

October 26, 2018

[Original]

### Carbon Tax

**Mr. Higgs:** In yesterday's newspaper, the MP for Saint John claimed that the Premier knew since spring that his carbon tax plan would not be approved by Ottawa. Yet, all through the election campaign, the Premier kept insisting that the plan would be accepted by Ottawa. Can the Premier explain how the people of New Brunswick should have any confidence in him if the claims by the MP for Saint John are true and if, in fact, he has known for months that his plan would not be accepted? Can the Premier explain that, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I think that all New Brunswickers were aware of the knee-jerk reaction that we saw from the Minister of Environment in Ottawa when we released our components of our climate change plan. Mr. Speaker, we understand that climate change is the largest challenge facing humanity, and we all have to act. That includes us, as citizens in our province. That is why we have a plan to phase out electricity generated by coal by 2030. That is why we have a plan to ask large emitters to pay their fair share. That is why we want to invest more in energy efficiency in our homes, hospitals, and schools. That is also why we want to ensure that we do everything that we can, but also help to ensure that we protect consumers.

Mr. Speaker, since the last days of submitting the proposal, we have talked to Ottawa about why our plan is going to work to curb emissions and combat climate change all the while ensuring that we protect consumers. We submitted our document only, I think, on September 1 or at the end of August, and then we have just received the response over the past few days.

**Mr. Higgs:** Mr. Speaker, I think the point and the question is: Who do we believe here? Do we believe Wayne Long and his statement that the Premier has known for a long time—long since they submitted the program—that, basically, it was not going to be accepted and it would be rejected? Or do we believe the Premier, who has been saying for months that it would be accepted? And is he telling us that he knew only when we found out, last Friday or one day last week or earlier this week or whenever it was, a few days ago? Is the Premier saying that we actually knew at the same time that he did? Who is telling the truth here, Mr. Speaker? Is it Wayne Long, or is it the Premier? That is the question.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, Wayne Long is a phenomenal MP and a citizen of this province. He works very hard on behalf of the people of Saint John-Rothesay. Like all New Brunswickers, he would have seen that, yes, indeed, the Minister of Environment publicly stated...

We debated this in this House. Media have talked to me about it several times over the past few months, that, indeed, Ottawa thought that the consumer part of our carbon plan action plan would not comply. Mr. Speaker, I said that it should comply. I said that we would stand up



to do everything that we could to have it comply. We will still do that, Mr. Speaker, because we believe that our plan will curb emissions while fighting climate change in a way in which we will still be able to grow our economy here and in a way that we can help families that are struggling to get ahead by ensuring that we help with the cost of living for them. Mr. Speaker, at the same time, our plan is asking large emitters to pay their fair share, eliminating electricity generated by coal by 2030, and investing in homes, hospitals, and schools to be as energy efficient as possible in this province.

**Mr. Higgs:** Mr. Speaker, once again, timelines become vague, and who knew what when? This has been a history of this government for quite some time. I think that we could go back to several issues. The property tax scandal certainly would be one of note.

Mr. Speaker, in the September 11 newspaper, the following quote is attributed to the Premier.

*Being able to work closely with Dominic LeBlanc over the next few years is a great asset to ensure our climate change plan will be approved by Ottawa.*

In the paper a few days ago, the Premier is quoted as saying:

*The idea that the federal or provincial governments are going to make important decisions based on who they're friends with, that's not how we do politics in this country.*

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain how the people of New Brunswick would have confidence in someone who makes two completely opposing statements? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** To start with, I will address what the Leader of the Opposition brought up in his preamble. I think it is very important to emphasize that some of our government officials were in fact discussing this file until August. In fact, at the end of August, they had discussions with officials in Ottawa about the plan to combat climate change that was going to be submitted by New Brunswick.

Naturally, having good relationships with any government can certainly be helpful for us, but I think it is also obvious that we are in no way saying that people would make important decisions about policies, investments, and actions that will support provinces, communities, Canadians, or New Brunswickers based on who their friends are.

I hope the Leader of the Opposition is not saying that this is what the government should be doing. I can tell you that this is not what we are doing, and it is not what we expect Ottawa to do, just because we have friends in the federal government.



