

Reply to the Speech from the Throne
by Mr. Shawn Graham,
Leader of the Official Opposition

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Unofficial Excerpt from the *Journal of Debates (Hansard)*

[Translation]

I begin today by acknowledging Lieutenant-Governor Marilyn Trenholme Counsell for her excellent work, particularly on behalf of New Brunswick's children.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend my best wishes to you today. You have presided over three very lively sessions, and I am certain this one will be no different.

I would like to acknowledge our Sergeant-at-Arms Dan Bussières. He has been very active not only during the session but throughout the summer and fall, ensuring that our facilities are secure for all those who work here. He takes his work so seriously that he is now protecting the chandelier by keeping it on his desk.

I thank the Clerk, Clerk Assistant, commissionaires, and all staff here at the Legislative Assembly who work tirelessly to ensure that legislative business proceeds as smoothly as possible.

I would also like to welcome our new pages to the Legislative Assembly. I hope that they each have a very productive and positive experience and I look forward to getting to know them better throughout the session.

[Original]

I would like to take this time to offer my condolences to the families of former Lieutenant-Governor George Stanley, former Sergeant-at-Arms Leo McNulty, and the late Supervisor of Political Financing, Sam Field.

Between 1982 and 1987, George Stanley, an educator and historian, served as Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick. Perhaps Mr. Stanley's most prominent achievement is evident from coast to coast to coast in Canada and around the world, for it was George Stanley, in 1965, who proposed the basic design of what would become our Canadian flag.

Leo McNulty served this Chamber well as Sergeant-at-Arms. As children, my brothers, my sister, and I would visit our father here at the Legislature, and Mr. McNulty always treated us with great kindness.

Sam Field held the position of Supervisor of Political Financing since it was created in 1978. He brought justice and fairness to the position and set the standard of unbiased supervision of the rules of political financing in our province.

I would also like to mention the recent passing of Bev O'Keefe, a well-known New Brunswick

businessman. I had the opportunity to work with Mr. O'Keefe on numerous occasions when I worked with the Department of Natural Resources and Energy. He was always a model of dedication and professionalism and a joy to work with on behalf of New Brunswickers.

Today it is a great pleasure for me to see a number of people from all corners of our province, but I would especially like to say thank-you to the people from Kent, whom I have represented since 1998. They have worked hard on my behalf, and I know the hours have been long, especially with the leadership convention that we went through together last May. Without your support and your dedication, I would not be here today to represent you.

My parents are also in the gallery. We come from a very strong family, and without their support, I would not have the opportunity to represent the people of this province with the ability I have.

My wife is also here today, Roxanne. Father Joyce, you had the opportunity to marry us. You were involved in our wedding ceremony last September, and for that, we are truly appreciative. Roxanne, you and I have been involved in this new endeavour since May. We know that the hours will continue to get longer, but together, we will make a difference in our province. It is nice to see your parents here as well, Roxanne.

I want to recognize the civil service of New Brunswick. I believe that it is the best and most dedicated in Canada.

I want to thank the staff in the opposition office and in the Brunswick Street office. Anyone who accuses me of being surrounded by the old boys' club has not paid much attention to these two offices. The vast majority of these people are neither old nor boys. Just ask Tony Barry. Seeing the size of the crowd here, I can tell you that with Tony Barry up there, our party is getting stronger every single day. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the guests in the gallery and to welcome them to the Legislative Assembly. With the great turnout here today from across the entire province, Tony, I hope you packed a big lunch, because we are going to have quite a party afterward.

I would also like to welcome Marcelle Mersereau's father here today, Placide Chiasson, who has made the trip to be with us. It is my understanding that Mr. Chiasson watches us every single day that we are in session, and he sometimes tells Marcelle to stop heckling as well.

It is the enthusiasm and support of these people that reinforces, in my mind, the fact that New Brunswick is headed for change in the next election. Because of their commitment and work ethic, it will be a change for the better.

