

Supply

But there is more. Studies show that in the riding of Québec alone, 38 per cent of all families in the lower town and Limoilou must devote more than 30 per cent of their gross income to housing. In the riding, 9,430 households out of a total of 20,165—that is almost 47 per cent of all families—have a gross income of less than \$29,999. Forty-seven per cent! Are there any members in this House who would not react to such statistics?

The average income of men in the central neighbourhoods of the riding of Quebec was \$14,078 in 1986 as compared to an average income of \$19,440 for the province as a whole. Women are always poorer than men, but the gap was not so wide in their case. It is easy to understand why: their average income was \$10,260 compared to \$11,884 for the province. According to Statistics Canada, out of 21,450 economic families, 29.1 per cent were considered to be low-income.

Still in my riding of Québec, there are 4,960 single-parent families, 86 per cent of which have a woman as head of the household, that is 4,260. For the province of Quebec, that figure is 81.86 per cent. The equation womanhood=poverly is still quite real.

Considering that 52.7 per cent of dwellings in downtown Quebec were built before 1946 and that another 22.8 per cent were built between 1946 and 1960, it is easy understand the importance of a renovation assistance program.

Furthermore, the 1986 data show a rental occupancy rate of 79.5 per cent in the old neighbourhoods of the riding while the average for the province is 45.1 per cent. The situation of most of my constituents is very clear. They are too poor to buy a house, therefore they rent in buildings built before 1946 and they devote more than 30 per cent of their income to that item alone. In fact, in Quebec today, 404,045 households are obliged to spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing. In November 1993, the Popular Action Front for Urban Redevelopment estimated that 195,000 Quebec households spent more than 50 per cent of their income on housing.

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That is what being poor means. In view of these alarming figures, the government should make a formal commitment to support social housing. Quebec City understands. As I mentioned before in the House, on January 10, 1994, the city adopted a resolution asking the federal government to review the budget for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The city demanded adequate funding for social housing, reinstatement of the co-operative housing program and a new program to provide assistance for renovation of rental housing.

In this way, the municipal authorities want to ensure that families do not pay more than 25 per cent of their income for housing. How can we expect families that who have to spend more than 30 per cent of their meagre income on housing to

make ends meet? How can they afford decent food, adequate clothing, medicine and a few much-needed leisure activities? It would take more than a degree in economics or home economics to accomplish that.

Although it may be a cliché, we will keep saying it until we get our message across: Let the government put its money where its mouth is. The Bloc Québécois has a mandate to promote sovereignty. It also has a mandate to support government action that is necessary and socially responsible, while defending the interests of Quebec.

It is a fact the federal government has imposed standards on Quebec that have prevented the latter from adopting a social policy that meets its real needs and aspirations. More and more, Quebec is losing its ability to control its social development. Quebecers are suffering as a result of poor federal management of the economy, and they are stuck between reductions in transfer payments and the obligation to abide by federal standards.

There is, however, a commonality of purpose between the government and the Bloc Québécois with respect to the challenges facing the government. In fact, we support stimulating employment through programs that create real, well-paying and long term jobs. We support tax reform to relieve the tax burden on families and others in our society.

Finally, we support reducing the deficit by putting public financing on a sounder footing. However, public spending should not be cut at the expense of the neediest in our society. There are Quebecers and Canadians who have been left to fend for themselves and in recent years have seen these cuts affect the bare necessities of their lives.

We believe that investing in social housing will be an investment in job creation. Every social housing unit built means 2.2 jobs. I say this because job creation seems to be this government's prime objective, and it was part of its platform in the last election campaign.

Perhaps we could backtrack very briefly. In its well known red book, the Liberal Party of Canada said, and I quote: "In many areas and neighbourhoods in Canada, the quality of housing needs to be improved in order to achieve adequate standards of safety, health and energy efficiency. The recently cancelled Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, which provided a loan or grant for home renovation to people of modest incomes, should be revived as a method for investing in the physical and social fabric of our communities. A Liberal government will make \$50 million a year available through the RRAP loan program for two years".

Further on, we read: "We must choose to make our social investments where we believe they will do the most good and have the greatest effect for the resources spent and for the long term future. We will focus our efforts on health care, children's