[Original]

**Mr. Higgs:** Mr. Speaker, my point was about the two conflicting statements. That is the issue, and that is what we see over and over again. Mr. Speaker, the Premier was very vocal in his disagreement with the stance that I was taking, that the Trudeau government should be taken to court over the carbon tax. The Premier suggested that it was a waste of time and money and was destined to fail. That was the position of the Premier. He was very clear, until Wednesday.

In yesterday morning's paper, we read that the Premier is threatening to sue Ottawa over the carbon tax. Can the Premier explain to the people of New Brunswick how they can expect to have confidence in someone who is unable to stay faithful to his own position or convictions? Or what facts have now changed? He is now suing the federal government, which is a position that we have taken strongly since the beginning. It is now one that the Premier is thinking: Oh, well, maybe that is the right thing to do after all. Please answer the question.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, as always, the Leader of the Opposition is using very charged language. What we said is that we will consider all options, including any legal pursuits that could be viable. The other options could include looking at doing something different with the excise tax, Mr. Speaker, and there could be other options that would be presented by the officials of the Department of Environment. That is what I said to the media. It covered the fact that we are open to considering legal options if they are tenable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear that the idea of putting this through the courts to question the jurisdictional aspects of this file is, we think, futile because the legal advice is very clear that the federal government does have the right to do this. Where we will be looking, if there is a case to be made to pursue in the courts—I am not saying that there is, but unfortunately, I have to talk about potential court cases on the floor of the Legislature because of the question—is at procedural fairness. Mr. Speaker, we believe that it is potentially possible that we have a legal case because our province is going to have to pay more taxes on gas than other provinces across the country to be able to succeed in being approved.

## Paramedics

**Mr. Cardy:** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election, and long may you serve in that chair. I am honoured to stand in the House today. Thank you to the people of Fredericton-West-Hanwell and all of those who supported me in getting here. It turns out that in my case, at least, Einstein might have made a mistake. Sometimes, doing the same thing over and over again does yield a different result.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Health said about the ambulance crisis that “if you look at something, you will always find cracks”. Mr. Speaker, we are talking here about lives that have been lost. Brave first responders have been left blaming themselves for their government's failure to protect them and their interests in their profession. This is not a crisis caused by paramedics. This is a crisis caused by politicians, and it has to be fixed by politicians.



My question for the minister is this: Did he inform the Paramedic Association of New Brunswick, the professional body representing our province's paramedics, about the green paper that the Department of Health had been preparing and then released earlier this week?

**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I also want to thank the constituents of Kent South for entrusting me with another mandate. I will try to do them proud, as much as I can.

In terms of the paramedic situation, I want to remind the House that approximately 100 000 calls per year are made within the paramedic sector in the province. It is unfortunate that these situations occur. We want them not to occur. We are doing everything in our power for them not to occur. As for batting 100 000 out of 100 000, I have yet to see a system that could make that happen. We are working, however, to get as close as possible to that number. We have done so. We have done some very interesting initiatives, including rapid response units that will be implemented soon. Thank you.

**Mr. Cardy:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for answering a question. It was not the question I asked, but we will move along.

[*Translation*]

The Paramedic Association of New Brunswick had not seen the green paper prepared by the government before it was made public this week; so much for cooperation and so much for evidence-based decision-making.

So, while the Premier, who was under pressure from the public, was saying that the ambulance crisis had become a priority for his government, the same government was trying to dodge the question in order to hide from the people who are risking their lives in these ambulances.

A few months ago, the Mayor of Belledune asked the Department of Health for data on ambulance response times in his community. He never got an answer. The department is now saying that his letter must have been lost in the mail. However, the information he is looking for is now in the green paper released this week. According to the green paper, the fail rate, in terms of response times, was one out of three.

My question is for the minister: Paramedics want to know...

[*Original*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Time.

(Interjections.)



[Translation]

**Mr. Speaker:** Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please be seated.

[Original]

Please be seated. The time is one minute. Thank you.

[Translation]

Honourable Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** Listen, what I can tell you... I still want to take this opportunity to thank all paramedics who are working in this province. Every day, they save New Brunswickers' lives. It is important that, in all this, these people be recognized for their dedication to their job and their commitment. It is most unfortunate to see that, in some cases, people are experiencing a lot of anxiety and suffering. These are unfortunate situations that occur. I am committed to preventing such events, and I know that all members of my government are supporting me in this regard. As a government, we will always make sure that fewer of these situations occur, because every life matters for New Brunswick. Thank you.