It is great to look up into the gallery and see our great team of candidates.

[Translation]

Hédard Albert from Caraquet and his neighbour in the Centre-Péninsule, Denis Landry, are candidates.

[Original]

There is Kelly Lamrock from Fredericton-Fort Nashwaak.

[Translation]

Former Mayor Ronald Ouellete is running in Grand Falls Region.

[Original]

Murray Driscoll is our candidate in Kennebecasis. Leroy Armstrong is back and better than ever in Kings East. There is Frank Trevors from Miramichi-Bay du Vin and John Foran of Miramichi Centre.

[Translation]

Our Moncton duo consists of Ray Goudreau in Moncton Crescent and Mike Murphy in Moncton North. Bert Paulin is our candidate in Restigouche West, and Maurice Richard will be carrying our Liberal banner in Rogersville-Kouchibouguac.

[Original]

Our Saint John team is Jamie Whelley and Anne-Marie Mullin. Along with Anne-Marie, we are pleased to welcome two other women, Dr. Sue Purdy in Tantramar and Madeleine Drummie in Western Charlotte. The most recent addition to our team is Scott Target of York.

I believe that this team, along with my caucus colleagues, will form the foundation of the next government of New Brunswick. I say that because from the first convention in Caraquet, which brought out more than 800 people, to the most recent convention in York, which saw 700 Liberals pack the gym in Harvey, momentum is building.

Believe me, government members are taking notice. When I was campaigning in Kennebecasis, the current MLA was so panicked that she called ahead to a senior citizens' home that I was visiting. She actually told them that no photos of Murray Driscoll and me were to be taken. In Miramichi Centre, the government tried to detract from our convention by holding a cheque presentation on the same day. That did not stop over 900 people from packing our nomination convention. Next door, in Miramichi-Bay du Vin, the local MLA has already virtually conceded defeat by stating publicly his job plans after the next election. He used to say that they got rid of Frank and brought in the Tank. Now he knows that the tune has changed. They are getting rid of the Tank and bringing back Frank—Frank Trevors, that is.

I especially want to acknowledge my caucus colleagues, who have been invaluable to me as I have adjusted to my new role. To see the level and diversity of expertise surrounding me is both humbling and heartening. Sheldon, Bernard, Marcelle, Roland, Eric, and Larry, you have a proven record of aggressively holding government accountable and putting forward new ideas and solutions. I know that you are all looking forward to the coming session as much as I am. I am proud of our Liberal team. We are energized and ready to go.

[Translation]

Tuesday's throne speech was very disappointing. It fell far short of the expectations raised by the Premier at the end of last week. Those who have been watching this government over the past

three years should be surprised. The throne speech is long on platitudes and short on substance.

Even the theme of the speech is somewhat questionable: Strengthening Prosperity. However, has New Brunswick truly become prosperous under this government?

[Original]

The throne speech attempts to paint a rosy picture. It neglects to mention that in 2001, New Brunswick had zero percent job growth over the previous year. It neglects to mention that the Toronto-Dominion Bank forecasts that GDP growth in New Brunswick in 2002-03 will be the third lowest in the country, at 3.1%.

However, I know that the Premier does not like it when I use statistics from impartial, unbiased sources. For some reason, this really bugs him. Instead, let's look at what his own Minister of Finance has to say. In Saturday's *Telegraph-Journal*, the Finance Minister said:

I think when I deliver the next budget, people will just see how challenged we are with some of our revenue growth as a province.

I think people will see that the fund will be used for the purpose that it was there. It was there to ensure as balanced a budget as we can provide here in the province under challenging economic times and challenging times in the revenue area.

Challenging times? Now, how can we be enjoying the prosperity the Premier claims we are enjoying and be facing the dire challenges that the Minister of Finance suggests? Whom are New Brunswickers to believe? They cannot have it both ways.

