

Premier says Vitalite's strategy has merit, but union says Horizon has already made big cuts

ADAM BOWIE
THE DAILY GLEANER

Premier Brian Gallant believes a home-grown plan may solve food, cleaning and portering service woes in New Brunswick's hospitals - but a labour leader says it likely won't be the antidote.

Gallant made the comments during an editorial board with the Telegraph-Journal on Tuesday, less than a week after the province announced it was walking away from a plan to privatize the services via outsourcing to French multinational Sodexo.

Announced in early 2017, the Sodexo deal was touted as a move that would save taxpayers at least \$7.9-million a year and improve patients' experience. It was hugely unpopular with labour leaders and Vitalité Health Network president and CEO Gilles Lanteigne, who said he had a plan to do things better from within.

While killing the deal last week, Health Minister Benoit Bourque said a report prepared by a provincial committee had found potential improvements.

The goal? To standardize the quality of services across the province.

The savings? Now less important, Bourque conceded.

"You're right to say that over the last few months, we've been having discussions with Vitalité, with the labour movement, with other stakeholders, to see if there was a better way [than privatization with Sodexo] of doing things," Gallant said Tuesday.

"Vitalité really believes that they can find different ways of saving money and being more efficient when it comes to the non-essential services. We're willing to give them a try. So we believe that by listening to them we were able to find a way that we can move forward.

"If Vitalité is able to find some efficiencies, we can certainly do everything that we can to help Horizon be able to realize the same type of efficiencies."

But Vitalité's plan won't likely work

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Working wood and 'living the dream, really'

AIDAN COX
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Timothy Jones won't let good wood go to waste.

With butternut trees falling victim to an infection called butternut canker that's endangering the future of the species, Jones is transforming discarded chunks of wood into hand-crafted masks and canoe paddles.

"So whenever there's a nice butternut tree that has to be cut down to keep the [disease] in control, the arborist gives us a call and we go and pick up the logs and give the tree a new life.

"Most people would just cut it up and throw it in a fire but how neat is it to think that that piece of wood you were just going to throw in a fire could be something like this," said Jones, standing outside one of the ground-level rooms at Fredericton's Soldiers' Barracks on Wednesday.

As part of a New Brunswick College of Craft and Design program funded through the Department of Post-Secondary, Education, Training and Labour, Jones and fellow carver Justin Sappier, will be working out of the barracks all summer, creating carvings and chatting with passers-by. With a chisel in one hand and a mallet in the other, Jones chipped away at a rough wooden mask that he said was about half-finished.

Behind him, completed masks hung from the walls of a short-ceilinged room with a stack of butternut and oak wood.

"... we're doing traditional wood carving so we stay away from power



Timothy Jones works on a wood mask carving that's made of butternut, an endangered tree species. Jones and fellow carver Justin Sappier will be based at the Soldiers' Barracks on Queen Street all summer. PHOTO: AIDAN COX/THE DAILY GLEANER

tools, so whether we're splitting a log, we do it with an axe - we're not using a chainsaw. When we're carving, we're using a chisel and a mallet and the sanding by hand too," Jones said.

As part of the program, Jones and Sappier are each paid to carve out of their spot at the barracks for 36 hours a week until the beginning of September. Seven days per week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., either Jones or Sappier can be found there working on a carving.

"[I'm] living the dream, really," Sappier said. "Being paid to do my artwork - it's a really good deal."



Some carvings made by Justin Sappier. PHOTO: AIDAN COX/THE DAILY GLEANER

Report gives Canadian kids D+ for physical activity

BRUCE HALLIHAN
THE DAILY GLEANER

The school year is almost over but Joe Crossland would like to see youngsters working to get better grades this summer - in physical fitness.

lead for four years, Crossland wasn't surprised to see the low grades in ParticipAction's 2018 Report Card for Physical Activity for Children and Youth, released Tuesday.

The annual report gave Canadian kids a score of D+ for overall physical

"The results never surprise me," Crossland said. "You'd like to see some improvements. This is preaching to the choir how important physical activity is for kids."

Only 35 per cent of five- to 17-year-olds and 60 per cent of three-

recommended physical activity levels for their age group, the report card found.

That's clearly not enough exercise, said Crossland. After school, "we don't want the kids to go home and scroll