscal challenges. In the long term, it was going to be resolved. It was unprecedented because when the opposition was in government, the now Leader of the Opposition—at that time, he was Finance Minister—brought in his second budget, and we got a downgrade in the credit rating. We had to pay more interest on the dollars that were borrowed over the years. I think that having the credit rating agency do what it did in a very objective and credible way gave a lot more credibility to the work that was done through the Strategic Program Review and the decisions that were made by our government.

I know that I have 50 seconds left. Since we came into office, we have to think about this: In terms of every financial projection that we made, not only did we meet them, but we exceeded them—exceeded them. The present Minister of Finance is well on track to making sure that we keep respecting our financial goals that were set out and laid out through the Strategic Program Review.

Compare that to the Leader of the Opposition today, who was the Finance Minister then. He was never, ever able to meet those targets. It was like a roller coaster in terms of how he managed the finances of our province. We are being very prudent. We are not only managing the tax dollars of New Brunswickers wisely, but we are also investing in education, protecting health care, and making sure that our economy is growing. Thank you.

Mr. Savoie: I do not know what to say exactly. I listened to the President of the Treasury Board. He talked about the Strategic Program Review and how the opposition members were not there. He has a short memory because there were two meetings in my riding. I was there at both of them, from pillar to post, and I can tell you with certainty that nobody who was there that night said: Spend more money. Tax us more, and we are going to be happy about it. There was not one person who said that.

I am somewhat disappointed in the results or the outcome of the debate on this motion. You have a Minister of Finance who stands up and says: This is my only argument. Here is what you did for four years, and, because of that, I cannot support this motion. The government members have been in government for two years. In that time, it is now at the point where it is raising taxes on ordinary New Brunswickers and on every single thing, to the tune of \$500 million per year.

The purpose of this was to say that there are schools of thought that do not agree with raising taxes in a declining economy or a difficult economy to the point where it becomes unsustainable for the general populous. That is where we are right now. Part of . . .

051

14:55

(Interjections.)

Mr. Savoie: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you could direct the Minister of Finance to please be quiet while I have the floor, I would appreciate it. If we want to have decorum in the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, then let's have decorum in the House. The members opposite had their chance to speak, and, now, I have mine.

When I opened the debate, I tried to talk about things like the tax to GDP ratio. I tried to talk about how different schools of thought feel as though there is a time when you raise taxes and a time when you lower taxes. Instead, we got: Here is what you did, and it was all wrong. Now, we are here to save everybody's life.

I will go back. This is a little bit of revisionist history. For the benefit of some of those on the other side who may not know what happened from 2006 going forward, I am going to remind them a little bit. The Shawn Graham government came into power in 2006. That government had a surplus. It had a surplus that it inherited from the previous Bernard Lord government. What did that government do? It cut taxes. It lowered its own revenues. Now, some people would applaud that. However, when you look at the fact that New Brunswick, due to it being an export-oriented province, was the last one to enter the economic downturn or recession that occurred . . . We were the last in, and, by nature, we were the last out. That government went and lowered taxes, burned through the surplus, and then tried to increase its spending to try to offset that. As a result, the government had lower-than-anticipated revenues. It had a deteriorating economic atmosphere. What did it do? It panicked and tried to sell NB Power.

That government spent two years of its mandate in an economic downturn. The next government, the Alward government, came in and had four years of that economic downturn. All that time was spent trying to create an atmosphere where people had an ability to grow their business and make money in the province to attract investment. Did we raise taxes? Yes, we raised taxes. However, it was done with a balance of trying to reduce government expenditure at the same time. Here, we see the traditional tax-and-spend Liberal approach all over again. There is one taxpayer, and the people only have the capacity to pay so much. That is the point of this motion.

(**Mr. Speaker** resumed the chair.)

Look at what the Alward government had to go through. To see that undone by this government . . . By the way, this government is benefiting from some of the policies and strategies of the former government. Look at the forestry strategy. That is one of the drivers of the economy right now. The government talks about the 1.9% increase in the GDP. It is receiving that because of the work done by the previous government. There are other examples along those same lines that are allowing the province to have some of the success that it is having.

That is the way it goes. Now that the government is in the position to say: You know, we have had meager economic growth, so let's tax people even more. Instead of encouraging people to spend or instead of encouraging people to invest in this province, it is driving that away.

The government says that it is investing in people. I agree with some of that. For some of the people in the province who are really struggling, the government is taking some of those revenues and doing some good work. I have said that I believe in giving credit where credit is due. The government is taking some of that money and putting it into some of the people who really need it. However, the imbalance of what it is doing to the average New Brunswicker who is going to work every day and bringing home less is the issue.

The government's new tour is for forcing the acceptance of a new carbon tax, just as the Strategic Program Review was for forcing the acceptance of the HST increase. The government is going to grow its revenues even more on the backs of New Brunswickers and say: We are still not going to meet our financial targets, so you tell us. Do you want us to meet our financial targets sooner or later?

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15:00

Then, the government members are going to put the blame on the people and say: You know that you chose this. They are raising revenues to the point where they could be paying down our debt, and they are not doing it. The President of the Treasury Board likes to talk about interest rates. Our debt has increased by \$2 billion under their watch. What happens if interest rates go up now? To talk out of both sides of their mouth and say that they are being fiscally prudent and managing the people's purse, while at the same time spending at an unbelievable rate . . . The people of New Brunswick cannot buy it because they cannot afford to buy it. It is fairly simple.

To have a debate—a real debate—on the state of the economy in the province right now and how the people of New Brunswick feel . . . Do they feel that they are financially better off now than they were two years ago? The members opposite talk about consulting people, and they talk about how they are in touch and in tune and how they are getting things done on behalf of the people of New Brunswick. Go ahead and ask the people of New Brunswick: How do you feel about the extra \$500 million in taxes that have been levied upon you? Is it being used properly,

and is it warranted? I can guarantee the members opposite that they will not like the answer that they get.

The challenge here was to try to have the opposition and the government work together to say: Let's put the swords down for a moment. Let's take a look at where the average taxpayers are in the province and how they are feeling right now. The challenge was to say: Can we come to an agreement that the government is not going to tax the people of New Brunswick any further for the next two years? It was to take the approach that we are going to reduce our expenditures rather than trying to grow revenues through reaching into the pockets of the average New Brunswicker. The answer to that is going to be no. The government members are going to defeat this motion because they want to have the ability to bring in the new carbon tax, to tax marijuana, and to bring in all these new revenue streams. They are going to grow their revenues by an astounding amount, yet still tax the people of New Brunswick into oblivion.

We talk about that tax-to-GDP ratio. If your GDP is going up, your tax base and your tax revenue generally go up with it. That is going to happen with this new carbon tax, and it is going to happen with the tax that the government receives on marijuana. What the government could be doing is this: If it is going to bring the GDP up, it could offset that a little bit by being more responsible with the public purse and giving a little bit of relief to the taxpayers of New Brunswick.

The last shot that I have on this is this: The government has taxed people excessively. The people of New Brunswick are at a breaking point. We are asking the government to please reconsider and agree with this motion to not impose any more taxes on the taxpayers of New Brunswick. That is all we ask. Thank you.

Motion 2 Defeated

(**Mr. Speaker** having read the motion, put the question, and Motion 2 was defeated.)

053

15:05

Motion 5

Mr. Urquhart, pursuant to notice of Motion 5, moved, seconded by **Mr. Savoie**, as follows:

WHEREAS 30 percent of New Brunswick's forests are privately owned;

WHEREAS silviculture is a productive means to increase wood fibre while maintaining the same amount of trees;

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WHEREAS many silvicultural practices help combat climate change through carbon sequestration;

WHEREAS the current government has increased revenues with over \$500 million worth of tax increases;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT this Assembly urges the current government to reprioritize its spending and reinvest the dollars cut from the silviculture program back into silviculture;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this Assembly urges the current government to reinstate the budget for private woodlot silviculture activities.

(Mr. Speaker read the motion, and the following debate ensued.)

Debate on Motion

Mr. Urquhart: There is a rather interesting reason that this came up. Earlier in the summer, I started getting e-mails from silviculture people in my riding. As you know, or as a lot of us think of it, silviculture is basically the thinning of trees and so on. I quickly got myself in trouble because I did not understand the whole process and worked backwards.

I was not long meeting with the manager. We have in the House today one Susannah Banks. She is the manager of the New Brunswick Federation of Woodlot Owners. Erica O'Donnell is the general manager of the York-Sunbury-Charlotte Forest Products Marketing Board, and Anne MacKnight is the silviculture manager in the York Sunbury Charlotte Forest Products Marketing Board. Chris Bubar is the director of the York Sunbury Charlotte Forest Products Marketing Board. The York Sunbury Charlotte board is basically my wood marketing board. Our family has only a 100-acre woodlot, but it is a woodlot within the York riding. We actually had silviculture work done on it.

The whole thing boiled down to budgets which are . . . When we did the forestry agreement, if we were going to cut more trees, we were going to put more money back into silviculture and the industry. At that time, the budget was \$5 million, and it was increased to \$6 million by our government to allow the operators to have enough money on a regular basis to do their silviculture management properly.

There are going to be a number of speakers today. We want to go away with two things. We really want to put this on. We want the 90-10 split by government landowners. This means that if the woodlot is going to be thinned, once the application has been made by the marketing board, the government, or whomever, 90% is going to be paid for and 10% is going to come from the

landowner. Also, we want the \$6 million back in and increased from \$5 million. That is what we are hoping to get.

054

15:10

Where does this all come from? There are seven wood marketing boards around the province which look after all the private woodlots in the province. From that, we have a large group of Crown land. The Crown land is owned by the people and leased out to mills such as AV Nackawic, JD Irving, and other places such as that. They have a separate budget. I believe it is around \$19 million that goes into that. One would question why, but that is not what we are here to discuss today. We are here to discuss the cut from \$6 million. It was not a cut. I will give you that. In terms of the \$5-million budget, we increased it to RDC and gave it \$6 million to operate under.

(Mrs. LeBlanc took the chair as Deputy Speaker.)

When the new government came in, it eliminated that \$1 million from RDC, which left it with \$5 million. The problem is that when you are in an industry such as that, to drop it even by \$500 000 for one year does not matter. You have to realize that when these people start their operation, they know where they are going. They have to order the trees. It is like the fish industry. You order small salmon. You order trees. You have to put your order in. The order has to come in. There is money to be spent. You have to say: We are going to buy them. They grow the tree for you. A couple of years later, it is ready.

You get the tree, and you have your budget. You have to plant your tree. Once you have planted the tree, you have your budget. You know basically what you are working with. Then, you have to maintain those trees. Those trees have to be allowed to grow, and there is work that needs to be done to maintain these trees.

I am saying \$6 million. Not only the marketing boards but the people who work in the industry say that that is the bare minimum at which a good silviculture on a private woodlot can operate.

Having said that, whole system has to be looked at to decide how other revenue could come into it. What are the other means of making it work? These people need a basic guarantee of \$6 million to operate. Some of that money will go for thinning. If you have a woodlot and you walk through it, a lot of people walk through it, and they cannot go anywhere. You have thickets. You have a lot of stuff in your woodlot. That is where you call these people in. You are not going to thin a deeryard. You are not going to thin certain parts of it. They look over your lot and say: That area, that thicket, if thinned, will grow quicker and will produce trees quicker. It will help them get ready for what they need to do.

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If I am the woodlot owner, I can go to them. These are my go-to people. I sit down with them and take my PID number, which is my property number. I show them what I have, what I want, and what my request is. Then, they have to try to find funding and operators to come in to do the thinning. They will bring a crew. Maybe you will only need one person, or maybe it needs three people.

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15:15

These men and women will come in and ribbon it off one hectare at a time, and they will thin it out. You will go through and, especially with the hardwood, you will be able to see through it. There might be a clump of birch trees before. They will pick out the healthiest, and they will cut the ones on all sides to allow the sun to come in. It is the same as doing apple trees in the fall. You always make sure that the middle has light. It is the same thing in the woods. You have your light coming in.

If they have thinning, they have to . . . I may be on the list for two or three years. All of a sudden, when I am ready to go and I have the people, the budget is cut. These people turn around and start scrambling. First of all, who gets the short end of it? You have the trees ordered. They have to be bought. You have the planting. You cannot have a bunch of little saplings in your shed all the time. You have to do that part, so you cut on the end of it. It is not only the landowner who loses. It then becomes a problem for the whole environment.

When you work down through, there are the operators. One gentleman in my area, Gary Graham, is into both planting and thinning. If you have 15 thinners . . . I am looking across the way, and I can see two people who may be able to do thinning. Thinning is probably the hardest work that you could possibly do. You have a harness. You have your helmet. You have your thinning saw. Just learning the movement to be a good thinner takes a long time. I do know that they will try to put a new guy or girl with an older man or woman who has been doing it for quite a while. Sometimes, I like to stop to watch because my son was a thinner for quite a few years before he went out West. I like to watch them at a woodlot and watch their minds work as they figure out which one to cut. It takes a lot of work.

It is a seasonal job, first of all. That is the way we have to do it. They are hoping for enough work to get unemployment for the winter. If they do not, they have to go out West or they have to go somewhere else. It is not a job that you want to do every second or third year. In my son's case, for the first two or three weeks he was sore when he got up in the morning. It takes a while to get your body built up. It is like any trade. If you are going to lift or do whatever, you have to build your way up to it.

These are professional people. Some of them have been doing it for years. Some of them are older than I am and are still doing it. However, they have been working for companies that have maintained a system that they could do. By taking that money away, it drops down. Instead of

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having 15, they have 9. It has dropped down. When it is put back up again, everybody starts calling each other. Do you have any thinners? No. Do you have any thinners? No. It is a trade. If we have a constant, maintained budget of a bare minimum, we can have a constant, maintained workforce. Now, I have heard both sides talk about a trained workforce.

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15:20

It is \$1 million over the whole province that you are putting into it. You cannot put that into any other trade and get the return on it that you can in forestry. When I talk to the marketing board people and so on, I tell them that I am very serious about the environment. I am very serious about the woods. I am very serious about the mill. However, the most important person I am worried about is the person in my riding who is working in silviculture. These are the ones who get up in the morning and can sit at their table knowing that they have work and they can move on. That is what we, hopefully, need to maintain.

