



STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

REVIEW REPORT ON PUBLIC RENTAL BOARD 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Committee's review report on the assessment made to the Public Rental Board 2015 Annual Report.

The review was in accordance with Section 109 (2)(b) of the Standing Orders of Parliament, in which the Standing Committee on Social Affairs is mandated to look into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, culture, media and their administration.

The Committee in its first reading through the Annual Report had agreed to invite the General Manager (GM) of the Public Rental Board to present on their 2015 annual performance.

On the 4th of October 2017, the Acting General Manager, Mr. Patrick Veu conducted a presentation to highlight the achievements and all other aspects of their work. Mr. Veu also responded to questions raised by the Members of the Committee on the following:

- Organisation Structure;
- The rent arrears, rental subsidy;
- Transitional housing policy;
- Development of rental units and property maintenance;
- Social obligation, community building
- Major constraints faced by PRB; and
- Major funding.

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs had reviewed the Public Rental Board 2015 Annual Report and acknowledged the responses provided by the Board and also assured the Committee that due consideration will be given to the issues raised.

I thank the Honourable Members for their contribution towards the scrutiny of the Annual Report and the formulation of this bipartisan Report.

With these words, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this Report to Parliament.



Hon. Viam Pillay

Chairperson of the Social Affairs Standing Committee

RECOMMENDATION:

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs has conducted a review of the Public Rental Board 2015 Annual Report and recommends that gender equality be considered in the composition of the Board.

INTRODUCTION

The Public Rental Board (PRB) is mandated to provide rental housing on a transitional basis as a priority obligation under the Constitution. However, it has always been a challenge for the Public Rental Board to deliver quality and affordable rental flats in an environment of ever increasing demand and complexity.

The following legislations are applicable to PRB:

- Housing (Amendment) Decree No. 12 of 1989
- Housing Act Revised 1985
- Public Enterprise Act 1996
- Public Private Partnership Act, 2006

The Committee assessed PRB's 2015 performance in consultation with the Board whereby they responded to all the questions that were raised by the Members. The Board briefed the Members on all areas of their work and invited the Committee members to visit one of its housing developments in Kalabu.

The discussion on the Annual Report was focussed on PRB's mandate and the progress of the housing developments in all division.

GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender is a critical dimension to parliamentary scrutiny. Under Standing Orders 110 (2) where a committee conducts an activity listed in clause (1), the Committee shall ensure full consideration be given to the principle of gender equality so as to ensure all matters are considered with regards to the impact and benefit on both men and women equally.

The Committee considered the issue of equal opportunity for all citizens including men and women when consulted during the presentation however noted that majority of the Board members were males.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the Committee is pleased with the overall performance of the Public Rental Board in promoting the interest and rights of all consumers.

The Public Rental Board's response on the issues raised was positive in terms of looking after all consumer issues and is not confined to any particular sector or issue and further it also lobbies on behalf of consumers on a range of issues.

Finally, the Committee has fulfilled its mandate in examining the Public Rental Board's 2015 Annual Report and commended this bipartisan report to Parliament.

SIGNATURES OF MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Viam Pillay', written over a horizontal line of small dots.


Hon. Viam Pillay
(Chairperson)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veena Bhatnagar', written over a horizontal line of small dots.

Hon. Veena Bhatnagar
(Deputy Chairperson)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Salote Radrodoro', written over a horizontal line of small dots.

Hon. Salote Radrodoro
(Member)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anare T. Vadei', written over a horizontal line of small dots.

Hon. Anare T. Vadei
(Member)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruveni Nadalo', written over a horizontal line of small dots.

Hon. Ruveni Nadalo
(Alternate Member for Hon. Mohammed M. A Dean)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ACRONYM

| | |
|-----|-------------------------------|
| PRB | Public Rental Board |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| SO | Standing Orders of Parliament |
| GM | General Manager |



Applicable Main Acts

- Housing (Amendment) Decree # 12 of 1989
- Housing Act *Revised 1985*
- Public Enterprise Act 1996
- Public Private Partnerships Act, 2006

