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## Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

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# DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

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### Social Housing

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the volunteer board of directors of Earl Grey Housing Authority sent concerns to the minister, and one of those concerns had to do with the maintenance budget. But when we asked the minister why the maintenance funding for Earl Grey Housing Authority was cut by 63 per cent, she said the numbers were dreamt up the night before.

The minister had received those very numbers a week prior from Earl Grey Housing Authority, Mr. Speaker, and we have those budget documents. And we know the facts are that government has cut the maintenance funding for Earl Grey Housing Authority from \$1,475 to \$550, a 63 per cent cut. I hope the minister can set the record straight today. Does the minister want to clarify her comments?

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to make sure that the member opposite knows, first of all, that I had an opportunity to speak to members of the Earl Grey Housing Authority yesterday. And we talked about the money that was given to them, and they understand that it's a two-step process. They know that they were given a portion of their funds earlier this year, about \$500 of it. And then they're going to be reviewing the needs when it comes to the other housing authorities — the capital asset planning work that's going on right now — to determine the work that should be . . . go on as we move on. They know there's more funds available.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's an important part of what we're doing as government to ensure that the 18,000 units that we have are kept in good shape. And my conversation with the board yesterday, with a member of the board yesterday . . . They were delighted to hear that I was going to come out and meet with them, that we're going to talk about this issue, and to see what other input they can have as we make decisions on the funding as we go forward.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

**Mr. Forbes:** We appreciate the minister's willing to sit down with the board, but the official from Sask Housing wrote to Earl Grey, instructing that the housing is intended for seniors of 60 years of age or older or those with a permanent physical or cognitive disability near that age. And the letter says and I quote, "If the housing authority rents a unit for other purposes, it must charge community market rent."

But that doesn't line up with what the minister was saying earlier this week. She claimed that rent for all tenants is based on income. So the minister's saying one thing, but her officials in the housing authority are under a very different impression.

So, Mr. Speaker, does she know what the actual policy is and how it's impacting low-income people in our province?

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'm well aware what the housing policies are. I'm well aware the changes that were made in the last while, and I'm well aware why they were made in the last while. We have to make sure that people that are vulnerable, people that are most in need are getting the houses that we have.

And, Mr. Speaker, we looked at the numbers of people that are renting these houses and know that there are some people that are making below \$39,500 a year that can be in our homes. We know what the maximum rent is. We also know that some of the board will have the opportunity, if there's chronic vacancy, to look at if somebody else can actually be in that home.

Our goal is not to have empty homes. Our goal is to make sure that the homes are there for people who are most in need. That's the discussion that we're having. Not only am I . . . within our ministry, but with authorities that are right, the housing authorities across the province. That's why I had a discussion with them. That's why I've gone out to other authorities in the province, and that's why I'll be meeting with the Earl Grey Housing Authority. And I'm sure the members opposite won't be there.