

NDP Caucus News

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O’Leary Pushes for Rent Control, Urges Action on Social Worker Recruitment

Today in the House of Assembly, NDP MHA Sheilagh O’Leary (St. John’s East-Quidi Vidi) challenged the government on its do-nothing approach to rent controls and pressed for a concrete plan to address the growing shortage of social workers.

O’Leary questioned the Minister responsible about his earlier response on implementing rent control, in which he cited the province’s financial situation as a reason for not making any promises. She asked the Minister to consider what costs more: hiring staff to enforce rent control, or allowing people to lose their homes and end up homeless.

“Speaker, when asked about rent control, the Minister responsible said that they couldn’t promise rent control due to restraints of the budget. Yet, we know that implementing rent control isn’t millions of dollars,” she said. “I ask the Minister, what costs more? People being priced out of their homes, ending up homeless and forced to go to for-profit shelters, hospital ERs, or into the justice system, or spending the money to hire staff to implement rent controls?”

She continued by drawing attention to the recent alarm raised by NAPE over Memorial University cutting seats in its Social Work program. O’Leary emphasized that, on top of an already growing shortage, social workers are facing burnout from overloaded caseloads and lack the supports they need to effectively help others.

“Speaker, in 2024, the Premier said the social worker shortage reflects a struggling health-care system. Now, with over a 20 per cent cut in seats in Memorial University’s Social Work Program, the situation is getting worse,” O’Leary said.

“With vacancies and overwhelming caseloads already impacting social workers and the care they deliver, I ask the Premier: what action will this government take to address the shortage of social workers?”

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