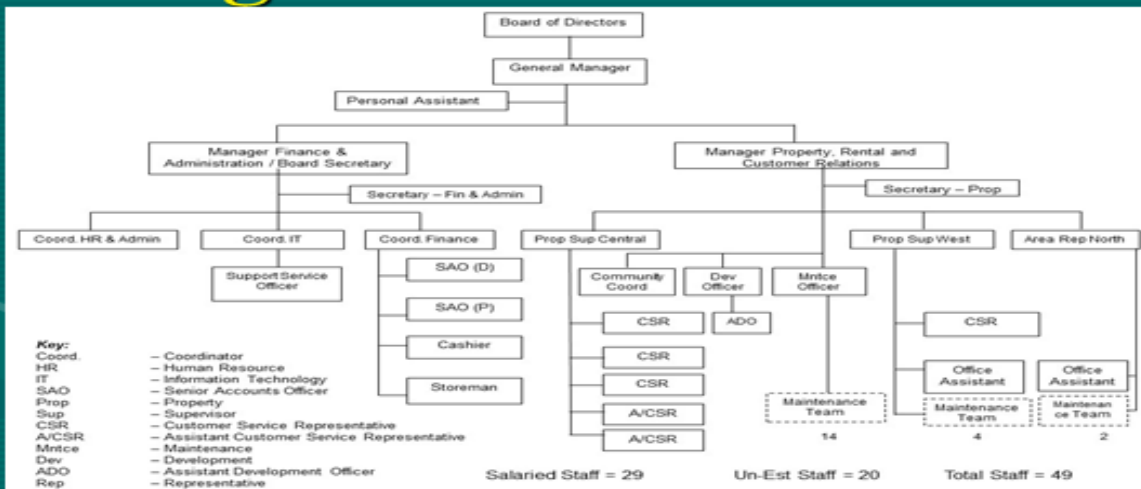
Mandate

- Provide Rental Accommodation
- Non Commercial Obligation – Provide Rental Economic Benefits to Tenants
- Provide Corporate Plans to Relevant Ministries

Organization Structure

- Board of Directors
- Executive Department
- Properties, Rental & Customer Services Department
- Finance & Administration Department

Organization Structure



Rent Arrears

- Total rent arrears @ December 2015 - \$110,526.79
 - Active tenants arrears - \$ 86,918.98
 - Vacated tenants arrears - \$ 23,607.81
- Target by December 2015 – \$87,000.00

Rent Arrears Cont...

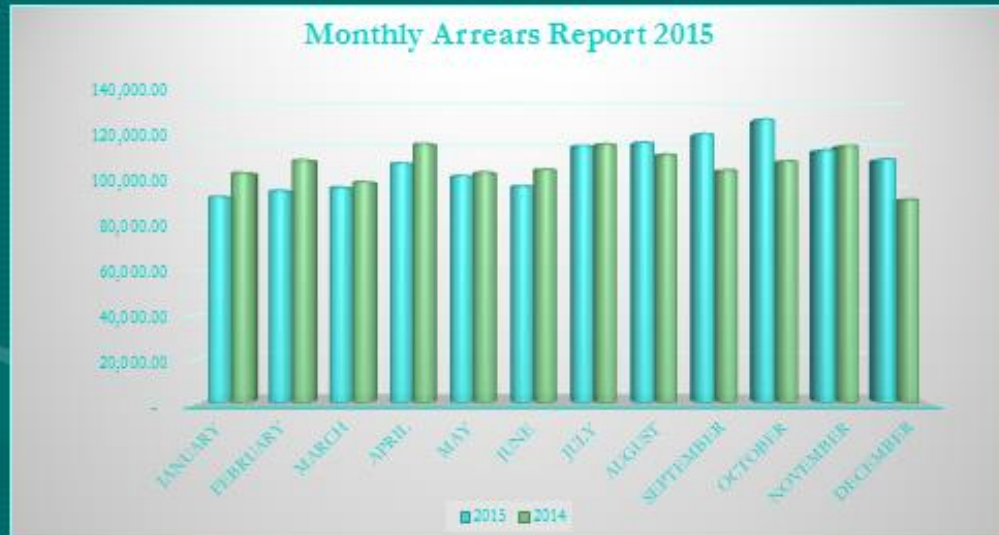


Chart Area

Rental Subsidy & Social Cost

- Government's social obligation to provide rental subsidy to PRB.
- Board continuing receipt of rental subsidy from Government since 1991. (\$1 million since 2003)
- Subsidy distributed according to the 1999 & 2010 Subsidy Distribution Criterion.

Rental Subsidy & Social Cost cont..

- 2005 – Charging of market rents but is subsidised via Govt. subsidy grant.
- Approximately \$89,489.00 was distributed as social cost for year 2015.
- Amended the 1999 subsidy criterion in 2010 after increasing rental charges. Tenants pay what they can afford.