[Original]

**Mr. Cardy:** The minister's own report shows that one third of Ambulance New Brunswick stations failed to meet their response time targets—one third. The minister excuses this by praising an accreditation report which says that Ambulance New Brunswick has attained the highest level of performance for a community-based organization. What the minister does not share is that this rating comes largely from information provided by the organization itself. Let's remember that the minister speaks for a government that, just a few months ago, gave itself an overall rating of 95%. We now know that the government would not meet with the Paramedic Association, we know the government knew that the response time numbers were bad, and we know that this government re-signed the contract with Medavie regardless.

Mr. Speaker, this government needs to stop downloading the consequences of poor management onto the backs of the paramedics and the patients they care for. Will the minister make a fresh start and commit to meeting as soon as possible with the Paramedic Association and with representatives of all parties, using the association's 35 recommendations as a starting point for solving the ambulance crisis? If the government is serious about cooperation...

**Mr. Speaker:** Time. Time.



**Hon. Mr. Bourque:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to correct what was said earlier. Yes, I personally met with members of the Paramedic Association last week. I had a very interesting discussion with them, and we discussed the different recommendations that they wanted to publish. That was obviously well received on our side, and much of it has found its way to the green paper we published a couple of days ago.

To directly answer the member's question, absolutely, I will meet with the Paramedic Association once again to discuss its paper and our paper. Also, I am extending an olive branch. Because we have a public review, the Paramedic Association will also be asked to come forward to this committee. All parties will look into this matter, and we will look at tangible solutions and concrete actions.

### **Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements**

**Mr. Carr:** Once again, I would like to congratulate all my colleagues on both sides of the House on their successful reelections or first-time elections.

I want to talk about the flooding from this past spring that happened along the Saint John River Valley. Before I go into my question, I want to thank all the staff at EMO, the first responders, the volunteers, the community leaders, and my colleagues on both sides of the House who were on the ground in their communities for several days in a row, from daylight to dark, looking after their constituents.

It has been over five months now since the spring floods subsided, and there are still many files that I believe have not yet been completed on this financial assistance. I would like to know from the minister responsible or the Premier himself, since the Premier did take the liberty to come to Oromocto and go for a nice boat ride, whether the Cabinet has approved the full package for this flood relief.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mr. Landry:** I, too, would like to congratulate all those who were elected as members, with the support of their constituents, for this new session of the Legislative Assembly.

I also wish to thank all those who in any way participated in the efforts, whether this means the people at the New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization or the folks at the federal level who supported those already working here in New Brunswick to help us. I want to thank all those people. There are the volunteers who took part to ensure that everyone...

You know, the flooding last spring was really disastrous. It was probably one of the biggest floods we have ever experienced in this province. All those who stepped up...

We are currently working to compensate all those who sent in claims. So many people were affected by this flooding, and I will tell you that, at this time, we are busy settling the claims.



[Original]

**Mr. Carr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the honourable minister for his answer. Mr. Speaker, I am still receiving phone calls from constituents in my riding that are still struggling with their files. The staff at EMO and at the call centres are doing the best they can to help them all. We all provided staff from our offices in the spring to help with the application process and to try to field the phone calls. People had to pitch in and do the best they could for all regular New Brunswickers who, really, were displaced and had their livelihoods put on hold. Some of them are still put on hold. I would like to know today from the minister whether he knows how many or what percentage of the files are still pending or have not been completed yet.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Landry:** You know, the floods last spring are a bit different from what happened in the Acadian Peninsula. You know, we were hit by the ice storm. People were able to go back home about two weeks later in certain cases. As soon as the power was restored, these people were able to settle back into their homes, whereas the situation is completely different in the case of the flooding.

I am looking at the data I have here. To date, 911 applications for disaster financial assistance have been submitted, and over 600 applications have been settled. So, I can tell my colleague opposite that, right now, precisely 626 applications have been dealt with. That means these people have received their money. However, there are still 121 applications left to be finalized. My officials are working very, very, very, very actively to try to deal with these applications as quickly as possible. We know that this will happen in the coming days.