Is New Brunswick enjoying greater prosperity than it has in the past couple of years? If things are as fiscally sunny as the Premier says they are, then there is no reason to dip into the rainy day fund. The fact is, this government wants to have it both ways. It wants to boast about prosperity, while using the rainy day fund to hand out preelection goodies. It is the oldest trick in the book, and I have faith that the people of this province will not be fooled. They will not be fooled by this government's passing mention of health care in this throne speech.

[Translation]

So devoid of genuine ideas and initiatives in health care is this government that it calls for a unanimous motion blaming the federal government. It did the same thing three years ago. I admire this government's commitment to recycling, but this is ridiculous. It cannot tell me, and it certainly cannot tell the people of this province, that our health care system is working so well that no new initiative is needed.

It is impossible to talk about increased spending in health care without mentioning the increase in federal transfers since this government took office.

New Brunswick does not need a government that blames or shirks responsibility. What New Brunswick needs is a government that is committed to action in health care.

New Brunswickers have told us that access to quality health care is their number one concern. We know that this access relies upon a strong health care team. We know that recruitment and retention efforts will be more successful if championed by the top levels of government.

I have made a personal commitment to recruitment and retention. I want my leadership to be judged by our success in recruiting and retaining physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals, because I know that this is the most pressing issue on New Brunswickers' minds.

[Original]

Two weeks ago, I unveiled the Liberal Party's health care recruitment and retention plan. The cornerstone of this plan was the creation of an office of recruitment and retention reporting directly to the Premier's Office. This would provide focus, coordination, energy, and drive to the very competitive business of recruiting and retaining health care professionals.

Imagine my surprise when, two days after I presented our action-oriented plan, a nursing recruitment fair took place right here in Fredericton and not one representative of the province was present. What was this government's response? First, it blamed the regional health authorities and said it was their responsibility, not government's. Then, the Minister of Health had the audacity to say that no one had asked him to go. He suggested it was the job of the Nursing Resources Advisory Committee to tell him to go to a local recruitment fair. Here is a loonie for the Premier, because the way his government passes the buck, it must be running low.

As a new leader, I am often asked how a government under my leadership will differ from the current one. The answer is simple: We will act. The current government chooses to blame others. I choose to make recruitment a personal mission. It chooses procrastination. I choose action.

I do not pretend to have all the answers myself. I did not come up with our recruitment plan while working in my office here in Fredericton. It was developed by listening to the people of our province. While the Premier spent the summer assessing his chances outside the province and hanging out at the Albany Club in Toronto, I was traveling to every corner of the province.

The people of New Brunswick know the challenges they face with health care, but they also have some solid solutions, if only this government would pay attention. Quite simply, with a government under my leadership, the people of New Brunswick will get much better. When we see a problem or face challenges, we will not study them endlessly, we will not sweep them under the rug, and we will not ignore them and hope they go away. We will face them head-on. We will figure out the best plan of attack, and then we will act.

A couple of months ago, I was on a television panel with the Minister of Finance. He said: Shawn, all you want to do is act, act, act. You know, for once, he was right. I do want to act, because I think it is an injustice to the people of New Brunswick, who are waiting for a decision that will affect their lives and their children's lives, to let stacks of unread reports pile up and do nothing. Well, I will do something. I am a doer. I always have been, and I do not intend to stop now. The measure of a government is not how many reports it amasses but how many lives it changes for the better. That can only happen with a government that can act—not one with one that hides from the tough decisions, not with one that skirts the issues or passes the buck, but

with one that is willing to act. In response to the statement of the Minister of Finance, yes, I do act, and so should you.

[Translation]

Our provincial governments have always forged ahead, never afraid of hurdles or obstacles. In the sixties, when it became clear that action had to be taken to remedy the disparity among the regions and the linguistic communities of the province, Louis Robichaud forged ahead with the Equal Opportunity program.

It must be said that, to his credit, Richard Hatfield continued advancing the Equal Opportunity program and promoting the official languages.

