

NDP Caucus News

For Immediate Release

April 2, 2026

O’Leary Presses Government on HMP Conditions and Restorative Justice Plan

In the House of Assembly today, NDP MHA Sheilagh O’Leary (St. John’s East–Quidi Vidi) raised serious concerns about the deteriorating conditions at Her Majesty’s Penitentiary (HMP) and the impact on both inmates and staff. She pressed the government for a clear plan to address these issues and asked whether the upcoming budget will include funding for restorative justice measures, including mental health and housing supports.

O’Leary began by referencing a recent news story highlighting how overcrowding and deteriorating conditions at HMP have forced 25 men to sleep on cots in the gymnasium. She told government that this is not only unacceptable for anyone, but is a clear violation of basic human rights.

“Speaker, overcrowding at the penitentiary has reached a crisis point, with inmates forced to sleep on cots in a gym just to avoid raindrops and mice. These are not acceptable conditions. They are a violation of basic human rights. No one should be subjected to this, including those who are incarcerated,” said O’Leary. “I ask the Minister: what is the immediate plan to address this? It is clear we cannot wait for the new facility while people continue to live in these conditions today.”

During the election, the PCs campaigned on “safer communities,” but O’Leary pointed out that adding more police and incarcerating more individuals does not automatically make communities safer if people are not receiving the rehabilitation they need. She emphasized that without meaningful restorative justice measures to support reintegration, communities are no safer, and those who are incarcerated are left without the supports they deserve.

“Speaker, we know that real public safety comes from rehabilitation, not just incarceration. Restorative justice and addressing the social determinants of health are key to helping people successfully reintegrate into society.

“So I ask the Minister: how much funding can we expect to see in the upcoming budget for restorative justice initiatives and programs that address mental health, addiction, housing, and other supports for inmates to help ensure successful reintegration?”

-30-

For further information, contact Stephanie Curran, Media and Communications Officer, NDP Caucus at 330-0328 (o), or stephaniecurran@assembly.nl.ca