

NDP Caucus News

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Dinn Questions Government's Math on Housing Targets and Income Support Levels

Today in the House of Assembly, NL NDP Leader Jim Dinn (St. John's Centre) called on the Premier to explain how his government calculated the funding amount needed to construct new public housing units and how they plan to build the number of new homes needed.

As the housing market continues to face pressure from low housing stock and the profiteering of REITs and large private landlords, Dinn continues to highlight the need for more public housing – not only to support the province's most vulnerable, but also to help relieve pressure across the broader housing market. He questioned government's commitment to building 10,000 homes over five years, including whether enough public housing units will be part of that plan.

"Speaker, government announced \$31.1M over three years to construct new public housing units. We estimated \$250K per unit. The Minister of housing says some could be as low as \$160K. Local housing advocate Hope Jamieson notes current construction costs are above \$350K per door," said Dinn. "I ask the Minister of Finance how he arrived at \$31.1M as the right size to solve our housing crisis?"

Dinn continued by highlighting the ongoing cost of living crisis and how inadequate income support rates are leaving many of the province's most vulnerable people struggling to get by. He said that by failing to raise income support to a livable level and index it to inflation – something that was once a part of the former PC governments poverty reduction plan – government is effectively forcing vulnerable people to fall further behind as the cost of essentials continues to rise.

"Speaker, Reverend and author Maggie Helwig says, 'that we have chosen, as a society, to set social system rates, and a fraction of what we acknowledge is necessary to survive.' Hope Jamieson says, 'providing people what is well-known to be a substandard amount of money to account for the cost of living is an intentional policy choice.'

"Why is his government intentionally keeping social assistance at a fraction of what is necessary to survive?" Dinn asked the Premier.

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