In the eighties, when economic times were uncertain in the province and when jobs or lack thereof were on everybody's minds, Frank McKenna asked New Brunswickers to put their faith in him. In return, he put his faith in New Brunswickers, and, together, they turned the province's economic outlook around. Communities that were on the verge of depression embraced new industries and changed their destinies.

I have faith in New Brunswickers. This province has been lifted up by generations of builders. It is the New Brunswick way and it is the Liberal way.

That is why, in the coming session, we will not only be working to hold the government accountable for its inaction, but we will also be putting forward an agenda of our own. We will outline initiatives that we would take as a government to address some of the concerns that New Brunswickers have.

We know that we can do better in New Brunswick. We know that we must do better in health care.

[Original]

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, there are 200 fewer registered nurses working in the province than there were in 1999. Statistics Canada says that there are over 32 000 New Brunswickers without a family doctor. Even the conservative-leaning Fraser Institute says that New Brunswickers wait two months to see a specialist and another two months for treatment, one of the longest waits in the country. That is why we brought forward motions on health care recruitment. We need to have competitive incentives to bring in new doctors for the 32 000 New Brunswickers without one and to deal with the number of retiring physicians.

We need to put incentives in place for other health care professionals as well. This summer I learned about two young cousins from the Miramichi region. They went to the UNB School of Nursing together and returned every weekend to Miramichi. After graduation, both young women wanted to return home to work, but instead, they ended up on the other side of the continent because the state of Oregon offered what New Brunswick would not—a full-time job.

Last year, with great fanfare, the Premier announced that nurse practitioners would be a reality in the province. What he seemed to overlook was the lack of a full-time nurse practitioner program

in the province. UNB has only a part-time program, and no Francophone program exists at all. If the government plans on staffing its new community health centres with nurse practitioners, it had better figure out where it is going to find them. The government may not be prepared to invest \$1.2 million per year to turn New Brunswick nurses into nurse practitioners, but we will. We believe it is an investment that we cannot afford to ignore.

This has not been a great fall for emergency rooms around the province. The people in Minto and Albert County and on the Peninsula have all been hit hard by ER closures. Where have the Conservative MLAs been? The member for Grand Lake toed the government line and said that if Minto could find a doctor, it could keep its ER. When the people were able to find physicians, his government said they would lose services anyway. Where was the member for Albert when his emergency room was on the chopping block? He has sat idly by while the people of his riding deal with the anxiety of losing their services on December 7.

It is time for leadership on this issue. It is time for government to bring forward a clear plan on emergency services in this province. Communities cannot continue to be frightened by the spectre of losing ER services at the eleventh hour. The bottom line on health care for the people of this province is: keep it accessible, keep it affordable, and keep it public.

The people of this province are nervous. They are nervous when they hear the Premier musing in Toronto about the possibility of private health care. It is time for the Premier to explain what he means when he speaks of the private delivery of publicly funded services. Call it what it is: a two-tier system. He spoke about it to the Romanow commission, and he spoke about it in Toronto. It is clear that he advocates the private delivery of health care, and that is a recipe for disaster.

I am committed to a public health care system that is accessible to all, whether you are rich or poor, Francophone or Anglophone, no matter where you live in our province. That is what separates us from them. Health care is a complex issue, but government cannot shy away from it. It is time for action on health care.

It is also time for action on education.

[Translation]

Our students are at the back of the pack in provincial, national, and international testing. Our university students are facing tuition increases between 8% and 10%.

Education has always been a personal passion for me. Education is basic for any plan for New Brunswick's future. I want to ensure that our schools are safe and healthy learning environments, that our students are able to compete on the national and international level, and that no students are forced to shelve their dreams of a good future because they cannot afford pursuing their education.

The current government paid Alberta education consultant Elena Scraba \$50 000 to review the performance of New Brunswick students on recent a test. Now that the Minister of Education has seen the report, he is refusing to make it public.

