



HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
Newfoundland and Labrador

James Dinn, M.H.A.
District of St. John's Centre

*Called by the member for
St. John's Centre
- with leave
K. Hawley-George
October 17, 2023*

10/6/2023

Hello Minister Pike,

I understand that you are traveling today and there was poor cell service. It is unfortunate that we could not meet to discuss the situation facing the tenters.

The following is a list of topics and solutions I would like to discuss. We also have included a list of requests from the tenters themselves. They and I would appreciate a response to the asks before the end of the day.

1. What action is being taken to find housing for the tenters? CSSD/NLHC staff have spoken to the tenters, but there has been no clear idea of what the department is prepared to do.
2. Members of the Harm Reduction team have expressed concern for the well-being of the tenters over the weekend, especially should the police move in to remove them. Tenters will be traumatized. Team members feel it would be prudent to have social workers or other trained professionals on standby over the weekend to offer support to the people and help deescalate any potential conflict.
3. We also recommend having CSSD, NLHC Staff or social workers check in regularly with the tenters over the long Thanksgiving Weekend.
4. My office is hearing that women are being removed from shelters at the Riverwalk Motel, Larkhall Place, and Elizabeth Avenue to the shelter on Lemarchant Road. Would you be able to confirm if this is the case, and if this is to make room for the tenters? If this is the case, people are simply being moved around like chess pieces on a board. Unlike the first three shelters, the shelter on Lemarchant Road is congregate sleeping and living arrangements. There is no privacy. This would seem to be a downgrade for these people. One lady who has been moved to Lemarchant Road has had surgery on her hip and is awaiting further surgery. There are several flights of stairs at the Lemarchant Road shelter and people sleep on cots, neither of which is helpful to a woman awaiting hip surgery.
5. Many of the tenters do not want to go into shelters. Some have tried to get into one only to be turned away. Others do not feel safe at the shelters. Some have partners and pets and do not want to be separated. What they want is a safe, clean, affordable place in which to live where they can have privacy. For now, is it possible

to house them in hotel rooms or in alternate accommodations where they would have privacy?

6. We would urge that police not be used to forcibly evict the tenters, but seek other resolutions. If indeed police are planning to move in, they should call your office before they do, so the appropriate personnel can be available to intercede and deescalate.
7. Join me and visit the tenters and have a conversation with the people living in the tent city.

The tenters, themselves, make the following requests:

1. Would you be able to provide them with a reasonable timeframe as to when they can expect to be in a real home that is safe, affordable and allows them privacy?
2. They request that adequate nutritious food be provided in shelters that reflects the dietary needs of those who have to stay there.
3. They request that CSSD increase the comfort allowance they receive while in shelter from \$62.50 every two weeks to a more livable amount.
4. They request more wrap around supports (social workers, healthcare, etc.) to help them deal with mental health and addictions.
5. In particular they would like to have one social worker from housing is dedicated to helping them versus the "revolving door" of workers they currently experience. They are seeking stability and help in expediting and navigating the housing process.

We can discuss these and more when we meet. The tenters are seeing a response to their requests today. This could be a positive step toward resolving the issue at hand and giving hope to those experiencing homelessness.

Sincerely,



James Dinn

Leader New Democratic Party of NL
M.H.A., St. John's Centre