Rental Subsidy Criterion – 1999 & 2010

1999 Allocations criteria

- Income Range \$0 to \$64, Tenant pays rate of 5% weekly HI Level
- Income Range \$65 to \$80, Tenant pays rate of 10% weekly HI Level
- Income Range \$81 to \$100, Tenant pays rate of 15% weekly HI Level
- Income Range \$101 to \$125, Tenant pays rate of 20% weekly HI Level
- Income Range \$126 to \$150, Tenant pays rate of 25% weekly HI Level

2010 Allocation criteria

- Income Range \$0 - \$80, Tenant pays rate of 5% weekly HI Level
- Income Range \$80 - \$100, Tenant pays rate of 8% weekly HI Level
- Income Range \$100 - \$125, Tenant pays rate of 11% weekly HI Level
- Income Range \$126 - \$150, Tenant pays rate of 14% weekly HI Level
- Income Range \$151 - \$175, Tenant pays rate of 17% weekly HI Level
- Income Range \$176 - \$200, Tenant pays rate of 20% weekly HI Level

Transitional Housing Policy

- Non compliance with policy
 1. Enjoyment of rental subsidy
 2. Lack of alternative housing development
 3. Development of Communities, church groups within the estate.

Transitional Housing Policy cont..

- Improved communication with stakeholders
- National Housing Policy 2011
- Enforcement of the three (3) years tenancy agreement
- Availability of affordable homes
- Incentives for homeownership

Development of Rental Units

- Way forward – construction of new flats
- Around 1024 waitlist applicants
- Number of flats – 1,551 flats
- Turnover of flats- 110 flats

Development of Rental Units cont..

- 1995 – 1998 – 114 terraced one bed room flats (Newtown, Kalabu, Raiwaqa, Raiwai, Kia)
- 2003 – 5 one bedroom flats (Kalabu)
- 2005 – 43 two bedroom flats (Macfarlane Rd)
- 2006 - 27 one bedroom flats (Kia St.)
- 2009 – 12 one bedroom flats (Savusavu)
- 2014 – 210 flats Raiwai (110 one b/r; 100 two b/r)

Development of Rental Units cont..

- PRB construction project as follows:

| Estate | No. of Flats | Estimated Cost | Year of Completion | Source of Funding | Status |
|----------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Kalabu | 36 | \$2.24 m | 2016 | Govt. Grant | In progress |
| Savusavu | 50 | \$3.87 m | 2016 | Govt. Grant | In progress |
| Simla | 36 | \$2.72 m | 2017 | Govt. Grant | Tender process |
| | | | | | |
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Property Maintenance

- Commenced second Maintenance Cycle in 2008
- 2015 General Maintenance
 - Vakatora Lautoka—61 units with a budget of \$120k—actual \$104k
 - Naodamu Labasa-72 units with a contract sum of \$250k-actuals \$250k
- Completed the second G/Maintenance cycle in 2015.

Community Building

- Importance of Community Halls
- All estates have a community hall
- Two of the community halls are being used for pre-school within the estates- Nadera & Macfarlane.
- For family and educational activities

Social Obligations

- Estate and pocket meetings
- Awareness programs from various Government departments
- Taxi Base- transport accessibility to the estate
- Canteen- Raiwai hall
- Market stalls
- Beautification of estate

Major Constraints

- 
- Funding
 - Existing Tenants
 - New Accommodation

Government Support

- 
- Capital Expenditure Grant
 - Subsidy

Public Rental Board

Income statement (extract)

| | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Income | | |
| Rental revenue | 2,767,817 | 3,511,301 |
| Other operating income | 174,877 | 154,259 |
| Total operating income | 2,942,694 | 3,665,560 |
| Expenses | | |
| Amortization & Depreciation | (436,370) | (662,459) |
| Staff costs | (1,034,896) | (1,020,899) |
| Other operating expenses | (1,103,866) | (1,416,472) |
| Profit from operations | 367,562 | 565,730 |
| Net financing costs | (89,613) | (205,788) |
| Net profit for the year | 277,949 | 359,942 |

APPENDIX 3: VERBATIM NOTES

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON WEDNESDAY, 4TH OCTOBER, 2017 AT 3.15 P.M.