We are talking environmentally. Everybody talks about the environment now. I see people go by and say: Isn't the old forest beautiful. Yes, it is. It needs to be cut down. It needs to be cut down because once you have mature growth, the oxygen and carbon monoxide going into it is diminished. That is why if you have a young forest or a messy forest, you have a healthy forest. By having a silviculture forest, you have quicker growth. A birch or any tree in a thicket could be—what? The size of a baseball. If you have silviculture, you can go back in a couple of years, and it will have grown three or four times quicker than the other. It makes for healthier trees. From the top down, they are healthy.

Excuse me. I'm afraid it is that time of year when the flu is coming around, and I am starting to get it. A man in top physical shape like me should not be getting it, but I'm afraid I am.

Once we have the trees growing, there is maintenance to them. People say that my marketing boards are a waste of money. To me, they are the only go-to people that the little guy—the woodlot owner—can go to. They are the only ones that organized silviculture people can work through. In their own way, they are a bit of a check and balance on the big guys. They are a lobby group. Some of the money, when you do give them money—\$5 million or \$6 million—does not go back into the wood. You have management, and you have good management. You have management people who study why we do things, where we do them, and how we do them. You have money that goes into education. You go into schools. You go into educational programs. You go into universities. It is there, funneled down through to these people.

What we need with them is a more . . . I get the feeling government feels like these people are a nuisance or a pain because the big guys do not like them. I know the big guys do not like them, and I do not really care. In my riding, I have way more people working in the woods, in the silviculture program, and not in big industry. I talk to the boys up at AV Nackawic. They use

them. They need these contractors, these private people, to go in and thin. Yes, we know that, and there is a lot of crossover. The problem we have with it is that the private woodlot owners in the province need these people so that they themselves can produce wood and put it into a system in which they have a say. They have an avenue so that they can do it.

057

15:25

In any caucus, you have people who are passionate about things. I am passionate about this, but I do not really have the technical knowledge that the next two speakers on our side do. My intention here is not to educate anybody on silviculture in the province. My purpose here today is to bring it up to the point to get people talking about it. The only way that I can make change, hold any change, influence government, or influence the public, who will then influence the government, is by talking about it and explaining to the government that the people out in rural New Brunswick have been kicked about as hard as they can. Our schools have shut down. Our gas stations have shut down. Everything has shut down.

The part that the people do not understand in the city is that rural New Brunswick does not want you out there anyway. Leave us alone. We want the garbage picked up. We want the ambulance to show up, and we want to be able to get up in the morning, have breakfast with our spouses, and go to work. That is the only thing we want. We do not want any big fancy Walmart. We do not need any of that. What this does is that it allows people in rural New Brunswick to get up in the morning and work. That is the only thing that we want to do.

Again, I will have a chance at the end. There are two things that I want to leave with you. I want government to look at the 90-10 to maintain it. The previous minister looked it over. He realized that it was important. He left it there. I am hoping that this one will too. Also, there are budgets, and there is carbon tax. There is every tax you want coming in right now. Increase it to \$6 million. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Doucet: It is certainly a pleasure to stand in the House today to talk on this important issue. It is good to hear the member. He is so very passionate about this industry. Especially coming from a rural area, we all understand that. We all get that. Basically, we are listening on this side of the House to the points that he has brought forward. That is what debate is, and that is what bringing these motions forward is all about—to talk about these things.

I would also like to welcome the woodlot owners in the House today. It is certainly a pleasure to have you onboard. I had the opportunity to meet with the woodlot owners, the group, and the association a short time ago. There is mutual respect because we understand that there are challenges, but with the challenges, there are some tremendous opportunities that we have in our woodland and in our forestry sector. What I can tell you is that I have been involved in the forestry sector a short time. I have been working with the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries for many years. I can tell you one thing: Forestry is a lot like

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agriculture. The fact of the matter is that it takes 35 years to 50 years before you can harvest in the forestry sector.

It is the same thing in the agriculture sector. You are planting plants, trees, or you are planting vegetables. You are getting your investment back in a year. It could be a two-time cycle. It is not a case of getting your instant value back right away. You have to have a vision. You have to have a long-term vision for the future and have an understanding of it. At the same time, with the private woodlots, it is not only the vision, but it is that sustainability plan and the succession plan that they have for their families to continue the growth of it.

I have to tell you that I am constantly amazed and inspired by the tremendous value of the trees and woods in our province. Trees have always been an important part of New Brunswick's heritage and a pillar of our identity. In no way, shape, or form . . . I have heard so many times that the sky is falling in the forestry sector. It has to be one of the most vibrant and biggest opportunities that we have in this province. There are endless amounts of wood. Our forestry sector is extremely healthy. It is diversified.

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15:30

We have tremendous operations from a harvest perspective, right through the process. On the process side, it is not only pulp and paper. It is not only the sticks of wood for two-by-fours, plywood, or waferboard. It is also things like tissue.

We are competing on a world stage, and when I say "competing", it is very strong, tough competition out there. I was talking to a group just a short time ago. If I recall, a two-by-four in Jacksonville, Florida, is selling for \$2.61, which is probably the same price it was 10 years ago. Things have certainly changed. Our costs have gone up, but our retail prices, in a lot of cases, have stayed the same. Pulp and paper has stayed the same. We are seeing kraft paper and a lot of things.

At the same time, there are many challenges that we are seeing at the forefront with some of the cases, whether it is the SLA, supercalendered paper, or the situation of having a new administration in the States. How will that administration take to imports from New Brunswick? We are export-driven. Our province is export-driven, and it is so important that we maintain those ties with the U.S.

As I said, the vision of the forestry sector is absolutely tremendous, right from the start to the finish, right from the harvesting and the loading of the trucks to the mills—the pulp and paper mills and the sawmills and that type of work that goes on. It is really an interesting sector.

Long before the European settlers arrived here, indigenous peoples depended on forests for wood, water, and shelter. When the Loyalists first arrived here, they stood in awe amid tall

stands of softwood and hardwood trees. By the early 19th century, a thriving lumber industry had been established, and it has been an economic mainstay since the early 1800s. It is part of our tapestry here, part of our fundamental beginnings. Forestry, agriculture, and fisheries are the founding roots of why we are here in New Brunswick.

The fact of the matter is that we have 22 000 people working in the industry today. That is absolutely amazing. These are New Brunswickers who are employed from the harvesting right through the processing sector and the marketing. You name it. It is right there. They are employed either directly or indirectly, by this sector. It is by far one of the largest industrial sectors. Its importance to the provincial economy is very strong, particularly in rural areas, because that is where a lot of our forestry sector is.

It cannot be overstated. Our forests are vital to not just our economy but our social fabric. They are part of who we are and why we are in New Brunswick. From industry to conservation, from recreational pursuits to tourism opportunities, our forests present endless opportunities for all New Brunswickers. The beauty is that all New Brunswickers are taking advantage of our forestry sector, and that is good to see. Whether it is hunting, fishing, or touring—there is great ecotourism—that is part of our forestry sector.

The Department of Energy and Resource Development takes very seriously its mission to manage the sustainability of the forest and of the future timber supply—a supply that depends on the successful regeneration of the forest. A successful silviculture program allows us to manage the composition, growth, and quality of the forest, including conservation, regeneration, reforestation, and cutting. Silviculture practices will not only lead to a more productive forest but will also help to combat climate change through carbon sequestration.

Some 30% of New Brunswick forest land is privately owned. Not a lot of people realize that. If you take the footprint of New Brunswick, it is fairly large, but can you imagine that 30% of provincial forest land is privately owned? Private woodlot owners are split into seven regional marketing boards which process wood sale transactions and deliver the Department of Energy and Resource Development's Private Woodlot Silviculture Program. I can assure you that private woodlots are vital to our province's economic development. The rebound of the forestry sector in recent years has been helped greatly by increased production from private woodlots.

Our government funds the Private Woodlot Silviculture Program, which consists of site preparation, planning, herbicide application, plantation, cleaning, and precommercial thinning, at a cost-share ratio of 90-10 with the landowners. Other jurisdictions are funded at 80-20.

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The silviculture program budget is divided proportionately among the seven forest products marketing boards that were established by the *Natural Products Act*. Of those funds, 20% goes

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directly to labour as most of the silviculture treatments are done by hand. Approximately 200 New Brunswickers work in the private woodlot silviculture program. That is 200 New Brunswickers who are working this program.

In 2015-16 the private woodlot silviculture program resulted in the planting of 3 847 620 trees on 6 950 ha of private land. That is almost 158 000 more trees than in 2014-15, and it is 1 221 474 more trees than in 2013-14, when the member who brought forward this motion was in government. This is good to see. It is good to see how the silviculture program is working.

I have to say to the member opposite—and I appreciate him bringing this forward—that the intent behind the motion is commendable. We all want to do whatever we can to ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of the forestry sector. Our department continues to look for new ways to improve the private silviculture program. We have been challenging the silviculturists, asking: How can you do things differently? How can we work together do things differently?

We are looking at things such as multiyear budgeting. How do we work together on the budgeting for multiyear cycles? How do we work on cost sharing? How do we work on industry partnerships and administrative efficiencies to make sure that the budget goes as far as possible to get the most benefit out of our program? The member opposite mentioned a portion of that budget going to the administrative costs. Is there something that we can do to work together to make sure that as much of that funding goes directly to boots on the ground in the forestry sector? I think that is a keen interest of us all. We are quite keen on that.

This week, I heard the Leader of the Opposition say that throwing money at something is not the solution. If we can find ways to do more without spending more, is that not the direction that we should be taking? I take what the Leader of the Opposition is saying and say: Do we throw more money at it, or do we find the root and work together on it?

Quite frankly, I know that the member opposite was pointing out that the funding program was \$6 million and is down to \$5 million. I look at this sector the same way that I look at the agriculture sector. I am not saying that we are making any changes to it. However, that is the challenging part that I have when I am working with multiple departments. I am also working with the agriculture sector.

As I said to the forestry marketing group when we were talking a short time ago, I look at this through different eyes. With the agricultural sector, if I were to give the farmers \$5 million to trim and prune their land on an annual basis, what would they think? Let's think about this and how we are doing it. How are we funding this? We do not fund the farmers for pruning or trimming their land. It would be nice if we had all kinds of money to do it. I am not saying, in any way, shape, or form, that we are changing that model. However, if we can work together, let's find a sustainable approach for how to do it.

I am definitely going to give the members opposite the benefit of the doubt and suggest that the intent of this motion is genuine. I feel that the member opposite is very genuine when he talks in the House. There is a genuine desire to see more trees planted in the province rather than petty politics. I do not sense the petty politics from him as I do from others. I think that others may have a little bit of a petty politics side to them, just appeasing the situation and trying to tell people what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. If that is the case, I agree with the sentiment from the member opposite.

I and my colleagues on this side of the House believe that we can achieve our silviculture goals without spending more money. We do not have to put more money toward those goals. How do we take that envelope of money, deal with it very effectively and efficiently, and find some ways to take the costs out so that we are putting that full amount of money into the wood? I think that is the important part. It is for that reason that this government will not support Motion 5.

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15:40

Mr. K. MacDonald: On a point of order, are the apple producers of the province not provided with funding to assist with the planting of apple trees?

Madam Deputy Speaker: To my knowledge, that does not seem to be a point of order.

Mr. Savoie: It is a pleasure to get up today to support this motion of my colleague from Carleton-York, who spoke so very well and obviously from a position of deep knowledge on the subject. I want to take a second to recognize what the member said about how difficult a job silviculture actually is. I have 28 acres of land myself, and I bought a thinning saw. These things are a fairly large piece of equipment. They do require a harness, hard hat, and earmuffs which are sound deadeners. It is the whole bit, including the screens, the footwear, the greaves, everything. It is difficult. You are walking over uneven terrain, fallen trees, rocks, critters, all kinds of stuff in the woods. It is not an easy job. I really would commend the people who do this type of work and recognize that it is very difficult to do.

I listened to the minister's comments. He has been a minister for a long time. It is obvious that he was talking quite a bit from an area of knowledge of the file. When I look at what he actually said, with all due respect, he kind of nibbled around the edges on a lot of things. He did not give a whole lot of depth to what we are actually debating here. At the very end, he said that he did not support it. The minister is correct. This sector does provide 22 000 direct and indirect jobs. These are all New Brunswickers who pay taxes. They live, work, and raise their families, which is one of the goals of government in the province. It is a sector where it is very difficult to maintain numbers because of its seasonal nature.

Because of the decisions of government in cutting back on the silviculture funding, it makes it more difficult to be able to retain people. As the member for Carleton-York said, it makes it

more difficult to maintain skilled people who are going to be able to work efficiently and safely in the woods.

One of the other things that have become apparent to me throughout my learning for this motion is that there are 42 000 woodlot owners in New Brunswick. As has been said, 30% of New Brunswick's forests are privately owned. This is a very important segment of the market. New Brunswick's fibre, from what I am told and understand, is among the best in the world. That gives us a competitive advantage. As the minister said, it is a global market. It is a very competitive market. In order for our people to enjoy that small market advantage that they would get from having good fibre, they have to be able to produce it. Silviculture is one of the ways that we do that.

In meetings with folks from the woodlots, I have been made to understand quite a few things that I did not know about silviculture. Like the member for Carleton-York, I thought that you could just go in the woods with a thinning saw and away you go. When I look at a list that was provided to me, there are 36 different treatment options, all with different rates per hectare that you have to apply for. I am not even sure that I fully understand what it is that has to be done to treat that patch of ground or that patch of forest. It is all very specific, and it is all very scientific. It is quite in-depth.

What we are debating here is the reduction in funding from \$6 million to \$5 million in the silviculture budget. Two things that were specifically asked for were that the 90-10 split be restored and that the \$6-million budget be restored. Obviously, when we were in government, we put the forestry strategy in place. Part of the thought process behind that was knowing how important forestry is to our GDP and that it does employ, directly and indirectly, 22 000 New Brunswickers who pay taxes and live in the province. From stakeholders and the Department of Natural Resources, we know that there was a large and viable amount of wood fibre that was coming online and was going to be available in large part due to previous silviculture that had been done.