I say that we cannot move forward on education without a public debate. We need to involve not only government but also teachers, parents, and students. That is why we will put forward a resolution calling on the Minister of Education to release the report. We need to know where we stand today so we can know how to move forward.

With the declining enrollment in New Brunswick schools, we have an opportunity to improve the ratios of teaching staff to students and provide better resources to children with learning disabilities.

[Original]

Rather than cutting teaching positions, as this government has done, we have brought forward a motion calling for a three-year freeze on cutting teaching positions so that we might take advantage of the opportunity presented to us.

Also, we need to know that our students' schools are safe and healthy environments. I am proud of the member sitting on my right. He was aggressive in improving school infrastructure. This government has done very little. We have aging schools around the province that need to be looked after. I had the opportunity recently to tour Harrison Trimble High School with Ray Goudreau and Principal McConnell. The labs in this school have not been upgraded in 20 years. There is limited access for people with disabilities. The students themselves recently had to launch a campaign to bring this matter to government's attention. This is just one of many schools that need improvement. That is why we are calling on government to put in place a multiyear education infrastructure strategy.

I am always amazed at how this government cannot even move on something that makes pure common sense and on ideas that it seems to like. Last year, we brought a motion forward calling on this Legislature to authorize the Select Committee on Education to invite representatives of the province's universities to appear before the committee. The idea was to review their spending and outline their plans and priorities, with the hope of improving our postsecondary education system. At the time, the Premier said: "That is something I will certainly consider. So there is one out there that is good." It has been a year, and he has yet to consider it. If this Premier cannot even act on an idea that he has endorsed, how can the people of this province trust the government to act on the really tough decisions?

Well, we still believe it is a good idea. We have talked to university representatives who are favourable to opening this dialogue, so we have brought that motion back. We are going to give the government a second chance to do the right thing.

[Translation]

We are also giving the government a second chance to take a stand on smoking on our school grounds.

On Tuesday, Bill 57, which would have seen smoking prohibited on school grounds, died on the Order Paper. However, we believe in this bill and we know that students, teachers, and people around this province believe in it too. So, yesterday, we brought in a new bill. It is an improved, which incorporates suggestions made by the Canadian Cancer Society to include consumption of

all tobacco products.

[Original]

We knew it was still the right thing to do when we heard teenagers speaking so passionately about their belief in this ban. In fact, Mr. Speaker, your old school made one of the most forceful presentations. When high school principal Clary Wilbur told of his battle with cancer . . . When concerned citizens voiced their support for the health of our children . . . The one dissenting voice that was heard was that of the Minister of Education.

We are asking the Minister of Education, Dennis Furlong, to do what is right, to help the kids of this province who get hooked on smoking. We are asking him and this government to put the ban in place. If we bungle raising our province's children, then nothing else really matters.

In June 2000, the *Children Come First* report on child welfare was released by this government. Two and a half years later, it is clear that children do not come first with this government. Industrial tax cuts maybe, rainy day reelection funds maybe, shadow tolls maybe, but definitely not children. For several weeks this fall, our social workers were on strike. The people of this province were deeply concerned about the impact of such a strike on our children. Even though the strike has been resolved and social workers are back on the job, several very serious concerns exist in the child protection system. The *Children Come First* report outlined some very clear shortcomings in the protection of New Brunswick children. *Children Come First* recommended that 177 new social workers be hired in child protection, child in care, children's residential services, and adoption services.

[Translation]

Admittedly, the government did add new social workers in adoption services.

I support efforts to enhance our adoption services. Anything that will help to give children a safe and loving home is a good thing. However, adoption is only one facet of a very complex and over-burdened child protection system.

That is why we are calling on government to implement the recommendations regarding social workers. That is why a Liberal government under my leadership would take action to put more workers in the system.

We would establish a Child/Youth Advocate position as recommended in *Children Come First*. This is one of the most basic steps to take to ensure that children and young people have a voice in government.