Submittee: Public Rental Board

In Attendance:

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------|---|---|
| 1. | Ms. Ashnita Dutt | - | Acting Manager Finance |
| 2. | Mr. Maloni Daurewa | - | Manager Property Rental and Customer Services |
| 3. | Mr. Pat Kostino Veu | - | Acting General Manager |
-

ACTING CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you Honourable Members. Here with us is the team from the Public Rental Board consisting of the Acting General Manager, Mr. Pat Kostino Veu; the Acting Finance Manager, Ms Ashnita Dutt; and Manager Property Rental and Customer Services, Mr. Maloni Daurewa. Welcome again to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs. Here with us is Honourable Anare Vadei, Honourable Salote Radrodro and I, Honourable Ruveni Nadalo standing in for our Chairman, Honourable Viam Pillay who is sick. The floor is yours now to present your report and any other questions will come after your presentation. Thank you so much.

MR. P. VEU.- Thank you, Acting Chairperson and the Honourable Members for giving us the opportunity to present this afternoon our Annual Report for 2015. Allow me, Honourable Members to dwell a bit on the Acts that govern the Public Rental Board. As we all know that the Housing Decree No. 12 of 1989, that is where the Board was established. This was as a result of the World Bank study recommending to Government that the Rental Board portfolio of the Housing Authority needs to be separated, hence, the establishment of the Public Rental Board.

There were 1,575 rental units transferred to the Public Rental Board together with \$20 million of Fiji National Provident Fund debt. The Board was mandated to sell the properties and service the inherited debt from the Housing Authority of around \$20 million. In 1996, we were declared a commercial entity where we also report to the Ministry of Public Enterprise and also in having declared that, we were also to prepare and submit to the Ministry of Public Enterprise our planning documents on time.

The Public, Private Partnership Act came into effect 2006 where we would have been in partnership with some of the investors to develop rental flats. This did not work well and we have not been able to partner with investors in developing more flats.

Our mandate was for us was to provide rental accommodation to meet the demand that is out there. From that time until now, we have not been able to fulfil that obligation. We have a mandate also to provide non-commercial obligations to our customers, our tenants and also provide rental economic benefits to the tenants. We are also providing corporate plans, corporate interns to the relevant ministries, our line Ministry and the Public Enterprise.

The organisation is quite a small one where the Board of Directors reports to the Government and the Executive Department which is headed by the General Manager and then there are two Departments; Properties Rental and Customer Services and the Financial and Administration Department. That is basically the structure. We have 29 salary staff and 20 unestablished staff; a total of 49 staff.

The problem that we continue to face is our rental arrears. As at December 2015 our arrears stood at \$110,526.79. We had initially targeted to reduce the overall arrears to \$87,000, unfortunately, we were not able to do that. That is the breakdown of arrears at that time - active tenant's arrears \$86.9k and vacated tenants \$23k.

That is basically the monthly arrears shown in the chart. It fluctuates as from January to December. You will note that in December the arrears in 2015 was quite higher than that of 2014.

We are thankful to Government for providing us the grant to subsidise those disadvantaged tenants so that they can have a roof over their heads. The Board continue to receive subsidies since 1991 and as from 2003 the Board has been receiving \$1 million from Government and this is to subsidise those disadvantaged tenants and the allocation of subsidy is in accordance with the criteria that has been set by the Board and it is allocated through the system on a weekly basis.

The focus is on the tenants who are financially disadvantaged. They receive more subsidy. The lesser the income, the more the subsidy. We will look at the criteria later.

We have been charging market rents and that is also being subsidised by Government. For example, if the rent is \$60 according to the market rate, our economical rent is \$50, the difference is the social cost across the board to every flat. And then we subsidise them according to the household income and according to the criteria, but social cost of approximately \$90k was distributed as social cost for year 2015, just to make the rent affordable. Those who can afford, they pay the full rent but those who are financially disadvantaged, we work according to the criteria that is there.

That is the criteria that we were using in 2015; 1999 allocation criteria and the 2010 allocation criteria. For example, someone that earns \$100 in the 2010 criteria, they pay 8 percent of the income (\$100). For a rent of \$20, they will pay only \$8, Government subsidy addresses the other \$12

Transitional Housing Policy:

We were mandated by Government to try and move our tenants to home ownership. We feel that it is a bit of a difficulty because some of the tenants enjoy the place where they stay, enjoy the subsidy allocation, they develop communities within the estates and church groups so it is slightly difficult for us. We are strengthening the tenancy agreement for us to try and get our tenants to transit to home ownership. The other thing is the lack of alternative housing development from housing providers. As there is only one board for both entities - Public Rental Board and Housing Authority at the moment, where the Housing Authority is looking at giving us some sort of preference for our tenants to move on. We try and enforce the three-year tenancy agreement but now under the Constitution we need to have a court order in order to enforce that fully.

