

2.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of the Minister for Housing regarding the provision of a rebate of rent for residents of the Cedars.

This will be a lot shorter, this one. Will the Minister undertake to consider the provision of a rebate of rent or a portion thereof for residents of the Cedars who have had to endure disruption to their lives over the last few months as a result of renovation works?

Senator T.J. Le Main (The Minister for Housing):

Were the existing rents being charged at the Cedars at full fare rent levels, then I have no doubt a rebate could be or would be worthy of consideration. However, the reality is that the rents being charged are significantly below the department's full fare rent which would be chargeable when the flats are complete and there are no building works going on. Therefore, Sir, the answer to the Deputy's question is no.

2.4.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Minister for accepting the principle that a lowered rate could be charged and note that the lowered rate for the inhabitants of the Cedars was based on the dilapidated condition of their property. Will he consider a further rebate to compensate for the trials and tribulations of the work required to put this shameful state to right?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

The answer is a categorical no. The Deputy does not understand. We are spending £6 million on this refurbishment and there was an article in the paper with 3 or 4 residents. I can assure the Members of this Assembly that we work with a high-rise representative, 2 of them living in those flats there, and the majority, nearly all of the residents, are quite happy to put up with some of the inconvenience that is carrying on at the moment because they are going to have some wonderful refurbished new windows, new homes, which are going to meet the modern day standards. I do not suppose the *Evening Post* had too much to print when they did that story, but there are 3 or 4 that have complained to the media and only 2 complaints have been sent to the department and have been resolved on issues. Generally, all of the residents ... I get stopped continuously because I go on the No. 18 bus which passes the Cedars, and residents on the bus keep complimenting me about the courtesy and the work being carried out by the contractors and the courtesy and consideration given by the staff of the Housing Department. You have to remember that there are 74 units of accommodation there and it would have been impossible to move them out. We have done significant refurbishments over the years, last year also - Journeaux Court, Clos du Fort, Clos de Roncier are carrying on - and people have remained in their homes and people have been patient. They will have wonderful homes when this is finished. So the answer to the Deputy is no.

2.4.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister inform Members what timescale was allocated to these repairs, what the finishing date was, and whether that finishing date is expected to be met?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

The completion date is end of April.

2.4.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will that date be met and how long was the work going on?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

The completion date, Sir, is due for completion by the end of April. I am not the contractor. Working on these old properties at times uncovers extra works or otherwise at times. The Deputy well knows that you can estimate and that is about all you can do.

2.4.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may, Sir, will the Minister tell Members what the time taken was estimated to be and whether that time will be met?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

I will repeat again it is due for completion, Sir, at the end of April. Everybody knows ... I cannot remember exactly the date that the work commenced, but it has been going on for a couple of months at the moment and it is due for completion and it is a huge, huge refurbishment job. You only have to pass around there and have a look at it. The Deputy is unfortunately electioneering with this sort of question. Again, let me just say, Sir, to Members of this Assembly that we have considerable experience in the refurbishment and upgrading of homes at long last by the courtesy of this House allowing us to have the Property Plan, which the Deputy voted against. So these people in normal circumstances would still be living in absolutely horrendous accommodation. Thank you, Deputy, for supporting the Property Plan. My grateful thanks to all the others that did support it.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy Le Claire, do you wish to ask a final question?

2.4.5 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Just to ask the Minister to confirm that there are issues in relation to providing improvements to people in housing. As I did support the Property Plan, I am trying to help the department and not trying to hinder it with these questions. Would he agree with me that the improvements are welcomed but the difficult questions we put to him from time to time are also necessary?

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Absolutely, Sir. I am very grateful for Deputy Le Claire who happens to be one of the very few Members of this Assembly that often asks me pertinent questions by email or by telephone and likes to understand both sides of the story. I think the residents of the Cedars and St. Helier No. 1 district are well served by Deputy Le Claire, who ... **[Laughter]** That is my election speech for Deputy Le Claire, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well. We will see if Deputy Southern has similar success when he asks a question of the Minister for Social Security.