[Original]

**Mr. Carr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you once again to the minister for his answer. I believe that he feels that this is an important topic that we need to put behind us and that we need to have the people of New Brunswick looked after in a timely manner. It has been five months. These files are still open, and that is not acceptable by any means. I truly think that the minister believes that as well. I want to know from the minister whether he will set a hard and fast timeline to have these finished up.

Winter is coming, Mr. Speaker, and I have constituents in my riding who still do not have money to buy a heat pump. They do not have... In some of their mini homes, that is all they had for heat. They had their heat pumps. Their vents for furnaces underneath were full of water. Now, they are full of mould, so remediation has to take place. We need to have these made as a priority, to have them finished up and put to bed so that these people can go back to their homes before Christmas. When is the timeline?



[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Landry:** I am going to finish what I started earlier when we were talking about the ice storm. Back home, two weeks later, people were in their homes. Regarding the floods, I acknowledge what my colleague opposite just said. There are people who are still not back in their homes. Will that happen by Christmas? I cannot tell you. There are still 121 cases that are in the hands of adjusters. All sorts of different factors can make things move more slowly than one might like. The fact remains that the demand was enormous.

This is an unfortunate experience that some people in the province have gone through. What we are doing is trying to get things going or taking things one step further in order to move this along as quickly as possible. I put myself in the shoes of the people in this situation, knowing that some of them have probably not been able to set foot in their homes for several months. However, please note that we will attempt the impossible to try to help all these people in the shortest possible time.

[Original]

## Climate Change

**Mr. Coon:** The Premier has said on a number of occasions that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity and that government must take concrete actions to tackle climate change. Most New Brunswickers agree, as I do.

The recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, however, reminds us how urgently we must take action, concluding that limiting global warming to 1.5°C requires transitions in energy, transportation, buildings, infrastructure, and industry. This implies deep emission reductions in all sectors and a significant increase in investments to get there.

Can the Premier tell this House how he intends to manage this critical transition for New Brunswickers when he was unable to design a carbon-pricing plan that was compliant with federal rules?

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member opposite's question. I could not agree more that we all have to step up and do everything that we can to fight climate change together. That includes all countries across the globe, every province within our country, and, of course, all New Brunswickers. That is why we put forward a plan that we believe will help us to do exactly that—play our role to combat change, all the while ensuring that we can still continue the economic growth that we have created together and ensuring that families that are struggling to get ahead do not see even more pressure on the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure New Brunswickers that we have a plan that was accepted in terms of many components. We have a plan that will phase out electricity generated by coal by



2030, which the federal government wanted to see across the country. We have a plan that will invest heavily in energy efficiency with the plan. Of course, we want to ask large emitters to pay their fair share. When it comes to consumers, we want to ensure that they do not pay one more cent.

**Mr. Coon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Climate change is damaging the health and well-being of New Brunswickers now. We need solutions now, developed in New Brunswick by New Brunswickers. The IPCC says that the world has a dozen years to turn things around, yet all I hear now is the Premier joining the Tories in fighting measures designed to fight climate change.

Will the Premier finally commit to implementing a made-in-New Brunswick carbon-pricing plan, as recommended by the Select Committee on Climate Change from this House, that is compliant with federal carbon-pricing rules so that we can replace the federal carbon-pricing system with our own and control our own destiny? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Mr. Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that it has an impact on the health and well-being of New Brunswickers, and I would even add that studies very much show that climate change will have an impact on our economy as well. Therefore, for many reasons, including that it is the right thing to do for the next generation but also because it is in the interest of all New Brunswickers, Canadians, and people across the globe, we need to step up to combat climate change. I will not repeat all the components of our plan that will be moving forward and that are compliant.

When it comes to the consumer piece, I want to make something really clear here. Our argument is that the taxes on gas in New Brunswick are already some of the highest in the country. Therefore, we believe that since we have already taken action and essentially put a price on carbon by having the excise tax and the HST where they are, we here in New Brunswick should be able to ensure that consumers do not pay more. We do not think it is fair that New Brunswick consumers will pay more while somebody in Alberta will not pay even as much as we are at the moment. That is why we are standing up for New Brunswickers.