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15:45

We were positioned, as a province, to take advantage of that, to help that market, and, obviously, to help the GDP of the province. As I mentioned in an earlier speech, that is what we are enjoying now. We are seeing a bump in the GDP, and that is partly because of the investments due to the forestry strategy that we put in place.

How does this affect the private woodlot owners and silviculture? The forestry strategy was put in place to give the industry an incentive to put more investments into its mills and so on so that they could produce more fibre. By extension, the private woodlot owners would get to sell more wood because more wood was needed, and the private woodlot owners would benefit in that regard. Sure enough, that is what we see happening.

Structurally—and this is central to my argument here—if you are cutting more trees and cutting or reducing the funding in the silviculture budget, you are going to have a fibre shortfall in the future. As the minister correctly said, it takes 35 to 50 years for a cycle, but without having the investment now, we are going to come up against a fibre shortfall in the future. In such a competitive global market, I do not think that that is a risk that we can take for the sake of changing a budget line item from \$5 million to \$6 million.

I do not think it is unfair or unreasonable for the people who work in this sector, who are trying to survive in this sector, to say: We are the people who do this work every day. We know what it costs. We know what it takes in order for us to survive in this market, and \$5 million is not enough. We need \$6 million. When we look at what the government does in so many other sectors, I do not think that restoring that \$1 million is too much to ask.

Just looking at some of the points that I have been given from the folks in the private woodlots, returns on investments in silviculture are only realized 35 to 50 years after the investment. In some cases, that is after the death of the person who made the investment, so that person does not see any return. That is really quite something when you think about it. Here is somebody who is investing in a business, investing in a private woodlot, and he or she may not live long enough to see a return on that investment. I would say that that is pretty much an all-in type of investment.

Industry benefits from the increased wood supply. Society benefits from the contribution that silviculture funding adds to the economy in the form of jobs and contributions to GDP. With the funding reinstated, these people will have the capacity to do more and to put more people back to work, which is entirely the point. Government says that jobs are a priority for it. If jobs are a priority, this is a small investment. When we think of an \$8-billion or \$9-million budget that the province has every year, \$1 million restored to this is very little in the big picture, but it makes a big difference for the people who are involved in this industry.

They lose workers permanently with cuts in funding. Again, in my original view of this, you would take a thinning saw and go out. I have done it. It is not easy work. I can see where it takes a long time to train somebody not only to be able to do the job with the efficiency that is required, but to do it safely so that you, as a landowner, know that you can count on that person to do the right job, a professional job, each and every time. Your investment, 50 years down the road, will depend on it. This is not a job that just anybody can pick up a saw and do. It does require a lot of work.

Silviculture also combats climate change. Trees that are growing faster, trees that are growing more robustly, are taking more carbon and releasing more clean, filtered air. That is something that is vital to us going forward, as the government knows. It is thinking of bringing in a carbon tax.

I want to share with the House the 2016 private silviculture rate sheet. There is a private forest task force report from 2012 that states that each additional cubic metre of harvested and processed wood adds approximately \$220 to provincial GDP, and that each 10 000 m³ processed provides an additional 13 direct and 12 indirect jobs. That is 25 total jobs. That small investment today, that increase of \$1 million in funding, means that, in the future, we have 25 people working as a result of that investment. However, if we do not continue to invest, those jobs will never materialize in the future.

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15:50

The minister talked about vision in the forestry sector, his understanding of the forestry sector, and the sustainability of the forestry sector. This speaks directly to that. Investing that extra \$1 million for these folks, the private woodlot owners today, means that they will be able to hire and employ people in the future. This goes directly to what the minister said—vision, understanding, and sustainability. I do not understand why the minister said at the end that the government does not support the motion. The government is saying that there are new ways to improve—looking at multiyear budgeting, finding efficiencies, cost sharing. That sounds like a downloading onto the sector. That sounds like the government is not really looking to prioritize silviculture in this province.

The government makes the argument all the time that it is investing in people. The argument that I am making today is that investing in silviculture is investing in people. You are investing in future earnings winners in New Brunswick who are going to pay taxes. They will continue to raise their families here, and those families are then going to continue to raise their own families here. However, if we continue down this road where the private woodlot owners are constantly being left in a position where they cannot hire people or cannot manage the forest stand, they are not going to have that opportunity. We are leading this particular sector down an inevitable path to failure in an already competitive global market which the minister himself alluded to. That is why this makes no sense to me at all.

When you look at the Auditor General's 2015 report, Volume II, it says:

The sustainability of future timber supply depends on its successful regeneration. Silviculture is the aspect of forest management that focuses on achieving the continued regeneration of a high quality timber supply. This leads to a more productive working forest which in turn can provide more forest area to satisfy non-timber objectives, such as habitat preservation, biodiversity, and alternative forest uses like maple sugar production.

Again, this all speaks to some of the things that the minister mentioned in some of his points. This dovetails perfectly with what he said in the time that he was on his feet. To say that the government is not supporting it . . . I guess it is not prioritizing jobs. I guess that it is not

prioritizing the collection of taxes, which is something that the government has shown a very quick willingness to do. I just do not understand it.

I have gotten some comments from people who actually work in the industry. These are people who are being affected. I heard the government members say, through the throne speech debate: We are listening to constituents. We are talking to people. Talk to these people. Have the minister go out. Have the members on the government side go out and talk to these people and listen to them. I guarantee that they will get a completely different story from what they are hearing right now. Here is one comment.

This has affected my company drastically I had to travel to cambellton to get enough weeks for my thinners. By this reduction areas of landowners thinning ground will get away and not meet government requirements for silviculture treatments.

There is another aspect. Landowners are required to reach a certain standard, and they cannot do it.

It is of little use trying to train new people to give them an opportunity in this field when our government of the day cuts back funding . . . I always thought forestry was new brunswicks highlight but not so now. After 25 years in silviculture I am ready to quit and let your government find jobs for these men.

Here is another one. This particular company

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15:55

Silvi Care Forestry Inc has been offering woodlot management services to central NB woodlot owners for over 20 years, During those years pre-commercial thinning made up the bulk of my income. At times I have had over 20 employees doing this seasonal work. Over the past couple of years I have had to discontinue that aspect of my business for a number of reasons. The primary reason was due to the fact that silviculture funding has been reduced to a point where it made each season unreliable with respect to knowing whether or not there would be enough funding to ensure the employees got enough weeks to claim their federal EI benefits during the off season.

It is very clear that this drastically affects this sector. We are asking the government to reconsider and to support this motion.

Mr. Coon: I do not know what it is exactly about why governments since Frank McKenna's have not used woodlot owners well. Woodlot owners have faced incredible adversity since Frank McKenna first ended woodlots as the primary source of supply in 1990, as part of what was called the pulp and paper rescue package at the time. They never really recovered from that. Every step along the way, woodlot owners, as primary producers just like farmers and fishermen,

tend to hire locally and buy locally. They are small businesspeople who are integral to the health of their local economies as a result, yet they are treated so poorly. If farmers were treated this way, or if fishermen were treated this way, it would be unbelievable, but somehow, government after government has gotten away with treating woodlot owners this way. When the mills in the north left New Brunswick, those companies left New Brunswick, and that wood was entirely reallocated to industrial users from Crown land, which made it, again, more difficult for woodlot owners to sell their wood. Their position as a primary source of supply was gone.

Many woodlot owners incorporate silviculture goals into their harvesting. I have to acknowledge that I am a woodlot owner. I have benefited in the past from silviculture funds to help me put together my forest management plan. I have sold wood, and I have been doing improvement cuts on my woodlot. I guess that puts me, in some sense, in a conflict of interest in speaking to the details of this motion.

New Brunswickers do not have to go very far to trip over someone who owns a woodlot somewhere, including some in this Legislature. Mine is in Charlotte County, and the YSC Forest Products Marketing Board has been an incredible help to me over the years. It is a great organization.

I received this letter from the President of the New Brunswick Federation of Woodlot Owners. He points out:

The Crown Land & Forest Act . . . clearly states that the Minister, during the process of approving an operating plan under subsection (7), shall ensure that private woodlots are a source of wood supply consistent with the principles of proportional supply and if at the end of every year the wood processing facility fails to use 98 per cent of the identified proportional supply from private land then in the subsequent year the volume of crown timber that may be taken by the licensee, or sub-licensee, or both, shall be reduced by a volume equal to the shortfall in volume of wood that should have been purchased from private woodlots in the previous year.

This is a way to ensure that woodlots have a decent market so that they can afford to do the work that they need to do—so that they can afford to harvest. As I said, many woodlot owners incorporate silviculture into their harvesting techniques through improvement cuts and then, later, with thinning. If you cannot afford to cut, you cannot afford the silviculture that would result from those activities.

The Auditor General, in her 2015 report, identified that “The Department

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has failed to ensure private wood supplied to mills is proportionate. They have not planned for, monitored, or reported on proportional supply since at least 2002.”

The law has not changed. The law is the same.

This lack of respect for the private woodlot sector and the contribution it makes to the NB economy is unacceptable.

I wholeheartedly concur.

The Federation of Woodlot Owners and the seven associated marketing boards have asked for the support of this Legislative Assembly.

The Federation of Woodlot Owners and the seven associated marketing boards would like your support for our efforts to get the provincial government to accept their responsibility and enforce the Act, through the Minister, and ensure that private woodlot owners have the assurance of proportional supply and a fair and orderly market for their products.

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16:00

In the end, it does come down to market. The better your market is, the better your prices are and the more you are able to do silviculture and to integrate silviculture work into your harvesting plans.

Assurance of market access is the only way that the private woodlot sector can grow and thrive. If industry treats the private wood supply as a last resort to fill in gaps in the crown harvest rather than as the primary or proportional supply, the private woodlot sector will shrivel and die. Woodlot owners cannot make substantial capital investments in machinery and workers if there is not a fair and orderly market. If industry is allowed to break contracts, shut off mill access at a moment's notice, alter the measurement of the input so that they unfairly benefit and circumvent the marketing board system without consequence,

—all of which has been happening—

the substantial jobs and economic benefit that is created by the private woodlot sector will cease to exist and rural NB will suffer.

The idea around this is to have government accept its responsibility and enforce the Act to protect the rights of the small producer and to ensure that large corporate entities do not manipulate the market to their own advantage and the detriment of the individual producer.

Now, as I said, I am not sure why governments over the years have used woodlot owners so poorly. I will say that, when the member for Sussex-Fundy-St. Martins was Minister of Natural Resources, he made a good effort to try to do things differently. In the end, we know what happened. He had bus marks on the back of his suit jacket, and we got what we got after that. However, he did his best. It seems as though, with one call from J.D. Irving, the best-laid plans go to pieces even when they are in the best interest of rural New Brunswick.

The *Crown Lands and Forests Act* provides the mandate for the Department of Natural Resources regarding private wood supply. It states:

3(2) The Minister shall encourage the management of private forest lands as the primary source of timber for wood processing facilities in the Province consistent with subsection 29(7.1)

It goes on to say that the department has two responsibilities with respect to private woodlots.

29(7.1) The Minister . . . shall ensure that private woodlots are a source of wood supply consistent with the principles of

(a) proportional supply, and

(b) sustained yield.

If the minister has the responsibility to ensure that woodlots remain a source of supply consistent with sustained yield, then investments have to be made in silviculture. The Act defines “proportional supply” as:

“proportional supply” means equitable sharing among the sources of wood supply identified . . . based on historic market share of supply to a wood processing facility;

That is remarkable.

In her work, the Auditor General found, in a letter dated July 26, 2002, that markets for all timber products increased through the mid-nineties and most mills at that time were purchasing much private land wood. After that period, that fell apart. Of course, the downturn in markets significantly affected sales for the private woodlots in that period of time, but it was not just the downturn in markets. If you look at what happened over a longer period of time, between 2004 and 2013, the consumption by the mills of wood off private woodlots decreased from 23% in 2004 to 12% in 2013—a decline from 23% to 12%—while Crown timber consumption by the mills increased from 41% to 51%. That was before the agreement was signed to increase the allowable cut off Crown lands. I shudder to think what that looks like today.

The Auditor General obtained a document from 2007 from the Department of Natural Resources that said:

the Department “contributed to the divergence between woodlot sales and Crown harvest” and that “Neither of the provisions of “Primary supply” or “proportional supply” has been maintained since 2005 for NB woodlot owners. Woodlot owners have clearly lost market share while the Crown share has increased.”

That is from a document from DNR, acknowledging what I have been saying here about the role the department has played in working against our private woodlot owners, who are our primary producers in the forestry sector.

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16:05

There was a bit of bright light in 2012, when the Minister of Natural Resources wrote to all marketing boards, licensees, and sublicensees and said that the department was going to be reinitiating a process to develop proportional supply targets for mills in the province based on the Legislature requirements under the appropriate section of the *Crown Lands and Forests Act*. In the end, that was unable to happen. As we know, it did not happen.

That is why the Auditor General made some important recommendations in her recent report looking at private wood supply. She pointed out:

4.95 We believe the Department has a mandated responsibility to influence the wood supply from private woodlots consistent with its Act and regulations. If the tools established through legislation do not work, we believe it is the Department’s responsibility to pursue changes to legislation allowing them to fulfill their responsibility.

4.96 We recommend the Department comply with the Crown Lands and Forests Act and regulations in meeting their responsibilities related to proportional supply and sustained yield.

That suggests a number of things with respect to how the market should function and what kind of investment should be made on the silvicultural side.

If current principles of proportional supply and sustained yield required under the Act are no longer relevant or applicable, the Department should pursue changes to the Act and regulations in order to facilitate accomplishment of its mandate.

It has not done that. Woodlot owners continue to be used poorly. Now, we have seen this reduction in silvicultural funding as well

Over the sweep of history since 1990, time and time again, with at least one exception that I mentioned earlier, the stakes have been stacked against private woodlot owners to their detriment. People have gotten out of the business, and people have had to go out West. They had a perfectly good business working on woodlots. They were forced to leave when we were talking about trying to attract people back to New Brunswick. They were forced to leave because they could not function given the lack of enforcement of the legislation that was designed to protect their sector, their livelihood, and their businesses. I do not understand why we do not regard private woodlot owners in this province as the small businesspeople that they clearly are.

