

*National Housing Act*

expand those funds to allow for a massive insulation program under residential rehabilitation for people on low incomes, not only to help them conserve home heating fuels but to allow the government to cut down their own use in accordance with their program of conservation of energy. I must repeat that many citizens who are in this predicament who own their own homes are on welfare, and as a result provinces must increase the amount paid to recipients for heating fuel in the winter months for 50 per cent of which the federal government must pay. So it is obvious that the saving for both the government and the public would make this program worth while.

The minister himself when he spoke in June of 1975 to the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, stated the following:

Fortunately, I believe it is now well understood that NIP is meant to assist in the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan which will fulfill a wide range of physical, social and recreational needs within the neighbourhood. It is not a hit-and-run, paint-and-patch proposition. CMHC now insists that the NIP investment in a neighbourhood should not be less than \$100 per capita... Closely associated with NIP is the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. Its purpose is to help restore run-down houses to acceptable standards of health and safety and to extend their useful life by another 15 years or so. The federal government will lend up to \$5,000 for this purpose, at favourable rates, and the first \$2,500 of the loan is forgivable, depending on income. RRAP is available in NIP areas, for non-profit housing projects, wherever they may be, and in areas specially designed by federal-provincial agreement.

The minister indicated this himself in June, and the program has been in existence for almost two and half or three years. I wonder why the people in CMHC do not realize that more houses could be made available by bringing these homes up to a decent standard which would relieve the pressure on those people who can afford to buy a house.

In another study the following was stated:

Rehabilitating older housing is another area that has not been pursued to any great degree. Since a major part of our housing problem is one of cost, rehabilitating older housing would be cheaper than tearing them down and building again. This was recommended in the Dennis and Fish study on low income housing in Canada.

"Even in areas of high growth, the expense of tearing down existing units and rebuilding is out of all proportion to the cost of rehabilitation.

We therefore recommend a large scale rehabilitation program, to bring as much existing housing as possible to a state where the structural and building systems perform adequately."

There are provisions under the National Housing Act for federal financing (loans and grants) of rehabilitation projects. To date, however, little widespread use has been made of the program. This is due to a slowness in communication between Ottawa, the provinces and the cities in defining program needs. If more use could be made of a rehabilitation program and older, rehabilitated homes kept in the housing stock, it could help to depress spiralling house prices.

Everything points to the advantages of such a program and I am sure, from experience in my own province of Newfoundland, that this is a reflection of conditions in many parts of Canada. I can only hope that the minister will take a harder look at this program and will allocate funding to correct this obvious inequity in our housing programs. I hope that when he concludes this debate he will be able to advise me on the stage of negotiations with the province of Newfoundland on RRAP which they presented to the minister some time ago.

I spoke about the Dennis and Fish report on low income housing. It is also obvious that the Council of Rural De-

velopment has made some strong recommendation to the minister on the need to bring existing homes up to a more acceptable level. I realize that the provinces have their problems in designating areas that would qualify under the program, and that municipalities also have their problems when they have to set down occupancy standards, but I wonder why, in our effort to get rid of red tape, we do not take advantage of another program in existence called the Home Improvement Loans Program to expand and introduce forgiveness factors into home improvement loans and to allow any Canadian, regardless of where he lives in Canada, to apply directly to CMHC and to take advantage of this excellent program which, as I indicated many times, can relieve the need for low cost housing in Canada.

There are certain aspects of the program contained in the bill which I feel would be beneficial, and one of the most important ones is the provision of loans for water and sewerage projects. I feel this is long overdue and I compliment the minister and his staff for introducing such a program. It should be obvious that the most important public service required in many thousands of communities across Canada, and particularly in smaller rural areas, is the provision of water and sewerage systems, not only for the comfort it provides but from the point of view of sanitation and health reasons for our citizens and their children.

I am pleased to note that under the Assisted home ownership provision the restriction against one or more children is removed. This, I feel, will benefit many young couples who feel they want to have a house before raising a family. I am sure that no one can quarrel with that right for these young Canadians. However, I am disappointed that the minister has not seen fit to allow benefits under AHOP for the purchase of existing homes, particularly because many older homes could be rehabilitated, thus relieving the pressures on increasing housing starts.

It is obvious that many older citizens whose families have moved away would like to sell their homes and move to an apartment or find a mobile home or smaller house. I hope that the minister will consider this fact before the bill goes to committee, and will introduce appropriate amendments at that stage.

Since AHOP is now related to the special housing assistance for veterans, I feel I am justified in mentioning some points in this program which replace the Veterans Land Act. I was most distressed to learn that as a result of questions I placed on the order paper only two applications were received under the provision for non-profit rental to provide rental housing not exclusively for veterans but for veterans and for senior citizens. But it is more distressing to note, in the answers I received, that the sum of only \$50,000 has been allotted to the entire special housing assistance program for veterans. To my mind that is downright ridiculous.

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The other answer, indicating that only 50 applications have been received under AHOP, confirms to me that there is a lack of communication between the Department of Veterans Affairs, Urban Affairs, and the veterans who can qualify. While no doubt the Minister of Veterans Affairs