[Original]

We are also urging government to review the provision of services to youth aged 16 to 18 to ensure that they receive the services and support required. You only have to walk through downtown Fredericton to know that there are teenagers falling through rather large holes in our social safety net. If we lose them at 17, we run a terrible risk that they will be lost forever.

I had the opportunity to speak to the New Brunswick Foster Families Association at its annual

general meeting last month. It is currently circulating a petition regarding services to 16- to 18-year-olds, and I was pleased to sign it. I will repeat today the commitment I made to the association: A Liberal government will review services and legislation to ensure stability and consistency of support to teenagers who need it.

As well as *Children Come First*, there is another report that has been gathering dust: *A Framework for an Integrated Service Delivery System for Persons with Autism in New Brunswick*, by the interdepartmental committee on services to people with autism. A surprising 1 in 500 children is affected by autism.

A recent court ruling by the British Columbia Court of Appeal has ruled that a failure to provide treatment to children with autism is a clear violation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. With early intervention, the chances that a person with autism can function more fully in society increase dramatically, yet in August, months after receiving the interdepartmental report, the Minister of Health had the nerve to say that he had not even read it.

The Premier has been talking about looking into the eyes of children lately. He looked into his son's eyes and postponed his leap to federal politics. He looked into the eyes of seventh graders in Maine and decided that laptops in schools would be a good idea. Well, I would challenge the Premier to look into the eyes of a 7-year-old living with autism. Look into his eyes and tell him why you will not help him.

A Liberal government will implement the recommendations of the interdepartmental committee—not because of the British Columbia ruling, not because it will save money on care down the road. We will do it because it is the right thing to do for these kids and for their families.

It is not only the young who are waiting for government to act. New Brunswick seniors are also concerned about a number of issues.

[Translation]

It is not only the young who are waiting for government to act. New Brunswick seniors are also concerned about a number of issues.

One area causing hardship for the older people of the province is rising drug costs. Last year, we brought forward a motion asking government to examine the feasibility of making an adjustment to the Prescription Drug Program ceiling in the next year to reflect inflation.

As well, we urged the government to adopt a policy that would automatically adjust the ceilings for the provincial Prescription Drug Program based on an index of inflation.

When we brought this motion forward last November, the situation for many seniors was very dire. It has worsened significantly since then, with premium increases from Atlantic Blue Cross as well as annual inflation in drug costs.

No action has been taken to alleviate this hardship on our seniors. However, we believe in our

initiatives and we will bring back this motion on the Prescription Drug Program.

[Original]

Our population is aging, and New Brunswick seniors need a strong voice in this government. This government has merely announced a seniors' council. It has yet to make it a reality. However, a Liberal government would give seniors more than a council. It would also give them an actual voice at the Cabinet table. I stand by that commitment today. We will implement a minister for seniors who will chair a Premier's council on the status of seniors, which will report directly to me as Premier. This idea comes straight from the N.B. Senior Citizens' Federation itself.

Seniors also have to deal with another issue that affects their limited incomes, and that is the skyrocketing cost of insurance premiums. Seniors are not the only ones being burdened by this. We introduced a motion last fall urging government to bring forward a white paper on this issue. Finally, on January 8, after much pressure from the opposition and the public, the government announced a Select Committee on Private Passenger Automobile Insurance. It is now November 21. The experts were consulted. Concerned citizens presented briefs. The report has been completed for two months, but government has yet to release it.

[Translation]

This situation is worsening. Are there any easy answers? No, but we must move forward. Government must make the report public and move ahead on the recommendations.

As prescription drug costs rise and insurance premiums increase, New Brunswickers are also concerned about the impact this government's plan for NB Power will have on their electricity bills.

[Original]

The government has promised to move ahead on the restructuring of NB Power and on measures that would see electricity generation deregulated. I would caution the government to look carefully at what has happened in other jurisdictions. Ontario, Alberta, and California come to mind quickly, but throughout North America, there are many other areas either completely drawing back or slowing down the deregulation process—you had better listen to this, Mr. Premier—Colorado, Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Hampshire. The list goes on. You have to ask yourself: What do they know that this government has failed to realize?