When small businesspeople spend their money, they buy most of what they use locally and hire people to work with their businesses or on their woodlots locally. We have this new hit on woodlot owners, in terms of them seeing their silvicultural funding reduced. Why on earth it would even have been contemplated is beyond me.

The department has demonstrated clearly that the private woodlots have a tremendous amount of wood supply available. In fact, they could have supplied the additional wood supply that the mills were looking for, instead of the government increasing the annual allowable cut on Crown lands, which is what happened as a result of the forest management agreement a couple of years ago now. They have wood to sell. Every dollar that they earn makes a big difference in their local communities, and it makes a big difference for the health of our local rural economies. We have ignored this reality. We talk about the need to create work, jobs, employment, and business opportunities in those parts of New Brunswick that are in hard shape, which is largely rural New Brunswick, compared to the cities such as Fredericton, Moncton, Dieppe, and Riverview. There is a stark contrast between the level of employment in those cities and the health of the economy in those cities and, on the other hand, small-town and rural New Brunswick.

Here we have part of the backbone of our rural economy that we have been using so poorly for years. It is time to turn the page on that. It requires courage. It requires backbone. It should include a return to the funding level for silviculture that was there. I support, in that sense, the motion that we are debating before the House today. I trust that members on all sides of the House will give it serious consideration and, for once, stand side by side with the woodlot owners of our province. Thank you.

066

16:10

Mr. Harvey: I want to start by thanking the members opposite for the motion. I know that they are sincere in what they are saying, the members for Carleton-York and from Saint John. I am not going to play politics with this, as I know they are sincere in what they say. However, I want to recognize a few facts, and we will get some facts on the table today. I want to recognize the member for Fredericton South. I tend to agree with a lot of what he says, and I want to recognize him for his passion for this industry.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Harvey: There is some chirping over there.

I want to rise in the House today to take part in the debate on Motion 5 and share a few thoughts with my colleagues from my riding of Carleton-Victoria and for the province. As we know, the forestry is the largest industry in New Brunswick today. It will continue to be, but we need to look at forestry differently than we have in the past. In my riding of Carleton-Victoria, we have six processing facilities. You noticed that I said “processing facilities” and not “sawmills”. We need to be thinking about all the uses of wood fibre rather than just putting it through and running out two-by-fours. We have a long history in Carleton County from Juniper all the way out to Centreville, to Perth-Andover, to Aroostook, to Plaster Rock, and all the way to Nictau. There is a long history of forestry in my riding—a very successful history.

I want to talk about forestry just for a minute, and then I want to talk about private woodlot owners and where we need to be in my opinion. As I mentioned, the sustainability of future timber supplies depends on how we treat our forests today. We must manage for composition of the forest, growth of the forest, and the quality of the forest, including conservation, regeneration, reforestation, and harvesting methods. That is why we on this side of the House are dedicated to work toward a more productive force, one that will provide for multiple uses and multiple values from our forestry, from our land.

I am thinking about food products. I am looking at the member for Restigouche West with maple syrup and the members from Madawaska, from Carleton, from Victoria, and from all parts of New Brunswick. There is tremendous economic value from food in our forests. Sometimes, we are not thinking about that. I think that we are starting to think more about that as a society, not only as other sources of income but also as other sources of economic activity. I think of other food products such as fiddleheads and a whole range of things—mushrooms. Lots of people in New Brunswick are doing this type of work, very important work, that adds a lot to our province economically and socially in rural areas. It is not only in rural areas, but it is predominantly in rural areas.

We are managing our forests for habitat preservation, for energy sources, for biodiversity, and for renewables. At this time of year, we are getting close to Christmas, and I think of the Christmas wreath production in my family’s small family business. So many across New Brunswick are doing that type of work, and it adds a lot of money to our province. It is estimated that the Christmas wreath and Christmas tree businesses are upwards of \$20 million in exports. That is a big industry for New Brunswick, and it is something that we should be promoting as part of our forest strategy, as are other things such as recreation and ecotourism, as some of the other members mentioned.

We need to start thinking of our forestry with a broader vision. On this side of the House, we have that vision, and I want to talk about some of it today. Today, in New Brunswick, there are 22 000 New Brunswickers—and we always use that number—employed directly or indirectly in the forest industry. I think that number is a little low. When taking into account some of these other new industries, I think that number is probably even higher, but that is the number that has always been quoted in the last few years. These jobs are essential to the economy, obviously, particularly in rural areas such as my riding of Carleton-Victoria. All New Brunswickers benefit from this activity spurred by our provincial forest and its land.

067

16:15

Private woodlots account for 30% of New Brunswick's forests, or 1.9 million ha, and are an integral component of the provincial wood supply. There is no question of that. To grow a sustainable supply of quality forest products, which would be used in processing facilities, the provincial government partners with private woodlot owners and the forest product marketing boards to fund silviculture treatments. These investments result in more valuable wood products available for harvest earlier than without such treatment.

Energy and Resource Development funds the private woodlot silviculture program on a 90-10 cost-sharing ratio with the landowners. It is important to note that in many other jurisdictions, this ratio is 80-20. The silviculture program budget is divided proportionately among the seven marketing boards around New Brunswick for qualifying treatments such as planting, precommercial thinning, harvest-based treatments, and forest management plans. Through this program, over 3.8 million trees were planted on private woodlots in 2015-16. The total land area for private woodlots in 2015-16 was close to 7 000 ha. If you work that out, it is roughly \$800 per hectare in investment by the provincial government. Some 709 ha of that is site preparation, 1 706 ha is for planting, 1 154 ha is for herbicide applications, 660 ha is for plantation cleaning, and 2 721 ha is for precommercial thinning.

Our position is very clear. We are committed to maintaining a competitive and sustainable forest industry in New Brunswick. That includes standing alongside our private woodlot owners. We are dedicated to helping them increase their productivity and the quality of their woodlands so that they can continue to improve their businesses and operate their woodlots. Our Department of Energy and Resource Development is constantly looking at ways to stretch its budgets further with multiyear budgeting, cost-sharing programs, industry partnerships, and administrative efficiencies.

Much more than just money is at stake. It is what you do with the money. It is about getting results and how you get the results from the money that you spend and invest. I know that people on the other side are always talking about measuring results. The Leader of the Opposition is talking about this and that. He has an expertise in that, which apparently no other New Brunswicker has. However, we can measure results here. We need to measure the results of our

investment to the private woodlot owners. We need accountability, as with any other organization. The private woodlot owners are doing great work around New Brunswick.

I look at the other side, and it is pretty rich for the other side to come in with this motion. The problem is that the private woodlot owners were not consulted, were not engaged, and were not considered when the members opposite came up with the forest strategy. Those people were just put off to the side. The previous government said: Here is a bunch more Crown wood. It signed 25-year agreements that locked in future governments. It said: Here is another 600 000 m³ of wood, and, by the way private woodlot owners, you are on your own. It is rich for the members of the opposition to come in and make the statement that they are all of a sudden standing up for private woodlot owners. I just do not understand how they can make that statement.

Again and again, within the two years that I have been here, we have just been cleaning up messes. We have been cleaning up the messes from the four years that the members opposite were in government. It is one thing after another. I would like to see the member for Southwest Miramichi-Bay du Vin stand up and the member for Fredericton-York stand up and talk about the forestry strategy now. The members opposite brought it in two years ago. They signed it really quickly before the election, and they brought it all in really quickly. They did not consult with the private woodlot owners. Now, we are stuck with it. We are trying to clean up a mess that the previous government brought in. I know one thing. I consult with my private woodlot owners. We have a good relationship, and we are trying to find solutions, which I am sure every other member is doing across the province.

I just find it unfortunate that . . . I appreciate the motion, but the members opposite were the ones who threw the private woodlot owners under the bus. They threw us under the bus. They signed a forestry agreement weeks or months before the provincial election, thinking that it was going to save them. It did not save them. Now, we have to clean up their mess. Anyway, we will work it out.

068

16:20

The member for Fredericton South had a good point. The reason the private woodlot owners do not want to put in a lot of money—they are putting in 10%, but they will put in more—is a lack of confidence in the market. In the forestry strategy from the other side, the woodlot owners were put aside. There was no confidence in the markets. They need fair and equitable access to markets. The member for Fredericton South was correct in that sense, in everything he said about primary supply and proportional supply.

The previous government just threw woodlot owners under the bus. It said: Here, you are on your own. We will give all this extra Crown wood to industry. You are on your own, private woodlot owners. That was what the previous government did, and that is what the people of New Brunswick know.

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(Interjections.)

Mr. Harvey: We hear it every day—the Alward forest strategy. What did it get them? A seat in the opposition is what it got them.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Harvey: We are cleaning up your mess.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, please.

Mr. Harvey: When I read this motion, I am puzzled, to say the least. When we want to invest, the opposition members say we should rationalize. When we rationalize, they say we should invest. They are sitting on the fence, and New Brunswick's Conservative opposition members do not seem to want to do either. They do not want to invest. They had a chance to invest in the hospital in Perth-Andover for three years after the flood, and they did not want to invest then. We had to clean up that mess today, so we finally invested in that.

They do not want to invest in anything, and they do not want to rationalize. They are sitting on the fence. I can only recommend that they find a comfortable sitting position. Thank you.

Mr. K. MacDonald: The member opposite made some very interesting comments, and he certainly knows a lot about forestry. So does his family. It is a wonder, given some of the forestry practices, that they did not wind up in another big house in New Brunswick.

I want to talk about a comment that was made by Sir Winston Churchill. He said that there can be no greater investment . . .

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order in the House, on both sides.

Mr. K. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Sir Winston Churchill said that there can be no greater investment than the putting of milk into babies. I agree with him, and I would suggest that the second-greatest investment is the silviculture program. I think that it has far-reaching applications for the province.

I hear the member opposite talking negatively about the members on this side of the House. I would remind him that it was \$6 million in funding under us, and it is \$5 million under him. He can twist the words any way he wants, but the facts are the facts.

I want to take this opportunity, much as my other colleagues did, to talk about the gist of what we want to accomplish with this motion. It is to see a restoration of funds from \$5 million to \$6

million, preferably more, and to have that wrapped into a long-term commitment to the silviculture industry here in the province. Also, we would like to maintain the 90-10 split that has been talked about by other members in the House, and to have that maintained as part of a long-term funding agreement for the silviculture sector. That way, people would have the money they need to be able to go out and do long-term planning. That is why we bring in the capital budget in the Christmas season. It is so that the contractors know what is coming down the pike for the next year. They can go out and start making long-term plans that they need to make to ensure that they have the people that they need to go forward.

069

16:25

I just want to touch on a few things. We have a number of members on this side of the House who want to speak, so I am going to try to curtail my comments. I presume that there may be a few on the other side who would like to speak as well.

Where could the additional funding come from? Where could that incremental \$1 million come from? It came from RDC in the past. It could come from RDC again. There is also a \$20-million fund over four years for the Miramichi and an \$80-million fund over four years for northern New Brunswick. This would be a good investment, a way of putting people to work in the rural communities that make up our province.

When we traveled around the province for the Select Committee on Wood Supply . . . I think there is only one other member still in the House who did that, the member from the Bathurst-Nepisiguit area. In fairness, I know that the member for Fredericton South and his organization made presentations at that time as well. We heard that the forests of New Brunswick were important to the environment, the economy, and the culture of our province. I would suggest to you respectfully that the silviculture program addresses all three of those. A healthy forest has some positive long-term ramifications for our environment. The silviculture program is putting people to work in all corners of our province, which is good for our economy. As the member who initiated this motion said, rural New Brunswick has a culture of independence and being close to nature and whatnot. The silviculture program addresses all three.

I heard one member talk about the strength of the wood fibre in New Brunswick. There is actually a report done by Dr. Chui at the Wood Science and Technology Centre. He analyzed maple from New Brunswick versus maple from other jurisdictions such as the Michigan area. Our wood fibre is stronger than theirs. The reason for that is because of the growing season. Our growing season is shorter. Therefore, the growth rings are more tightly compacted. That, in turn, causes the fibres to be stronger. Our Achilles heel, the short growing season that we have here in New Brunswick, is actually one of our strengths as well.

You will hear people talk about the softwood lumber agreement. One of the reasons that we were able to get an exemption for the softwood agreement in Atlantic Canada was because of the

degree of private land ownership. As you move westward across Canada, the amount of Crown land increases significantly. Here in New Brunswick, it is around 50%. By the time you get to British Columbia, it is 5% private land and 95% Crown land. The argument was made that Crown land was a means of subsidizing industry. Our mills in New Brunswick, our large corporate entities in New Brunswick, actually have the private woodlot owners to thank because, if it were not for that high percentage of private land ownership in the province, they would not have been able to get the exemption that has helped them out over the years.

I misspoke. The member from Fredericton-Lincoln was also on the wood supply committee and how wonderful it is, all these years later, to still be serving here in the House with him. Forgive me for that.

070

16:30

I have talked about the softwood lumber agreement. I also want to talk about how there was mention of one of the silviculture contractors that was made in the House. There is a gentleman by the name of Gary Graham who lives up close to Nackawic on Route 105. I know that operation, having represented that area for a number of years. Now, it is in the capable hands of the member for Carleton-York. However, Mr. Graham has individuals who have worked for him for 25 years. When you decrease the amount of money in the silviculture budget, you run the risk of losing some of those long-term people. They need to have so many weeks to be able to live. When people cannot get that number of weeks through the silviculture work that they are used to doing, they unfortunately have to start looking for work elsewhere, someplace where they can get a number of weeks of employment each year to be able to survive. I heard the mention of that particular contractor, and I know for a fact that he has people with 20 to 25-plus years of service.

I also want to talk about the long-term plan for industry. In 2003-04, the Jaakko Pöyry report came out. It said that, in order for the industries to remain viable long-term, they were going to have to take the 3.3 million cubic metres of softwood fibre, which was the softwood annual allowable cut on Crown land at that particular time, and move it, in the short term, to 4.5 million cubic metres. In the longer term, they were going to have to go to 6.8 million cubic metres. The Jaakko Pöyry was not a go-forward document.

