

New Brunswick

Former minister says N.B. premier's response to her resignation 'says it all'

Dorothy Shephard says she reached an expiration point, could no longer do any good in cabinet

[Hadeel Ibrahim](#) · CBC News ·

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Dorothy Shephard resigned from her position as social development minister on Thursday. (Ed Hunter/CBC)

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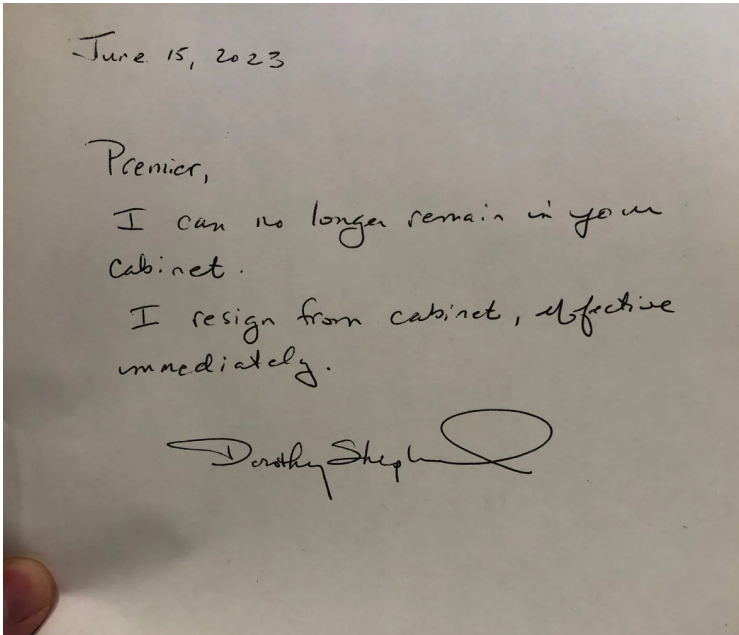
As New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs spoke in the legislature Thursday about his conviction that gender dysphoria has become "trendy," and increased acceptance of it is hurting kids and excluding parents, cabinet minister Dorothy Shephard got up and left the chamber.

She returned to vote with five of her colleagues for an opposition motion against Higgs's wishes.

Then she took her name plate off of her desk, put it in her purse and handed the Progressive Conservative premier a hand-written, two-sentence letter of resignation from her post as social development minister.

"He said, 'Well, it's good to get it in early,'" Shephard told *Information Morning Saint John* on Friday, the morning after the [dramatic legislature sitting](#).

"That was his response, and I'll never forget it."



Shephard's two-sentence letter of resignation to Higgs said it was effective immediately. (Alix Villeneuve/Radio-Canada)

Shephard said Higgs's response "says it all" and may have indicated he was already considering a cabinet shuffle.

"I don't believe he's used to people standing up to him, and I've certainly done that on a number of occasions these past couple of years," she said.

"Maybe it's anger, maybe it's surprise. It's hard for me to be in his shoes, so I can only speak to myself, but it was as disappointing as I thought it would be."

LISTEN | Dorothy Shephard tells host Julia Wright what led her to quit the PC cabinet in New Brunswick:

**Information Morning - Saint John 10:34**

Dorothy Shephard
resigns

Saint John-Lancaster MLA Dorothy Shephard explains why she resigned from the Progressive Conservative cabinet.

The premier's rhetoric about the review of the education policy meant to protect LGBTQ students — an issue she described as "mismanaged" — may have been the last straw for her, but she said it came after years of trying to work under Higgs's "difficult" leadership style.

- [PC minister says not enough LGBTQ consultation on school policy](#)
- [Higgs faces growing dissent from cabinet on LGBTQ policy review](#)

Shephard is the third minister to resign from cabinet, the other two being former education minister Dominic Cardy, who now sits as an Independent, and former deputy premier Robert Gauvin, who now sits as a Liberal.

Shephard said she's been struggling with his leadership style since the beginning — Higgs has been premier since 2018 — but especially since October 2021.

That month, she sent a six-page letter to Higgs airing her concerns about his unilateral decision-making. She said they didn't meet to talk about the letter until January, and even then, she didn't feel they got anywhere.

"I can't say that there was anything productive that came out of it," she said.

WATCH | Dorothy Shephard, minister of social development, resigns from cabinet:



Dorothy Shephard resigns from cabinet

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In a note addressed to the premier, the social development minister said, 'I can no longer remain in your cabinet.'

Shephard was health minister at the time, helping lead the province's COVID-19 response. CBC News has asked Shephard for a copy of the letter.

Shephard and Cardy both cited Higgs's unilateral decision-making and lack of consideration for other viewpoints as among their reasons for resigning from cabinet.

[Cardy famously quoted Higgs saying "data my](#)

[ass" in response to numbers](#) on French immersion. Higgs said those numbers he was referring to were "irrelevant" to the issue at hand.

When asked Thursday about Shephard's concerns, Higgs said "everyone had their own views."

'We've accomplished many good things in spite of Blaine Higgs'

Shephard said that since she sent her letter in 2021, she made a commitment to herself and to her colleagues that she would stay and do the most good she can.

"I just put my head down and and did my job and I spoke up when I needed to," she said.

But the review into Policy 713 was the "beach head," she said.

Education Minister Bill Hogan said the policy now makes it mandatory to get parental consent to use a child's chosen name and pronoun even informally in class. The entire review process and the results have been criticized by many, including the child and youth advocate, the New Brunswick Association of School Psychologists and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

The opposition motion passed by the legislature on Thursday called for consultations on the policy by child and youth advocate Kelly Lamrock, with a report in August.



Two MLAs who also quit Higgs's cabinet, Dominic Cardy and Robert Gauvin, watch as the premier speaks to media after Dorothy Shephard's resignation. (Jacques Poitras/CBC)

Shepherd said that during the 713 review, the premier's response to differing opinions inside his own caucus showed her that she can't do any more that would justify staying on.

"We have accomplished some good things under Blaine Higgs and I believe we've accomplished many good things in spite of Blaine Higgs that had been challenged and challenged and challenged," she said.

The MLA of Saint John Lancaster has served

for 13 years. She said she would run again, but not if Higgs is still leader of the party.

She said several other MLAs share her views and hinted there may be further unrest in the party.

"I've made this clear to many of my colleagues. You know, some of us will have an expiration date, and we have to recognize when that expiration date may have happened."

With files from Information Morning Saint John

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