



Speaking Notes for

Honourable Trevor Taylor

Minister of Transportation and Works
Responsible for Newfoundland Labrador Housing

Media Conference

To launch

A Social Housing Plan for Newfoundland & Labrador

2:00 P.M., Tuesday, August 11, 2009

Buckmaster's Circle Community Centre

129 Buckmaster's Circle

St. John's, NL

- Good afternoon, everyone – on behalf of my fellow colleagues, the Honourable Tom Marshall, Minister of Justice, the Honourable Paul Oram, Minister of Health and Community Services, and the Honourable Susan Sullivan, Minister of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, who was unable to be here -- thank you for joining us.
- Today, we are very proud to present to you the first long-term, progressive, Social Housing Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador. We are one of only four jurisdictions across the country to have such a plan.
- In 2006-07, Government conducted a province-wide social housing review. Meetings and consultations were held with over 150 stakeholders, representing tenant associations and community centres that serve public housing tenants, community-based organizations, government departments, municipalities, housing developers, private sector landlords, as well as Newfoundland Labrador Housing.
- Government recognized that social housing is an issue that can only be addressed by working in partnership with many other government departments and social agencies such as Human Resources, Justice, Labour and Employment and Health and Community Services, as well as the many community-based organizations and the private sector.

- The provincial social housing plan was developed to follow Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy. It also supports strategic directions in respect of major social initiatives such as: the Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework; Long-term Care and Community Support Services; the Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador and the Provincial Policy Framework for Mental Health and Addictions Services.
- Government has listened -- we have asked for and received valuable feedback from our community partners. We know and understand the need to provide viable, safe, affordable housing and support services for those most vulnerable in our Province.
- We are committed to building the necessary partnerships and investing in programs and services that will help to reduce, alleviate and eventually break the cycle of poverty and homelessness.
- This plan will position government to address the issues and challenges of current and future social housing needs throughout the province over the next decade.
- The following significant issues were raised by stakeholders throughout the consultation process:

- address the need for more co-ordinated supportive services;
- provide more Housing support for persons with complex needs;
- more investment in social housing infrastructure;
- more emphasis on energy efficiency efforts;
- press the federal government for an extension to the Provincial Housing Repair Program to assist low-income seniors;
- address the need for more accessible housing;
- press the federal government to extend the Affordable Housing Program;
- encourage additional private-sector involvement;
- continue with efforts to obtain more federal funding for social housing.

I am therefore, pleased to announce the following new initiatives in response to all the issues raised:

1. Addressing the need for more co-ordinated supportive services:

- A new supportive housing committee will be created with a representative from NL Housing, HRLE, HCS and Justice. The committee will be chaired by Donna O'Brien, Senior Policy Advisor with HRLE. This committee will assist community support groups with housing and support service issues in a more co-ordinated fashion. In addition, a stakeholders' advisory council will also be established.

2. Housing support for persons with complex needs:

- **\$1 million** annually will be provided through NL Housing to establish a Provincial Homelessness Fund to help non-profit community groups provide wrap-around services vital to supporting complex needs clients. NL Housing's contribution will include capital funding for infrastructure;

3. More investment in social housing infrastructure:

- Just recently, the Provincial and Federal governments announced a joint investment of \$43 million to renovate NL Housing's existing portfolio across the province over the next two years. Overall, the provincial contribution to this investment is \$21 million;
- \$1 million to fund Engineering design, site identification, and site regeneration research for smaller social housing homes;

4. More emphasis on energy efficiency efforts:

- **\$6.4 million** has been allocated for NL Housing to deliver the Department of Natural Resources' Residential Energy Efficiency Program (REEP), which is served on a first-come, first-served basis. During 2008 – 2010, grants of \$4,000 per dwelling in Labrador and \$3,000 per dwelling on the island are available to low-income earners to promote energy efficiency renovations.

5. Press for an extension to the PHRP program to assist low-income seniors in staying in their own homes:

- The Provincial Home Repair Program (PHRP) helps low-income homeowners with the cost of essential repairs for their houses. An additional \$24 million in provincial and federal funding has been allocated over the next two years for this program, with \$16 million being contributed from the provincial government. Over the next five years, potentially more than 10,000 families will have their homes upgraded.

6. The need for more accessible housing:

- We will continue to ensure that one in every 10 houses that are built through the Affordable Housing Initiative will be made fully accessible. In addition, NL Housing continues to upgrade its portfolio each year, and to help address the accessibility needs of current tenants, as they occur.

7. Press federal government to extend the Affordable Housing Program:

- The Affordable Housing Initiative promotes the continued development of new private-sector and non-profit affordable supportive rental housing through community-based partnerships. Since 2003, NL Housing has already invested approximately **\$23 million** to create new affordable housing province-wide. By 2010,

approximately 463 homes will have been built under this funding initiative through the private and non-profit sector, for seniors, disabled, families and persons with complex needs.

- Under the recently announced joint F/P investment of \$93 million, this program has now been extended, and approximately **\$26 million** will be spent over the next two years under the Affordable Housing Initiative to develop another 300 more affordable housing units, province-wide.

8. Additional private-sector involvement:

- Government recently allocated additional funding to enhance NL Housing programs which helped to address the demand for smaller rental accommodations.

9. Continued efforts to get more federal funding:

- This province has an ongoing commitment to ensure that the federal government recognizes the need to continue its involvement in social housing throughout Canada. Federal Minister of Housing, Diane Finley, has indicated that she would be willing to meet later this year with provincial and territorial Housing Ministers to discuss the results of the upcoming Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) consultation on Housing and Homelessness.

I want to conclude by reaffirming that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recognizes that effective solutions to this highly complex issue can only be found by working together as a community. We need to tap into our combined wealth of knowledge and understanding of this situation to ensure we remain flexible and able to respond to this issue over time. This Government has taken up the challenge, we are committed, and we will work to find these solutions. Thank you.