I would suggest that it is in big industry's best interest to continue to invest in silviculture on the private land base. If, in fact, the industry does need the volume of fibre that it said it was going to need, it is not going to be able to achieve it strictly on Crown land, given that the Jaakko Pöyry report did not go forward, and on the industrial freehold. I would suggest that it would be shortsighted of industry not to advocate for more activity on the private land base as well.

What other things did I want to touch on? I guess that this is just one of the last things that I wanted to say. It is very much like thinning carrots. You need to reduce the number of stems per

hectare in order to get them to put on size. If you go out to test blocks . . . I invite all members of the House to out. I think that the York-Sunbury-Charlotte Forest Products Marketing Board would have some great examples of some test blocks. I know that AV Nackawic has some great examples of test plots where silviculture work has been undertaken. You can see plots side by side where silviculture has taken place and where there has been no silviculture treatment. You can see the difference in the size and volume of timber, or fibre, per hectare. It is significant.

If you take only one thing from what I have said today, it is that we would like to see that \$5 million moved back up to \$6 million, and we would like to see it move higher, if possible. We would like to see it wrapped into a long-term agreement so that there would be predictability and so that people would know from one year to the next what level of silviculture funding would be in place to do the work and to do the associated planning that goes along with that. Of course, with the 90-10 split, depending on the type of silviculture treatment that you are looking for, the 10% co-pay could be anywhere from a low of \$41.60 per hectare up to about \$110 per hectare. We would like to see those percentages stay in place and, again, be part of a long-term agreement so that there is predictability.

I will close with that, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this issue.

071

16:35

M. LePage : J'aimerais savoir quel est mon temps de parole ; ai-je 20 minutes?

La vice-présidente : Vous avez 15 minutes.

M. LePage : Parfait, merci. C'est avec fierté, bien sûr, que je me lève à la Chambre — il est toujours difficile de suivre l'expert en foresterie qu'est mon collègue, le député de Carleton-Victoria —, mais je le fais pour parler avec fierté de ma région de Restigouche-Ouest. Comme vous le savez, l'industrie forestière joue un rôle prédominant dans ma circonscription. Bien sûr, les forêts y jouent un rôle énorme, que ce soit en ce qui concerne l'emploi et notre économie ou même sur les valeurs et les vies des gens de nos collectivités.

Je vais vous donner quelques exemples. À Saint-Quentin, il y a le Groupe Savoie. Fondé en 1978, le Groupe Savoie emploie actuellement 600 personnes. Il s'est taillé une réputation enviable de fabricant de produits de bois franc de qualité supérieure. À Kedgwick, il y a la scierie J.D. Irving, qui produit du bois d'épinette, de pin et de sapin, et qui contribue énormément à l'économie de la collectivité de Kedgwick. À Atholville, il y a le groupe AV Cell, qui utilise la technologie d'acide bisulfite pour produire de la pâte pour dissolution dans son usine. Cette usine utilise un mélange de feuillus et de résineux pour produire 126 000 t par année de pâte pour dissolution de haute qualité, qui est expédiée en Inde, en Thaïlande, en Indonésie et en Chine. Il y a aussi la Coopérative Travailleurs Forestiers McKendrick, fondée en 1991. Elle se

spécialise précisément dans l'aménagement forestier et fait de la formation. Elle continue à employer plusieurs personnes de ma circonscription.

Je ne peux pas non plus passer sous silence les acériculteurs; ils sont au-delà de 50 dans ma circonscription. Ces producteurs de sirop d'érable y sont établis et prospèrent continuellement. L'industrie du transport de nos ressources, autant celles à l'état brut que les produits finis, contribue bien sûr à l'essor économique de ma circonscription et de notre province.

À Balmoral, il y a A. Landry Fabrication, qui se démarque fièrement dans la fabrication sur mesure et dans l'assemblage d'équipement forestier. Toujours à Balmoral, il y a aussi Les Cèdres Balmoral, qui est un fabricant de bardeaux de cèdre pour les marchés canadien et américain.

Toutes ces entreprises continuent à contribuer à l'essor économique de ma circonscription et de notre province. Je suis fier de tous les gens qui travaillent dans les usines ou sur nos routes à continuer fièrement à faire leur part dans et pour nos forêts.

Vous n'avez qu'à passer dans ma circonscription pour comprendre à quel point l'industrie forestière est importante pour moi et aussi pour les milliers de familles qui y résident. Vous verriez, bien sûr, la beauté de la forêt et ses couleurs magnifiques, mais vous y croiseriez de nombreux camions de transports forestiers manoeuvrant nos arbres et nos produits finis. Vous constateriez aussi le nombre impressionnant d'usines et de commerces liés à l'industrie forestière.

J'ai grandi à la campagne, avec la forêt comme arrière-cour et la baie des Chaleurs comme cour avant. Aujourd'hui, je vis encore à la campagne et j'en suis fier. Comme vous le savez, le VTT, la motoneige, la pêche, la chasse, le camping, le canotage et les randonnées dans les sentiers sont quelques-uns des exemples des passe-temps favoris des gens de ma circonscription. La forêt est notre terrain de jeux et c'est aussi notre gagne-pain.

072

16:40

L'industrie forestière crée des produits qui améliorent la qualité de vie des gens du Nouveau-Brunswick : Nos maisons, qui nous donnent un toit ; nos livres, qui nous ont éduqués ainsi que nos enfants et qui continuent de le faire ; nos meubles, qui nous procurent du confort ; les fibres, qui servent à fabriquer nos vêtements, et bien d'autres produits que nous utilisons tous les jours.

Nous pouvons être fiers de nos forêts, car nous réalisons à quel point celles-ci contribuent à notre qualité de vie. En effet, nos forêts purifient l'air que nous respirons ; elles filtrent l'eau que nous buvons ; elles servent d'habitat pour nombreuses d'espèces animales et font du Nouveau-Brunswick un endroit où il fait bon vivre.

Bien avant que les premiers colons européens arrivent ici, les peuples autochtones dépendaient et dépendent toujours aujourd'hui de la forêt pour se nourrir, boire et, bien sûr, s'abriter. Tel que mes collègues l'ont mentionné, 22 000 personnes du Nouveau-Brunswick sont employées ou travaillent dans l'industrie forestière ; l'un des plus grands secteurs industriels et économiques de ma circonscription et de notre province.

La sylviculture doit aussi jouer un rôle important dans le développement de nos ressources naturelles, car la viabilité des futurs stocks de bois dépend de la régénération efficace de la forêt. La sylviculture et la pratique de la gestion de la composition, la croissance et la qualité de la forêt, incluant la conservation, la régénération, la reforestation et la coupe sont essentielles à la survie de nos forêts. Les pratiques de la sylviculture donnent lieu à une forêt plus productive, ce qui assure plus de zones forestières pour la préservation des habitats, la biodiversité et les loisirs, comme la chasse et la pêche.

Avec cette motion, l'opposition tente encore de faire peur aux gens du Nouveau-Brunswick, en laissant sous-entendre que notre gouvernement n'investit pas dans le maintien de nos forêts. Mais, en fait, en 2015-2016, des investissements pour le traitement de la sylviculture du ministère du Développement de l'énergie et des ressources étaient de 19,11 millions pour les terres de la Couronne et de 5,5 millions pour les lots boisés privés.

En 2016-2017, le financement pour les lots boisés privés est de 5 millions. Ce montant est réparti proportionnellement entre les sept offices de commercialisation des produits forestiers, qui représentent des régions distinctes et qui s'occupent entre autres de la plantation, de l'éclaircissement précommercial, des traitements à base de récolte ainsi que des plans de gestion pour nos secteurs boisés.

Tel que mentionné par mon collègue, le ministre du Développement de l'énergie et des ressources, son ministère prend au sérieux ses responsabilités de gérer de façon durable nos forêts ainsi que le futur de nos ressources.

Un programme de sylviculture fructueux nous permettra de continuer de gérer la composition, la croissance et la qualité de nos forêts, y compris la conservation, la régénération, le reboisement et la coupe. Les pratiques sylvicoles aboutissent non seulement à une forêt plus productive, mais contribuent également à lutter contre les changements climatiques grâce à la séquestration de carbone.

Comme vous le savez, j'ai eu la chance de siéger au Comité spécial sur les changements climatiques où j'ai particulièrement porté attention aux impacts climatiques sur l'industrie forestière.

L'économie du Nouveau-Brunswick axée sur ses ressources naturelles est vulnérable en raison des changements que nous pouvons déjà percevoir. Nous devons cependant agir pour faire face

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aux dangers imminents des changements climatiques. Ces derniers présentent des perspectives d'avenir économiques mais aussi des risques et des défis en matière de production sur le plan des activités et de la viabilité des secteurs forestiers. Voilà pourquoi notre comité a recommandé entre autres d'incorporer les connaissances en matière de changements climatiques dans tous les plans d'aménagement forestier.

Notre gouvernement comprend l'importance de la sylviculture au Nouveau-Brunswick. Voilà pourquoi nous continuons d'appuyer le Programme de sylviculture pour les lots boisés privés du ministère, qui, en 2015-2016, a fait en sorte qu'environ 3,9 millions d'arbres ont été plantés, que le programme a produit près de 200 emplois et que la surface totale des terres cultivées fut de 6 950 ha.

073

16:45

Bien sûr, l'objectif derrière cette motion est respectable, étant donné que notre gouvernement veut faire de cette province le meilleur endroit où vivre, travailler et y élever une famille, et nous allons continuer à faire tout notre possible pour assurer la viabilité et la compétitivité de notre secteur forestier.

Depuis le début de mon mandat en tant que député de Restigouche-Ouest, je peux dire que notre gouvernement a fait des investissements stratégiques pour le développement de notre industrie forestière. En effet, dans ma région, les gouvernements provincial et fédéral ont investi plus de 10 millions de dollars pour permettre aux acériculteurs du Madawaska et du Restigouche de réaliser 25 beaux projets. En effet, 2,1 millions de dollars ont été investis au Groupe Savoie, de Saint-Quentin, pour qu'il puisse accroître la production de son usine et, ainsi, créer 40 emplois. De plus, 4 millions de dollars ont été injectés dans une installation proposée de marijuana à des fins médicinales, ce qui devrait créer jusqu'à 208 emplois à Atholville.

Je veux mentionner les 260 000 \$ accordés à l'entreprise Léon Chouinard et Fils, située à Eel River Crossing, pour sa nouvelle usine de fabrication de poutrelles de plancher ajourées. Cette usine est située dans la circonscription voisine de la mienne, mais les propriétaires demeurent dans ma circonscription. Il y a aussi eu un investissement de 3,1 millions de dollars dans des projets liés à l'acériculture.

Notre gouvernement croit dans le potentiel de tous les gens du Nouveau-Brunswick. Notre gouvernement croit dans les ressources naturelles et dans ce que notre province peut nous offrir. Notre gouvernement croit que nous pouvons toujours améliorer le programme de sylviculture privée, et c'est pourquoi nous envisageons des choses comme la budgétisation pluriannuelle, le partage des coûts, le partenariat avec l'industrie et l'efficacité administrative pour nous assurer que ce programme tire le meilleur de ce que nous avons à offrir.

Plus tôt cette semaine, j'ai entendu le chef de l'opposition dire ceci : Jeter de l'argent dans quelque chose, ce n'est pas une solution. Si nous pouvons trouver des façons de faire plus avec moins, n'est-ce pas la direction que nous devrions prendre? Je pense aussi que l'ancien ministre des Finances, qui est actuellement chef de l'opposition, devrait faire une distinction entre les termes « dépenses » et « investissements ».

De ce côté-ci de la Chambre, nous prenons des mesures pour réduire les dépenses et investissons stratégiquement dans nos gens et dans nos infrastructures.

Malgré la bonne intention de la motion, tout comme mes collègues de ce côté-ci de la Chambre, je voterai contre celle-ci, car je crois que nous pouvons atteindre nos objectifs de sylviculture sans investir plus d'argent. C'est pour cette raison que je n'appuierai pas cette motion. Merci.

Mr. Northrup: I have sat here and have listened intensely for the last couple of hours. I find it really hard to believe that the member for Restigouche West would stand up and say that he is voting against the people in his own riding. I challenge a lot of the MLAs on the other side to stick up for the people in their ridings, stick up for the people who work very, very hard in the spring, summer, and fall in silviculture. They work tremendous hours.

When I was the Minister of Natural Resources, I had the opportunity to go to the Christmas Mountains, just north of the Miramichi. I challenged the members from the Miramichi to stick up for the silviculture people in their area and to vote with their hearts. We are not here to spread fear. We are for the facts, the F-A-C-T-S. One of the major facts is that I am very, very proud to stand in this House and say that I never cut one cent out of the silviculture budget in the years that we were in government.

074

16:50

I hear the member for Dieppe talking against our leader, saying cut, cut, cut. That is a fact. The members opposite cut \$1 million out of the silviculture budget. I do not know how much clearer you can be with that.

The former minister from Campbellton-Dalhousie—he does not pass a mirror without looking at it and asking why he is the smartest MLA in New Brunswick, and he cracks a lot of mirrors too—was the one who took \$1 million or \$2 million, I believe, out of silviculture in 2009 without contacting his department, and he just took it upon himself. It was not too much longer that the money was put back where it should have been.

I am very proud to stand here, and I do not want to dwell on the past. I want to work with the people on the other side for the future. I am asking the members over there to vote with their hearts, to vote for the people who put them in those seats on the other side. We all represent

11 300 people. We have 49 ridings here. We have a lot of rural ridings over there. A lot of people over there represent silviculture people who work very hard at their businesses.

As I said, we are not here to spread fear. We are here to tell the facts. I enjoyed the years that I was able to work with Ken Hardie. Ken Hardie was a gentleman for whom I had a lot of respect and for whom the member for Fredericton South had a lot of respect. People on this side of the House had a lot of respect for Mr. Hardie. God rest his soul. He devoted his life to the private woodlot owners. He was the CEO of the seven boards that we have in New Brunswick.

What I am doing . . . I appreciate the member for Saint John East, my colleague who I came in with in 2006, and my seatmate for talking about the facts. The fact is that we need that \$1 million put back in the silviculture budget. We needed it yesterday. We need it today. We need it for the future. As people have explained here, you have to have a budget so that you know where the money is going to come from year after year. You have to make plans for the next year, as we do. In a normal household, you do not plan for only tomorrow. You plan for years down the road, and that is why there are RRSPs and things similar to that. The marketing boards have to plan. Without that money in place, they cannot do what they should do.