The other area is the availability of affordable homes by housing providers. We are thankful that now that is an incentive for home ownership especially the first home owners. That we are going around telling our tenants especially those who are earning above our bracket, the ceiling for Public Rental Board to move on to home ownership. We believe that for us the way forward is to construct new flats in order to meet the demand that is out there. You will note that in 2015 the wait list application stood at 1,024; that is compared to the number of flats that we have of 1,551 at that time. Our turnover of flats is quite low. We would like to increase that (tenants to move) so that we can address the applications that are there with us and the turnover average in 2015 is only 110. Sometimes it reaches 200, but we feel that that is quite low. If we can move tenants, say about 500 to 600, then we will be able to allocate that many flats to wait listed applicants. So, that will have an impact because building new flats we are more or less dependent on Government to give us the grant to do so.

Since 1995 to 2009, you will note that we were able to only construct 201 units from our internal funds. We are thankful to Government that in 2014 we were able to construct 210 from the funds loaned from the Exim Bank of China; that is a loan that was negotiated by the Government. You will note that we have been able to construct and complete 210 flats at Raiwai This is the reconstruction of the existing site. We have Government grants for Kalabu, Savusavu and Simla. Savusavu has been completed, Kalabu is still in progress and we anticipate to complete early next month and Simla has not commenced as yet.

Property maintenance:

We carry out general maintenance every five to six years. In 2015 we were able to complete Vakatora - 61 units at \$104k and that is from our internal maintenance team. Naodamu, Labasa because it is further away, 72 units we were able to complete that on contract at \$250k. The second cycle has been completed in 2015.

Community Building:

We build community halls on every estate that we have. Right now we have completed 28 community halls in our 28 estates. That is used for family and educational activities as well. Two of our community halls are used for pre-school.

Social Obligations:

We have estate pocket meetings where we discuss with our tenants in order for us to know what the shortfalls are and add value to the services that we provide. We have three taxi bases to ease the problem of transport in our estates and we are also looking at canteens in our rental estates. We have approved Raiwai as a canteen for a start.

Market Stalls:

In our estates also for the women's groups to sell and supplement a rental and the Board carries out beautification of each estate.

The constraints that we face, firstly is the funding. We do not have the funds in-house and we are more or less depended on Government to fund our projects.

Existing tenants:

Like I mentioned earlier that once they come in, they form their communities within the estates, the church groups, it is quite difficult for us to ask them to leave.

Cost of new constructions for new accommodations:

Government supports the Public Rental Board through its capital expenditure grant and also subsidy every year.

Mr. Acting Chair, there is an extract from our profit and loss account in 2015. You will note that revenue increased slightly due to the fact that Raiwai project came on line and the underlying figure of net profit for the year increased to \$359,942. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you Acting General Manager for your presentation. I will now open the floor to the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to ask questions.

HON. A.T. VADEL.- Acting Chair, on Page 8 of your Annual Report, the Chairman's Report above capital projects on the second last sentence, "There is still a level of concern as regards to administration cost as a percentage of rental income." Can we elaborate on that? What does that mean?

MR. P. VEU.- I think the number of units to the total income. When you compare that because the number of units is quite low. It is fixed and in order to reduce the percentage, there needs to be more rental units in order to do so.

HON. A.T. VADEL.- On the same page, Acting Chair, on the demand survey, it is mentioned there that you have model housing concept on the last line, "... Government on a universal programme and model housing concept." Have you got a new model housing concept for that one?

MR. P. VEU.- The current projects that we are undertaking, the plans are designed and drawn in-house. That is what the Board had approved and also we had presented that to Government which we have been able to source the funds from Government. It is a one bedroom and a two bedroom units.

HON. A.T. VADEL. - One last question, Acting Chairperson. On page nine. Rental Flats versus future plans. This, I believe, is one of the challenges for the institution. They are setting the target to construct 100 flats per annum, whether that is a realistic target or a dream?

MR. P. VEU. - That at the moment, Acting Chairperson, is depended on Government to fund projects. I did mention that we would opt to have a satisfactory transition so that tenants move out (a good number). At the moment, we mentioned in our presentation that it is quite less and then we want 500 to 600 to transit every year. That will give the vacuum for us to fill with the applications list that is there. At the moment we are not meeting that target of 100 units a year. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO. - Thank you, Acting Chairman and thank you Mr. Veu and the team for your presentation. On the rent arrears: 2015 is reading \$110,526.79. In the rental arrears trend, is it decreasing or like say for example, if we take 13 and 14, is 2015 less or is it increasing?