Ontario went down a road similar to where the New Brunswick government is taking this province. It broke its power company into three areas: distribution, generation, and transmission. Its plan was to go completely into the private sector to be able to bring Ontario Hydro's debt more in line. At that time, University of Toronto Finance Professor Myron Gordon warned the government that public hydro versus private hydro boils down to this: Consumers will inevitably pay more for private power because their bills will reflect the return on capital demanded by private investors. Well, he was right. After just a year of uncertainty and huge price increases, the Ontario government was forced to backtrack. The current Premier has rolled back rates to the 1994 level. He is now actually giving money back to Ontario consumers, and he has canceled

plans to sell Hydro One.

Critics of the plan here in New Brunswick are certain this province's power rates are going to increase by as much as 20 % by April. The Energy Minister says he is confident he can keep rates down. He also says he is about to enter into a private partnership for the Coleson Cove refurbishment. The question is, Why?

[Translation]

The experts have told us that the refurbishment of Coleson Cove is financially viable. NB Power has said the investment in this facility will have a payback period of six years. New Brunswickers will benefit; so, why enter into a partnership with the private sector?

The minister is right that we have enough capacity and even, sometimes, a surplus of power in this province. That is of course when all the plants are up and running, when the water levels in the Saint John River are high, and when Point Lepreau is not down for maintenance. How often are all our plants up and running?

[Original]

We would like to take the Premier at his word, but right now New Brunswickers want guarantees. They want guarantees that when a deal is struck and the dust settles, New Brunswickers will still have first access to affordable and reliable energy. That is why I am calling on this government to say no to privatization and to move cautiously on deregulation.

There can be a role for private-public partnerships, but New Brunswickers must retain control and ownership of the generation and transmission infrastructure of NB Power. We have brought forward a motion calling on government to do just that. This must be done to protect New Brunswickers from the rate shock experienced by other jurisdictions.

These are just some of the initiatives we have brought forward for the coming session. We have also made motions regarding the improvement of transportation infrastructure—no one builds roads like Sheldon Lee did, though—pay equity, and Sunday shopping. In addition to the improved bill on the tobacco ban on school property, we are looking at other legislative amendments aimed at improving the quality of life for New Brunswickers.

I am certain the Premier will resort to the same tired lines about the opposition being negative and not offering positive suggestions, but this is clearly not the case. We have offered numerous recommendations, and we have even had success in pushing government to do the right thing.

Last year, we pushed for better safety measures on the Sussex interchange. The Minister of Transportation may have thought he was the hero of the day when he announced rumble strips along that section, but the people of Sussex know better. They know that it was the pressure they put on government and the pressure we put on government that forced him to act.

[Translation]

On the insurance issue, opposition pressure forced the formation of a select committee. We saw similar results with pay equity. The opposition motion, in combination with the aggressive

campaign by the Coalition for Pay Equity, forced the government to establish a wage gap round table. It is not as far as we would go, but, at least, it is movement.

[Original]

Even three years ago, I stood with the farmers and fought against the decimation of the Department of Agriculture. Together, we forced government to back away from the planned cuts.

I am putting the government on warning today: We are not going to stop pushing it. Every single day of this session, we will be here fighting for the people of New Brunswick. What is really sad, though, is that this government should have to be dragged kicking and screaming to do the right thing.

We have an incredible opportunity to improve the lives of our fellow citizens. I want to ensure that people have access to family doctors, that children are getting the education they need, that those who want the dignity of work can have it, and that our seniors, families, and children are looked after. It is not about logo-sprinkled backdrops or empty platitudes. It is about hard work, it is about making tough decisions, and it is about action. In the end, that is what separates us from them. At the end of this session, New Brunswick voters will see that the choice is clear. They will see that it is time for action, and they will see that it is time for the Liberals again.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.