If anybody questions anything on silviculture, I would be very happy to show my sample that I have here in the House. It is how silviculture works. We did the sample in the Miramichi. We took two plots of land many years ago, and we did silviculture work on one plot and did not do silviculture in another plot. If anybody would like to come to see the two samples that I have here . . . I know that, if I show them in here, you might tell me to get out of the House, so I will not show them. However, anybody on the other side or in New Brunswick can come see the proof that I have here that silviculture works in New Brunswick. It works well.

That is why I am here to stand up for the silviculture people, and I challenge the rural MLAs on the other side. Some of them got up today and spoke very eloquently about other things in their ridings but did not really connect with silviculture, which this is all about and which is what we are talking about today. That is a shame. You have to talk and plan. There are 22 000 employees directly and indirectly in this business. It affects the GDP. It affects people's wallets. It affects families. That is what we on this side are about. We are about keeping families together, keeping families working, and keeping families in New Brunswick to make it the great province that it is. Thank you.

075

16:55

Mr. Urquhart: When you get the idea in your head that you want to talk about something in the Legislature, you get an idea . . . I do not know where it comes from, but you get a bit excited about it. It is something that you feel needs to be brought to the House. I met with the woodlot owners. I explained to them and to the boards that they should not expect anything. Way down deep in your gut, you are sort of hoping that maybe it will work.

I told the members opposite they could expect to perhaps bring in a motion to change it. They cannot even do that on this one, and that is what disappoints me. If I did anything, I guess it is that I forced some of them to get up and talk against their own people, which is not a good thing. They did not want to do it. I have been here a while—some would say too long. You are told: You are going to do the talking on it, and this is what you are going to say. When a minister gets up and reads it, it sort of gives you that feeling . . . Instead of reading, talk to your people. Talk to the people up there and explain to them why you are doing something or why you are doing nothing.

Some of the things the members opposite said, I agreed with, and some I did not. As much as the member for Carleton-Victoria wants to vote against it, I know the man too well. I know he believes in forestry, and he knows that this type of thing is not going the way he really wants it to go. I expect that.

I heard them talking about how the marketing board was not efficient. In this game we are playing, we have AV Nackawic, we have the Irvings, we have the government, and we have the marketing boards—the little guys. We have taken \$1 million away from them because they are not efficient. Do you think we are efficient? Do you think that big industry is efficient? No. The difference between us and these people is that we do not know what they are doing most of the time, and they do know what they are doing. They do know that they had to plant trees two years ago. They do know that they have to have them paid for. They do know that the efficiency part of it has to be maintained because they have people's lives on the line when it comes up.

You say they do not need as many people on the management side. If you take the money away from the management side of the marketing board, who is going to keep people like me informed? Who is going to keep people in the schools informed of what is wrong in the industry? Yes, anyplace here can be changed to have better efficiency, but these people . . . We are not taking money away from a system that was not working. We took money away from the only system that was working. They had a \$6-million budget. Yes, they took a portion away for education. Yes, they took a portion away for management. They put all the rest into the forest and into the industry.

You can sit with them all you want. To me, it is like me sitting down with somebody in poverty to go over how they buy groceries. They have already figured out how to buy the cheapest they possibly can. They have already figured out how to share with other groups. They have already figured it out, and here comes a suit to tell them how they are going to grow, or tell them how to buy their groceries.

076

17:00

This little talk was not about that at all. It was about money that was taken away from a system that works. You are taking money away from a system that needs stable funding over a long

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period of time. You cannot have a \$6 000 tree one year and a \$5 000 tree the next year. Their budget is not every year, as ours is. We have a four-year flip over. That is the only thing that we worry about. They worry about the long term, the planning of whom they can bring into the system and of whom they cannot. Yes, they make mistakes. Sometimes, they are stupid mistakes. Sometimes, they do things where they themselves scratch their heads and wonder why they did it. When you take the big picture, they are still better organized than we are. Our job is not to cut their ideas. It is to give them the tools or the ability to run their operations.

If you want to send in a review every two or three years, the best thing that a marketing board and these folks could do is for our going in and reviewing them every five years. They would love it because, first of all, we would realize that they are not getting enough for what they are doing and we would walk away figuring that we need to give them more money. These are the types of organizations . . . You came down and said that inefficiencies have to be found, but there are no inefficiencies anymore in that organization. I know that the leader of the third party hates big industry, but we need them too. We need the big groups. The easiest way to keep these people where you want them is to divide and conquer them. Yes, they fight with us. I have nine brothers and sisters, and there are days when we do not talk to each other. As a family in the woods industry, you have to talk. Yes, you are going to go away in a snit, but you have to work together.

By taking that money away, you are telling them that they are the only ones who are not efficient. I am glad. I was hoping that I did not have to bring up the 90-10 split because, so far, that has not been changed. I do know that the previous minister had no intention of changing it, and I do know that he probably did not want to make the cut. I know that the current minister does not. There is nobody in agriculture that I remember on either side that has spent more time in my riding, going from farm to farm and talking to people. However, I do know that, when it comes to the budget, he is not always doing what he wants to do. I am not always doing what I want to do.

The thing is that the government . . . If you want a signed document that all the mistakes in the past were our fault, I would give that to you. I will take all the blame for everything that you want. However, the reality is that you are in government now and these people need the money. It is not that they have inefficiencies, but they have to be allowed to work on a regular . . .

I do not read a lot of speeches. Every now and again, when little notes come in from the other side, I usually cannot put them into my train of thought because no one really knows where my train of thought is going. I want to leave this today . . . I know that you are going to vote this down, but I know that there are members on both sides who are going to go away and say: That was a good motion. Later, as the budget reviews come up, as the ideas come up, and as things go onto the table, remember rural New Brunswick. Remember that we do not want to move to your city. We do not want to move to your big cars. Give us an old half-ton truck, give us our saws, give us our family, and give us a place to go to school in rural New Brunswick. That is all we

want. By cutting this budget . . . A cut of \$1 million out of our budget is like a \$100-million cut out of a city budget. We need the government and the people to support the woodworkers of our province. Thank you.

077

17:05

Motion 5 Defeated

(**Mr. Speaker**, having read the motion, put the question, and Motion 5 was defeated.)

Motion 4

Mr. Stewart, pursuant to notice of Motion 4, moved, seconded by **Mr. Fairgrieve**, as follows:

WHEREAS the Auditor General is responsible for leading and directing independent audits and advising on how well the provincial government is managing its responsibilities and resources;

WHEREAS the Auditor General conducts financial audits of government services and programs to support the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements submitted to government and the public;

WHEREAS the Auditor General conducts performance audits of government services and programs, providing a systematic and objective assessment of how well government is managing its activities, responsibilities and resources;

WHEREAS the Auditor General conducts special examination of our Crown Corporations, providing assurance that their assets are safeguarded, their resources are managed economically and efficiently and their operations are carried out effectively;

WHEREAS government spent considerable time and effort on a Strategic Program Review, but refused more resources to the Auditor General, even though it is this office that performs financial, performance and special reviews of government services, and provides recommendations to government to improve these practices;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT this Assembly urges the current government to start supporting the Auditor General's office, and allowing additional performance audits and special investigations to be conducted, so that we can reach the goal of a balanced budget and better taxpayer protection.

(**Mr. Speaker**, having read the motion, put the question, and the following debate ensued.)

Debate on Motion

Mr. Stewart: The Auditor General started out a couple of months ago, not long after the current government was in, and she slammed the government's accounting. She could not qualify the audit that first came in, which means that the government's accounting was unrecognizable, unfit, unbalanced, or abnormal, to say the least. It was very clear then to the taxpayers of New Brunswick that taxpayer protection was going to be crucial under the current government. The current government at the time seemed to be at odds with the Auditor General, who is one of our foremost legislative officers here in the province and a symbol of citizen protection with regard to the way money is spent. Members of the general public in New Brunswick have a level of trust in their Auditor General, but in recent years, it seems that they have even more trust with so many deficits, and with the current government not even being able to qualify the audit. Members of the public have been brought up to speed on what is happening, and they are very concerned about the protection they need in the province.

The Auditor General was also concerned with the use of a contingency fund that the government was using, probably to pave roads. Essentially, this is borrowed money that the taxpayers will have to pay back, regardless of whether the streets are in better shape or not.

The government also took on the Auditor General when she delivered a scathing critique of the government's public accounts, as I said. The current government has been virtually at odds with the Auditor General for two years now, and the reason that came to a head was the additional resources needed to perform the forensic audit of Atcon. We know that that is a sticky issue in New Brunswick, but she is the Auditor General. The public has a right to know where the money went, and we should all be supporting that. The government has something to hide on that front, and it would like very much for that audit never to happen. That, I think, is one of the reasons the general public of New Brunswick wants to see the Auditor General supported by the government.

This motion is because we, on this side of the floor, believe that the Auditor General should be supported with additional resources. When she wants to do an audit, a special project, or a forensic audit, we should be letting her do that. The reason is that the Auditor General's Office has the ability to save this province millions and millions of dollars. That is why it is there—to protect us as citizens and to inform government each year of the many ways that the province could find efficiencies and put better services in place, at a better price, for the taxpayers of New Brunswick.

The Auditor General needs our support, and, on this side of the floor, we certainly believe in the work that she is doing. We respect it, and we want to put something on the floor so that the public knows we are working toward helping her, whether it means additional funding or not.

One of the other things is that the Auditor General was concerned that a Liberal bill would erode her power. There was a Liberal bill that repealed a section of the Act that gave the Auditor General the power to commission an inquiry. We, as a government, have to make sure that the Auditor General is allowed to do her job. No matter how bad it may make the government look, it is still in the best interest of the taxpayers, regardless of whom they vote for.

I think that this motion alludes to the fact that members of the general public know there is an issue with the accounting of the current government. They know that the Auditor General could not qualify the government's accounting each year. They know that the current government does not want her exercising a forensic audit. We know that she took on that task on her own. I want to commend her on that because that is what the public needs. Regardless of the project, regardless of where the company might be from, it is just in the best interest of the taxpayers of the province.

I think that, in the future, the Auditor General is going to become even more prominent in her role because there are certain files. The industrial rail file is an interesting one, along with the Caraquet shipyard and many more. We are going to see that we are going to need the Auditor General more than ever before.

079

17:15

We, on this side of the floor, certainly want to highlight the good work and the value that the Auditor General's position has in the province. I want to state very clearly—and this is very important—that if the Auditor General of New Brunswick can find ways for us to save money, protect taxpayers, try to find out if there is corruption, get in front of it, and all these things, we have to support her. In the end, that saves millions and millions and millions of dollars for taxpayers. I think that is the most important thing. It crosses party lines. It does not have anything to do with the politics of parties, it just has to do with the public's money and where it is being spent. The Auditor General's ability to perform accounting, audits, and inquiries where needed is of great benefit to the taxpayers of this province.

One of the other things that I want to touch on is when the Auditor General slammed the government accounting, claiming once again that the province was not following proper public sector accounting practices with the contingency fund. Your evidence is right there. The reason we should not have a contingency fund is that we are sitting in a shroud of debt, to the tune of probably \$13 billion or \$14 billion. We have rising deficits that the current government does not even know exist. The public, like never before, despite politics, needs the Auditor General's position to have autonomy. The Auditor General needs to be able to conduct the work of that office on behalf of the citizens of New Brunswick, and it has to be free of politics. The Auditor General has to be able to do her work. It is no different from the rest of the legislative officers. I am going to comment on that.

All our legislative officers do considerable work for the province. We know that it is not common that legislative officers want additional funding. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you know about these sorts of things. However, in the end, the one position where it is almost a no-brainer is the Auditor General. Although they are all respectful, the Auditor General has the ability to save us millions of dollars. That is one position where we never want to see any government getting in the way, because it is in the best interests of each of us here, our families, our kids, and their kids to come.

One of the other things that we find interesting is that the Auditor General was seeking more money to do the Atcon audit. That hits close to home. That was a local company. Many of my friends worked there, and it was a sad day for the region when the company went under. So many people ended up being unemployed. The problem with this is that there are many files that are no different from that file. We have never learned, as a province, where the money went. We do not have the type of ethics that certain states in the United States have. We do not have a lot of accountability in taxpayer protection. We really are 30 to 40 years behind when it comes to this. I could argue this all day long and provide a million examples of it. That is why I was campaigning, first, on an ethics commission.

I think that when I look at the Auditor General, nothing should ever get in his or her way. I agree that when the Auditor General needs more money, he or she has to ask for it. I understand all that. Our money is vital because our revenues are in short supply. If the Auditor General of this province can find a way to save us millions and protect us, we have to let her do it. It might cost \$300 000 or \$400 000 extra for her to conduct some form of inquiry. However, at the same time, what if she saves us \$5 million or \$6 million and prevents another \$10 million from being spent on some similar endeavour down the road or something? That is why it is so important.

One of the reasons that I moved this motion is because, as I traveled New Brunswick for the past couple of months, it seemed very clear that many people in the province had lost hope in the idea that the government would spend money wisely. I ran into that everywhere. Although people have different obstacles and issues in the varying regions of New Brunswick, it was very clear that one of the reasons people are so disenfranchised is based on the fact that they feel that they not only do not have any say on where the money is going, they do not know where the money is going. They do not know why it is going there. They did not feel that they had any sort of insight into where the monies were being spent.

080

17:20

The one thing that always came up was that, despite all of that, it was disheartening for them to know that the Auditor General did not seem to be getting the support that the public wanted her to get. I heard this in many parts of the province. I think it is important. Shortly after the convention, I spoke with the leader, and he agreed. He agreed that it is an important aspect of New Brunswick that we have to look after as elected officials. One of the reasons this motion is

on the floor is that it is important that the new leader support it. Caucus supported it, and we want the public to understand that we are going to support the Auditor General. We believe she needs to be supported.

One of the issues that hits close to home is the idea of the P3 nursing home. As we know, the Auditor General has said that the P3 model, be it for infrastructure, highways, or whatnot, has a great deal of . . . Basically, she did not feel that they were up to speed. I read a little bit of this report, and it could be costing us more money than people ever anticipated. A lot of people now are concerned with any sort of P3 model across New Brunswick.