MR. P. VEU. - I think it is almost at that average. I was looking at the report that just came out for the month end of August, it stood at 212 as well, but this we have on line the new flats; the Raiwai Rental Units. We are charging \$99 a week and \$111 respectively and taking into consideration the new flats that had come in, we continue to maintain the arrears. We would like to reduce the arrears further but then we are serving members of the public so we would also like tenants to deduct direct from source. That is the only way we can do that; we can reduce arrears because then we will direct deduct from source, they will be able to deduct the rent plus arrears. But then, like I have said, we are serving the people, we really need to look generously at those who are employed and assist them with the need for housing.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO. - On the next question, that is the mandate of the Public Rental Board to look after the housing needs of low income earners. For the Raiwai one, what is the occupancy rate right now because as you have mentioned, you are charging \$99 and \$111.

MR. P. VEU. - Right now the occupancy rate is 100 percent. Why the rent is slightly high is because we are fully servicing the debt through Government to the Exim Bank of China. That is a loan that we have taken through the Government and we are servicing this loan so the rent is a little high but there is a wait list also for Raiwai for those who are interested to move in.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- Why I asked that question is because you may have the 100 percent occupancy rate and you may have a waiting list to get in but are those really your targeted clients?

MR. P. VEU.- There is an approval that we look at those who are slightly up or threshold of \$16,500 to \$25,000 maximum for Raiwai only.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- What is the loan repayment? How are you servicing your loan? Are you good to do?

MR. P. VEU. - We are servicing the loan through the rent income that is plus interest.

MS. A. DUTT.- It is the principal amount plus the interest. Actually we are paying on a monthly basis.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- What is the duration like for your loan repayment?

MS. A. DUTT.- 20 years.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- And for the 20 years, is there going to be a likely increase in rental or this is a fixed loan repayment?

MR. P. VEU. - Increase may be through the exchange rate but this is a fixed interest rate.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- This one in, is it Kalabu or somewhere that side, I think the construction has been underway, I am not too sure whether it has been completed. Why I am mentioning this because there were concerns raised about the suitability of the land where the new site is, because the concern raised was the risk. The new site that is under construction triggers this risk to those in the existing in terms of, maybe stability of the building or something like that. They were mentioning about the construction, I am not too sure but which company was undertaking the construction but it stopped and then carried on or something like that, so if you can just elaborate on that particular construction site.

MR. P. VEU.- Honourable Member, we have mentioned that the works will be completed next month. On the stability of the site, you will note that we have constructed retaining walls to stabilise the phase that is at the rear and also the site itself, we have taken the foundations to the solid as per the requirements of the engineers who are looking after the project. We confirm that the project will complete next month. We hope to advise Government on that and for an announcement.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- Just further to that question, why I actually raised it, would that affect the willingness of tenants to move in there in regards to their safety?

MR. P. VEU. – If you visit the site now, there is a huge difference from the beginning when the phase had not been stabilised. And also the work that has been undertaken, it has given a very good outlook when you look at the site. We understand that, that is quite a difficult site because it is sloping towards the front but, because we do not really have much land to construct, that is the reason why we have earmarked that area. I think it is good to have a look at it at the moment. We have right now about 72 applications wait listed for that and out of the 36, we have about 72 applications waiting to be allocated a flat at Kalabu.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON.- Just a supplementary question. So that 72 on the wait list, is it part of that 1,024 wait list applicants or totally different?

(Inaudible).

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- Just another question. I visited Delaidogo or Wainibuku HART, or is that different, it is not under your jurisdiction?

MR. P. VEU. – No.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- Alright.

Sorry and then who looks after the HART?

MR. P. VEU.- They have their own HART office in Valelvu where they have a Director and employees working for HART.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- So it comes under which ministry?

MR. P. VEU.- The Housing Ministry.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you once again Mr. Veu and the team from the Public Rental Board. Thank you for your presentation. The presentation today will assist us in submitting our report to be tabled in Parliament. This will be a great help to the Committee to formulate their recommendations to be tabled in Parliament. Before you leave, there was a discussion amongst us before you came in. We would like to visit some of your estates most probably next week. Our Secretariat will be writing to you or maybe call you confirming the days that we will be coming down.

MR. P. VEU.- Thank you very much Acting Chairperson and Members. We will assist Members who would like to visit our estates, let us know. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Definitely yes, our Secretariat will be getting in touch with your officials sometimes around Monday next week. Before you leave, Sir, please join us for a cup of tea. *Vinaka*.

The Committee adjourned at 3.55 p.m.