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Hon. John Lohr
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Sent via email: dmamin@novascotia.ca

Friday, October 13th, 2023

Dear Minister Lohr,

I am writing as a follow-up to meetings I recently had with residents of two Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency properties in my constituency, Joseph Howe Manor (5515 Victoria Road) and H. P. MacKeen Manor (1186 Queen Street). There are some new issues with these buildings as well as others that have escalated since my office met with NSPHA leadership in November of 2022 following our first series of resident meetings. These properties are meant to be safe and affordable housing for seniors, and I believe that several issues continue to be detrimental to the residents' overall well-being.

Residents of Joseph Howe Manor continue to experience flooding through the windows in their units during wet weather – some are affected more than others, to the extent of mould growth. We had been told that Housing Nova Scotia engineers were looking at the issue on a higher level but there has been very little done. Naturally, this makes residents very concerned about overall air quality. Also at Joseph Howe Manor, there is work being done to the common area in front of the building. We are told this is for accessibility, but there are new steps and other barriers that were not present before upgrades and the area is overall more difficult to use.

Safety, security, and cleanliness continue to be a grave concern for both properties. It is difficult for security guards to respond to issues as they arise, since one guard is tasked with watching both sites. In a similar vein, common areas are hastily and ineffectively cleaned due to staff's large workload. Naturally, this makes a more hospitable environment for pests. Residents have also expressed concerns about the availability of help during emergencies – weather, fire alarm, or otherwise – due to a lack of on-call staff at certain hours. During fire alarms, turnout is poor and there is not a standard procedure for ensuring everyone is accounted for. We are told that police have been surprised and concerned upon arrival to the buildings when they realize there are no staff onsite.

The most consistently reported issue at our visits to the two properties was a lack of communication from NSPHA. Site visits have been scarce since the start of the pandemic, and residents are not sure if there is a new Property Manager in place since Jane Clark's promotion. Their calls to the property office are not consistently returned or followed up, and many have expressed to me and my staff that they feel ignored or burdensome.

Due to these issues I have outlined, some of which have been escalating for years, I am concerned for the residents of Joseph Howe and H. P. MacKeen Manors' safety and health. I would welcome an opportunity to discuss this with your department at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Lisa Lachance, MLA Halifax Citadel-Sable Island