In Miramichi, we have a nursing home that is going to be a P3 model. I support the nursing home, and I support the number of beds. I think the region needs it. However, the public really does not want a P3 model, and there are many reasons for that. One of those—and we are going to be looking into it—goes directly to this motion. It is the idea that current unionized employees of the current nursing homes can actually be grandfathered in, still unionized, with the same rates of pay and longevity. On this side of the floor, we have to question that. I think the reasons that this project is delayed are twofold or threefold: (a), it is probably not possible with staffing, (b) the public wants a home but not a P3, and (c), will they really build a home at all? We have these questions. Where is the RFQ? That should have been out a year ago. It is late for a reason.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Speaker: Order, minister.

Mr. Stewart: The Auditor General . . . The members on the other side of the floor are going to be upset with this because they are caught on this one. This is another reason the Auditor General needs to get support in New Brunswick—because of issues like this where the public is misinformed and money is spent on something that is not going to benefit the taxpayers of New Brunswick. Build the nursing home, yes, but take the advice of the Auditor General. A P3 home does not look to be the right way to go in that situation. Build the 240-bed home, but not with a P3 model. I can tell you right now that the Auditor General says it is going to cost us more money. I tend to believe that. I dent to believe her, the inquiries she has done, and the reports she has done on behalf of New Brunswick citizens.

Our hope on this side of the floor is that the government will support this motion and start to finally give support to the Auditor General.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Stewart: I have a couple more minutes.

With the Auditor General, it is very clear that, on this side of the floor, we want the government to support the Auditor General. We want the government to allow the Auditor General to have additional resources to be able to file inquiries and perform audits and/or forensic audits where need be, to put in place the best taxpayer protection we can have for the citizens of New Brunswick.

I can tell you that the citizens of New Brunswick are getting into this. They know that the Auditor General is a good thing. Even people who did not really know a lot about legislative officers or what they do know this. You would find it hard to believe, but as I travel around the province, they cannot believe that the current government is not supporting the foremost accountant in this province—the symbol of taxpayer protection, the person we need to be looking at endeavours that are failing, or looking at models like P3s that are costing us too much money. This is the type of individual for whom we have to show support. The people on this side of the floor, in the opposition, are going to be supporting the Auditor General. We know that she has a report coming out soon, and we cannot wait to see it.

081

17:25

Every time that she comes out with a report, although it has bad news, it proves again that she is doing a valuable job for the taxpayers of New Brunswick. On this side of the floor, we are really looking forward to that. In the future, we are going to be looking at this P3 model in Miramichi and we are hopeful that the government will look past the P3 aspect of that because the Auditor General has great concerns, basically, on the efficiency of these models. Of course, I would like to see the home built, but we do not see anything there now.

One of the other things that is interesting with the Auditor General is how critical she has been of the current government. I think that explains a lot about the situation in the province. It is one thing for the opposition to believe that much of what government is doing is inaccurate or wrong, but it is quite another thing to see the Auditor General basically come out to say: I cannot read the government's accounting. I cannot understand the rationale of borrowing another \$150 million for a contingency fund. I cannot read its accounting again, so I am going to file another scathing report of what the government is doing.

Then she comes out with another report that P3s, public-private partnerships, might not be finding efficiencies at all in the province. Yet, we still have a government that is forging ahead with more than one P3 project. We have to question: Where is the government getting its advice? It is not taking it from us, but, worse, it is not taking it from the Auditor General. Here, you have a situation where the taxpayers of New Brunswick are overburdened with increased taxes, huge deficits, and bad news all the time. Then the government cannot have its accounting up to snuff, and the Auditor General cannot even read it at the end of the year. What does that tell you? What does it mean in New Brunswick when the Auditor General files a scathing report of the

government's accounting, cannot qualify its accounting, and then begs for additional money to find out where \$70 million went? How does that happen?

That is a made-in-New Brunswick story right there. It is why people leave here. It is why people are disenfranchised with politics and government. It is why people do not want to invest here. It is why companies are leaving here. It is downright ridiculous, and when is it going to stop?

When are we actually going to have a government that opens up its arms, embraces the Auditor General, and allows her to do the valuable work on behalf of the citizens of this province? When is that going to happen? We are waiting for it over here. Do you see it happening? I do not see it happening. We have been waiting.

(Interjection.)

Mr. Stewart: What is that? We have a lot to say over here, but do you know what? They are supporting the P3 model. She told them not to, so we have to question it. When are they going to listen to what the Auditor General tells them? When is it going to happen?

I will tell you something. We have a leader on this side of the floor who is going to be supporting the Auditor General. The government is not supporting her because its members do not know any better. They are still following after projects that she has told us will not be efficient and will only cost us more money in the future. On this side of the floor, we are supporting the Auditor General. Thank you.

L'hon. M. Melanson : Merci, Monsieur le président, de me donner l'occasion cet après-midi d'exposer quelques faits et de donner quelques idées concernant la motion 4, présentée par l'opposition officielle.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on this motion. First, we do not need this motion, to be quite honest, from the opposition to have the government understand the importance, the independence, and the role of the Office of the Auditor General in New Brunswick. We fully understand and also appreciate the role that the Auditor General and that entire office play with regard to auditing the government and at looking at how the government can use or invest taxpayers' dollars. Certainly, we fully respect that.

082

17:30

I do want to point out that for the Office of the Auditor General and, for that matter, all legislative officers, the way they are funded is not through government. It is through the legislative administration committee, a committee of the Legislative Assembly which is independent of government. All of the requests for annual operating budgets go to that committee, and that committee makes a decision.

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Je pense qu'il est aussi nécessaire de souligner le rôle essentiel que joue le Bureau du vérificateur général. Comme pour tout autre organisme, le rôle de vérifier les livres et voir à son bon fonctionnement est essentiel et doit se faire de façon indépendante. En tant que gouvernement, cela est important pour nous.

I also want to point out that, over the last few years, the budget of the Office of the Auditor General under the previous government was actually frozen. Today, they are asking for us not only to respect what the Office of the Auditor General does—and we do respect it—but also to increase the funding. The previous government, in which the current Leader of the Opposition was Finance Minister, actually froze the budget. This year, we have to increase the budget for the Office of the Auditor General. I think it is important that we note that.

The other thing that I think is important is that government does not get involved in the subjects or the matters that the Office of the Auditor General audits. It is the Auditor General's sole independent responsibility to decide which issues, which projects, or which items the office wants to verify. That is why the Auditor General is an officer of the Legislative Assembly and not an employee of government. For all of the legislative officers, it works in that manner. Let's make sure it is clear for the opposition member who brought forward this motion, so that he understands that.

I also want to bring to your attention and to the attention of the people listening that the relationship with the Auditor General and the office is good. It is actually very respectful. There are many things that Auditor Generals over the years have actually recommended that the government consider in order to improve.

I will give you a few examples where this government, since it took office, actually accepted the recommendations of the Auditor General and was actually quite positive in accepting them. For example, there was the way we accounted for pensions. We discussed it with the Auditor General, and the Auditor General came up with a suggestion or recommendation. We actually accepted to account for pensions in the way the Auditor General recommended.

On the reporting of the contingency reserve, I will correct the member opposite. It is not actually borrowed money, by the way. It is actually a reserve in case those dollars need to be borrowed, but it is not borrowed if it is not needed. For the reporting and accounting of it, we actually sat down with the Auditor General. She made some recommendations, and now, we are reporting based on the recommendations of the Auditor General.

The other thing I think is important is that discussions are ongoing all the time with the Auditor General and her office. Another issue on which we were able to agree was the timing of how we would recognize various transfers from the federal government. When we look at accounting practices, there are some best practices that need to be followed and respected. That is why the

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Auditor General offers opinions and recommendations so that we can improve things as they evolve.

The other thing that we have accepted to do . . . know the Leader of the Opposition has been saying that the debt has increased significantly over the last two years, but one of the reasons is that it was recommended by the Auditor General that we account for this and that we actually include in the consolidated statements of the province the value of the assets of nursing homes.

083

17:35

That is \$600 million that we had to put on the debt of the province. However, that is a recommendation from Auditor General. It is an accounting recommendation, and we have accepted that. That is another example of the good relationship we have with the Office of the Auditor General.

The other thing that we accepted is to have an audit committee chaired by the Minister of Finance. Any organization, when you look around . . . Some of us have been either on boards of directors or senior managers of organizations, and there is always an audit committee that the auditors can meet with to discuss some of the issues. We have accepted to create an audit committee, which the Minister of Finance will be chairing. I will be sitting on it, and the Attorney General will also be a member of it. We will meet quarterly, and we will meet with the Auditor General to discuss some of the issues.

At the end of the day, we are all here to do the right thing, to improve how we account for the expenditures, and to improve how we do things as an organization and a government. There are many different examples that I just enumerated that we have accepted because of a good working relationship between the Office of the Auditor General and the government through the Office of the Comptroller.

Je trouve intéressant que cette motion ait été présentée. Il se peut que ce soit pour faire des énoncés de politique, mais, en fin de compte, je pense qu'il est important d'expliquer aux gens qui nous écoutent et aux personnes qui sont ici, à la Chambre, que le rôle du Bureau du vérificateur général est essentiel et pertinent. De plus, ce rôle est tout à fait indépendant du gouvernement.

Lorsque la vérificatrice générale fait des recommandations, le gouvernement les prend en considération et plusieurs d'entre elles sont acceptées.

Je vais donner un autre exemple. La vérificatrice générale a fait des vérifications pour connaître le processus du gouvernement en ce qui a trait d'accorder de l'argent pour des investissements dans le secteur privé. Je crois que 19 recommandations ont été apportées, et, par l'entremise de

la société de la Couronne, Opportunités Nouveau-Brunswick, le gouvernement a accepté toutes les recommandations de la vérificatrice générale.

De tels exemples prouvent que le gouvernement écoute et accepte les recommandations du Bureau de la vérificatrice générale. Pourquoi fait-il cela? Pour la simple raison que ces recommandations améliorent la façon de faire les choses et permettent au gouvernement de prendre de meilleures décisions envers la gestion des finances publiques.

I think it is important that we were able to speak on this motion and to explain to the people listening that a lot of great and important recommendations from the Auditor General have been brought forward over the years, and the government has certainly accepted a lot of them. However, I do want to point out that, when there is a process of allocating budgets to any legislative officer or government department, we expect that, when the decision is made in terms of the allocation, the budget will be respected. Now, there may be situations when it is exceptional or unique. I get that. However, there is certainly a process that needs to be followed.

Also, as a government, when departments come in and have a situation where there may be an overexpenditure, we try to manage that along the fiscal year to minimize the need to go to supplementary estimates, which is when dollars that have not been authorized on the floor of the Legislature need to be authorized because there has been incremental spending. However, we want to minimize that, and we are working very hard to minimize that.

At the end of the day, when we are able to allow the Office of the Auditor General to do its work independently—government is not interfering in what it audits—it actually allows savings and efficiencies so that improvements can be made. We will have access to more dollars to invest in education, which New Brunswickers are telling us is their priority, and to sustain health care. We know that, in every part of New Brunswick, health care is a big priority for them, as is being able to invest those dollars for job creation, enabling New Brunswickers to stay and work in their home province.

084

17:40

En écoutant le député de l'opposition, j'ai constaté qu'il a dit beaucoup de choses qui n'étaient pas toujours basées sur des faits. Cela étant dit, j'ai eu l'occasion de corriger certaines choses et d'apporter des exemples concrets du travail qui est fait par le Bureau du vérificateur général. J'ai aussi souligné le fait que plusieurs de ses recommandations ont été acceptées, ce qui permet d'améliorer la façon dont le gouvernement fonctionne.

I will stop there because I think that I have said the things that I think are important, at this time, in order to give comfort to the opposition and to the people listening. We fully respect—we fully respect—the role of the Office of the Auditor General, and we actually want to make sure that people understand that the office is totally independent of government. We do not interfere with

what it chooses to audit and look into. It is able to get the funding to do that. About \$2 million per year in funding goes to the Office of the Auditor General for its staff to be able to do their job. It is essential that they are able to do their work independent of government. On top of that, the government always accepts many of the recommendations brought forward by the Auditor General, and we are happy to do so.

Mr. Fairgrieve: It is a privilege to have the opportunity to speak to this motion today. It is an honour to be able to follow the member opposite. I congratulate him on his comments. We certainly share views with regard to respect of the Auditor General. I have had the opportunity to engage the member during committee work in the past, and I have always found him to be respectful and constructive in his engagement. I thank him very much for the work that he has done.

(Interjections.)

Mr. Fairgrieve: The member, in his introductory remarks, talked about the fact that we do not need this motion. I would like to take the opportunity to amend that slightly and say that we should not need this motion. All members of this Legislature should understand and respect the role of the Auditor General because it is the Auditor General's responsibility to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are spent efficiently, and to ensure that taxpayers have confidence in their government and in the representatives that sit in this Legislature.

While that budget may be administered by the legislative committee—or what we commonly refer to as LAC—on the surface, it is not independent of government. The money that is approved for any supplemental expenditure must be approved through the Board of Management. The governing party has a significant majority on LAC. It is chaired by a government member.

While we are respectful and receptive to the recommendations that come forth from the Auditor General in the annual report, we do not always take those recommendations to heart. They are not always implemented, and, in the recent past, the Auditor General would not sign off on the books of the province. There were questions about the contingency reserve. The member opposite referred to best practices, or accounting practices, that have been used by the government. Some of that has been in dispute with the Auditor General. In no way should that diminish the role of the Auditor General or what she does.

085

17:45

Thank you for this opportunity. In my role as legislative critic, the legislative officers fall under that jurisdiction. I would like to remind the members and anyone who may be listening in that the reason that the Auditor General's Office is independent of government is a long-standing tradition in our system. The Auditor General's role is significant. If I could just highlight some

of the duties that fall within that office—many of which are outlined in the wording of this motion—the Auditor General is “responsible for leading and directing independent audits”—“independent” being the key word—“and advising on how well the provincial government is managing its responsibilities and resources”. The Auditor General conducts financial audits, as well as performance audits, special audits, or supplemental audits, where the office sees fit.