## Highways

**Mrs. Conroy:** My question is about our riding at home. During our campaign in Miramichi, a major concern in our region—and it is not a new concern—was the construction of a new bypass linking the former Newcastle area to the former Douglastown area. With the upcoming bridge closure, there will be a huge safety concern for our citizens and, at times, it will bring traffic to a standstill. My question is this: Will the bypass be considered and the construction be started sooner than later?



[Translation]

**Hon. Mr. Landry:** Thank you for this question. I am not familiar enough with what is happening at the department regarding this file. It is a new department for me. I am going to take this question under advisement, and I will get back to you with the real facts.

[Original]

## Quarries

**Mr. DeSaulniers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is with regard to the Mira quarry on the Royal Road, which is also known as Route 620. The people in the Esteys Bridge flat area have lost their right to enjoy their property. The Mira quarry is operating without dust mitigation. This is not good. It gets into the watershed. That area has an endangered species—the wood turtle. The people have to put up with blasts that have broken the seals in their windows, they have to deal with heavy truck traffic, and they have lost the equity in their homes. These people need to have their day. These people need to have a meeting with the minister responsible.

My question is: Will the minister responsible do the respectable thing for these folks who have all these things that they have to deal with? Will he facilitate a meeting, look them in the eye, and answer their questions, because they have great questions?

**Hon. Mr. Harvey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that. It is an honour to stand in the House today. I want to congratulate all my fellow members for the last election campaign.

On this particular issue, we do meet with stakeholders, but I am going to take this under advisement. I will definitely get back to the member about this particular situation. As you can recognize, we have had a few other things going on within the last couple of months. I want to get back to you with a clear answer on this issue. I will undertake to do that.

## WorkSafeNB

**Mr. Higgs:** Back in July 2018, there was a report on the task force on WorkSafeNB. We know that businesses have been hit hard with increases in WorkSafeNB rates over the last four years, to the point that the rates have doubled and to the point where it is planned that they will go up again in 2019.

I would like to ask this of the Premier or another minister: What is the plan, and what has been the delay? I understand that this report was done by all parties, employees and employers, and it is recommended that we move forward quickly in adopting a program that will help small businesses survive and ensure that employees are protected. I would like to ask this: What is the status of the implementation of this program that was put out in July 2018? Thank you.



**Hon. Mr. LePage:** Thank you very much for the question. I would also like to congratulate everyone sitting here today.

[*Translation*]

As you know, workplace safety is a top priority not only for our government, but also for employers and employees. A viable and predictable workers' compensation program is, of course, another one of our priorities.

[*Original*]

The WorkSafeNB task force was established at the request of our government to examine WorkSafeNB's current financial situation, governing legislation, overall objectives, and the effectiveness of the workers' compensation system. The task force was made up of workers, as was mentioned, and employers, as well as representatives of WorkSafeNB. We are reviewing these recommendations. There are 28 recommendations, and we are still working on those recommendations.

**Mr. Higgs:** It seems that working on something has been a theme throughout. They are always working on it: We are going to do it, we are thinking about it, it is coming soon, maybe tomorrow, maybe next week, or maybe if we get through and form government again. Those are the themes we have heard over and over again, with no results. There is a lot of talk, but there are no results. This report was put together in July 2018. It is serious for businesses, small businesses, employers, and employees in this province, but there does not seem to be a sense of urgency with this government. The point is that we need a sense of urgency in New Brunswick.

I want to know why that was not one of the first things that came forward. Why has that report not been tabled so that we can get on with protecting businesses and the people who are trying to survive here in New Brunswick?

**Hon. Mr. LePage:** To make sure that I understand completely, the 28 recommendations are there. They implicate everyone. What we want to do is to look at this collaboratively. We want to work together to make sure that the solutions that are proposed in those recommendations are applicable, to make sure that the workers are safe, and to make sure that the WorkSafeNB environment is there for a long time and viable in the long run. We also want to involve the employers because of their situation.

Yes, we want to look at this very closely. It is not a simple solution, but—I am looking at all of you today—together we will make sure to put those recommendations in action as soon as we get control of this House. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Question period is over.