Independently, the role of the Auditor General could be summarized as ensuring that the people of New Brunswick get value for their money. That is a laudable objective. It is a massive task. It is made somewhat easier by the fact that the role of the Auditor General is filled by an individual in the province who is eminently qualified to do the job and to fulfill that duties of that role.

The current Auditor General, whom we have representing that office for the people of New Brunswick, is responsible for financial independent audits. She is also responsible for advising the provincial government on how well it is managing its resources. She has 29 years of experience in the New Brunswick government serving in various capacities such as provincial Comptroller. She has worked in as well as the Department of Finance, the New Brunswick Extra-Mural Hospital, and the Office of the Auditor General, as well as serving as a chartered accountant.

When she graduated with a BBA in 1984, she received her chartered accountant designation. She has been an active member of various committees for her profession, including the New Brunswick Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada, the Public Sector Accounting Board, and Canadian Comprehensive Auditing board.

In short, the Auditor General for the province is eminently qualified to fulfill the role with which she is tasked. She is not an exception to that rule. Other eminently qualified individuals have served in various capacities. I recall Daryl Wilson who served with distinction as Auditor General in the province. New Brunswick’s own Mike Ferguson was selected over a number of candidates to serve as the Auditor General of Canada. In New Brunswick, we have had a long tradition of selecting qualified individuals to fulfill this role. Their advice has not been in question. Recommendations that they have come forward with traditionally have been accepted by government.

Even though there have been recent disputes or disagreements on how certain financial items, such as the contingency reserve or the government’s preferred accounting practices, may have been utilized, the Auditor General has made recommendations that have ultimately been accepted by government. We all agree that it is an important role that she currently fills.

For people listening at home, the massive role of the Auditor General of the province may be hard to comprehend. If we relate it more to the role that accounting services provide in the private sector, it is important to recognize and acknowledge the distinction. In the private sector, when financial audits are performed, they do not necessarily go to the president or the chairman. The financial audits are presented to the shareholders of the company—the actual owners of the company. The comparison would be that the Auditor General does not necessarily have to report to the government, although the annual report comes through this Legislature. That report is for the people of New Brunswick, the shareholders of New Brunswick—the men, women, and families who live here.

This role is essential, and that is why, in the very extensive Act that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Auditor General, frequently, the word “shall” is used to describe her role. That role, in legal terms, is a mandatory phrase, not a discretionary phrase. The Auditor General in our province is granted wide discretion. She is immune from prosecution. She has immunity in many aspects of the role she currently fulfills. Therefore, her independence should never be questioned. Yet, in this motion, we are seeking a resolution that the Assembly urges the current government to support the Auditor General’s Office, and to allow additional performance audits and special investigations that may have to be conducted.

The member opposite spoke somewhat eloquently a few moments ago, before I had the opportunity, about the fact that the actual budget of the Auditor General had not been increased by the previous government. There is an important distinction to make here. If that budget had not been increased, the Auditor General of the day would have had to seek supplemental funds. If the Auditor General’s Office did not see the need to do that, no supplemental funds would have been granted. However, in this case, in our current situation, the Auditor General has sought supplemental funds.

The reason I bring that up, Mr. Speaker, is to indicate to you and to everyone in this House that that is not the norm. The Auditor General does not seek additional funding on a whim. It is done with respect for her role and with respect for the guidelines and rules that govern the role. It is not done in a whimsical manner. It is done when the province’s chief watchdog sees a need. I have full confidence and full respect that if the Auditor General feels that there is a need—and this is based on the qualifications, based on the history, based on the criteria, based on the education, based on the track record of the individual in question—then that need is real.

The Act governing the Auditor General allows many things. It is interesting to note that the selection of this Auditor General would make her the first Auditor General who actually went through the selection process that was put in place by the previous government to ensure that not just the Auditor General but all legislative officers were selected in an arm’s-length, nonpartisan, nonpolitical manner. This Auditor General was certainly selected in that way.

In the *Auditor General Act*, there are two clauses that I would like to quote for the record.

9(6) The Auditor General may charge reasonable fees as a recovery for the costs of audits conducted under subsection (2) or (5) or section 12.

9(7) The Auditor General may retain and expend the fees charged under subsection (6) in the manner and for the purposes that the Auditor General considers appropriate.

087

17:55

The motion, which indicates that the Auditor General's Office should be supported, may be considered redundant in light of the two articles that I have just read. We cannot vote against the provisions of the Act. The Act allows for supplemental funds when the Auditor General deems it to be important. This motion asks the government—urges the government—to support the Auditor General's Office by allowing just those situations to take place.

Whether the funding comes through the Board of Management, whether it is a direct budgetary expense, or whether it is additional funding that is approved by LAC—which, again, has a government majority and a government chair—it would be against the principles of corporate transparency and accountability. These are the same principles and the same demands that we make on the private sector, the same principles and demands that are used by Revenue Canada when it is dealing with private corporations and individuals. We cannot vote against the provisions of the Act. I urge all members—the members opposite included—to support this bill and to allow the Auditor General's Office to fund special investigations as the Auditor General deems appropriate. Thank you.

M. Guitard : Cela me fait plaisir de participer aujourd'hui au débat sur la motion 4.

Je l'ai déjà fait à plusieurs reprises, mais j'aimerais profiter encore une fois de l'occasion qui m'est offerte de démontrer jusqu'à quel point l'opposition joue à de petits jeux. Chaque fois que l'opposition présente une motion, donc régulièrement, les démarches qu'elle propose semblent être nobles et sérieuses. Il est alors question de justice, et le tout semble être équitable. Tout semble alors beau, grand et noble. Cependant, lorsque nous commençons à analyser les paroles et les actes de l'opposition, nous réalisons que c'est de la foutaise. L'opposition joue constamment avec les gens.

Au début de la motion 4, l'opposition demande au gouvernement d'appuyer la vérificatrice général en lui permettant de mener des vérifications. Est-ce de cette façon que fonctionnait le processus lorsque les parlementaires du côté de l'opposition formaient le gouvernement? Lui permettaient-ils de faire des vérifications? Fallait-il obtenir la permission du gouvernement de David Alward pour faire des enquêtes. Pour notre part, nous n'avons pas besoin de donner notre permission à la vérificatrice générale; elle a le droit de faire les enquêtes qu'elle veut faire.

Plus loin dans la motion, l'opposition dit que le gouvernement a refusé d'affecter des ressources additionnelles à la vérificatrice générale. Où est la demande? Nous n'avons jamais reçu de demande officielle. Nous n'avons jamais refusé d'affecter un seul cent.

Voilà ce que je veux dire; dans les motions de l'opposition, tout est toujours beau et grandiose. Toutefois, quand nous commençons à lire les détails et à regarder le fond de l'histoire, nous réalisons que ce sont seulement de petits jeux politiques.

À un moment donné, j'avais dit ici que les parlementaires du côté de l'opposition ne vivaient pas sur la même planète que nous et qu'ils manquaient d'oxygène, mais le président m'avait ramené à l'ordre en me disant qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'un langage que je devais utiliser. Aujourd'hui, je vais dire que les élections de 2014 ont probablement créé tout un choc et une commotion pour les parlementaires du côté de l'opposition, qui ne sont pas des Gretzky ou des Crosby; ils ne peuvent pas se remettre d'une commotion cérébrale en l'espace de deux semaines. Il leur faut deux ans, mais, encore aujourd'hui, ils ont la mémoire courte.

En 2014-2015, c'est l'ancien gouvernement qui a gelé le budget de la vérificatrice générale. Nous ne l'avons pas gelé, nous l'avons augmenté de 1,5 %. Les parlementaires du côté de l'opposition ont oublié que leur gouvernement avait gelé ce budget. Pourtant, aujourd'hui, devant la population du Nouveau-Brunswick, les parlementaires du côté de l'opposition disent qu'il faut donner des fonds additionnels à la vérificatrice général et lui laisser plus de liberté. Il faudrait faire ceci et cela. C'est de la foutaise; les parlementaires du côté de l'opposition rient des gens du Nouveau-Brunswick, et c'est pourquoi ils sont assis de ce côté de la Chambre. C'est aussi pour cette raison qu'ils devraient y rester pour encore 20 ans. En fait, 20 ans, c'est le minimum, parce que je m'attends de peut-être prendre ma retraite à 85 ans. Ce ne sera pas avant cela.

088

18:00

J'ai encore de beaux jours devant moi pour taquiner les gens. Le député de Miramichi-Sud-Ouest-Baie-du-Vin nous accuse souvent de faire volte-face. J'ai écouté son discours. Dans la même phrase et, dans un même souffle, il a ...

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, member. It is now 6 p.m. Pursuant to the Standing Rules, we will move on to Condolences and Messages of Sympathy.

Condoléances et messages de sympathie

M. Bourque : C'est avec tristesse que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour annoncer le décès de Germaine Melanson, de Champdoré, le 15 novembre dernier, à l'âge de 72 ans. Née à Sainte-Marie-de-Kent, elle était la fille de feu Alban et de feu Elise Léger.

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M^{me} Melanson a travaillé pour Assurance Vienneau, à Saint-Antoine, pendant plusieurs années. Outre son mari, Robert « Bobby » Melanson, elle manquera beaucoup à ses trois enfants, Carole Crosthwaite (Wayne), de Sackville, Louis (Martine), de Moncton, et Jacques (Lucie) de Dieppe ; à ses cinq petits-enfants, Christelle, Janelle, Amélie, Alexa et Audrey, ainsi qu'à ses deux arrière petits-enfants, Damien et Lily. Elle laisse également dans le deuil trois sœurs, Loretta, Emerise et Alida ; six frères, Olivier, Fabien, Ovide, Amédée, Clarence et Jules, ainsi que plusieurs neveux et nièces.

Les funérailles auront lieu en l'église de Saint-Marie-de-Kent, le lundi 21 novembre 2016, à 11 h.

M^{me} Melanson était fortement impliquée dans sa collectivité de Sainte-Marie-de-Kent. Je désire présenter mes sincères condoléances à son mari, Bobby, qui oeuvre depuis longtemps dans mon association libérale, ainsi qu'à toute la famille.

M^{me} Dubé : C'est avec beaucoup de peine que j'annonce le décès d'Albert Dufour, à l'Hôpital régional d'Edmundston, le 14 novembre, à l'âge de 95 ans et 8 mois. Il laisse dans le deuil sa femme, Léona Martin ; ses enfants, Linda, Colette, Gilbert et Gérald, et deux frères, Alfred et Allain. Il laisse également six petits-enfants, Line, Marco, Nathalie, Stéphane, Kevin et Jennifer, ainsi que huit arrière petits-enfants, Leah, Dylon, Justine, Emilie, Nicolas, Jérémie, Brendon et Kelly.

Les funérailles auront lieu ce vendredi, le 18 novembre, à 16 h 15, en l'église de Saint-Basile. La famille recevra les condoléances de 15 h 30 à 16 h 15.

Je voudrais dire deux mots sur M. Dufour : À 95 ans, il est décédé dans son atelier, en faisant ce qu'il aimait faire. C'était un musicien, un artiste, un entrepreneur et un homme qui était impliqué dans la collectivité.

Messages of Congratulation and Recognition

Hon. Mr. Doherty: Today, I rise to congratulate two of Saint John's finest, Sergeant Stephen Wilson and Constable David MacDonald, who were recognized with the highest honour of the Saint John police force on November 1. The Saint John Board of Police Commissioners gold commendation was awarded to Sergeant Wilson and Constable MacDonald for talking a suspect into lowering a weapon and peacefully ending an armed standoff. Congratulations to Sergeant Wilson and Constable MacDonald for your fine work and your deserved award. Thank you.

Mr. Crossman: Premature birth is the leading cause of death in children under the age of 5 worldwide. Babies born too early may have more health issues than babies born on time and may face long-term health problems that affect the brain, the lungs, hearing, or vision. World

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Prematurity Day on November 17 raises awareness of this serious health crisis. One baby in 10 is born premature worldwide.

Our grandson Max was one of these babies. He was born one year ago, two months early, on November 16, 2015, at the Moncton Hospital. Max is the son of our daughter Kate and Owen Brinson and brother to Carter. We have nothing but praise for the medical staff and everyone at the Moncton Hospital. Today, Max is a healthy and active child. Please join me today in wishing them well.

Mr. Coon: I would like to congratulate Willow Tree Community for receiving the Fredericton Community Foundation Impact Grant this week. It was recognized at a ceremony at the Lieutenant-Governor's house on Tuesday afternoon.

089

18:10

Willow Tree Community is doing great work. It has created a faith-based community that seeks to establish an ecumenical home in the spirit of the L'Arche community founded by Jean Vanier, where adults of varying intellectual abilities can live, celebrate, and grow with one another. I am sure that the money received as part of this award could be put to great use by the Willow Tree community in the coming days and months. I invite all members present to join me in congratulating the Willow Tree on receiving the Impact Grant and on the endeavour of establishing a L'Arche community in Fredericton. Thank you.

Hon. Mrs. Harris: I am very proud to celebrate Lynn Carney, who is a teacher in Sunny Corner, who received the Garth Wade Career Award for a lifetime of achievement and dedicated career in physical education. Lynn has been teaching physical education since she graduated from UNB in 1987. She began coaching sports in 1981. Lynn Carney, who is often fondly called Ms. Lynn Hallihan, is a generous and dynamic person who has a truly positive influence on her students, colleagues, and the community. Lynn is a dear friend of mine and a great example of excellence in teaching. She is dearly loved and appreciated by all who know her. I ask all members to join me in congratulating Lynn Carney on receiving this most prestigious award.

Mr. Oliver: I want to congratulate and bring to the attention of the members the continuance of a 150-year-old tradition. This Sunday, November 20, at three o'clock, Reverend Jane Johnson will be conducting the annual lamplight service which celebrates the Stewarton United Church 150-year history. This once-per-year service, which uses candlelight to help with reading, will feature memories from the church's past, the singing of many old favourite hymns, and, as always, after the service and in keeping with rural tradition in New Brunswick, refreshments will be served. The church is located just off Highway 695 on the East Scotch Settlement Road in Stewarton and all are welcome. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to the Standing Rules, the House is now adjourned.

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(The House adjourned at 6:07 p.m.)
