

square foot upon which the lending value is based. Since the lowest cost per square foot under integrated housing in Vancouver is now, as far as I know, something like \$5.65, and the cost per square foot in the case of houses built under the National Housing Act but not under the integrated scheme would be from \$6 to \$7 or \$8 per square foot, I think this \$4.62 is the figure the minister should raise at the present time. I should like to ask whether he will give the committee the present cost per square foot upon which the lending value is based under the National Housing Act and whether, if it is still \$4.62, he will be prepared substantially to increase it.

Mr. HOWE: I am sorry; at the moment I have not the figure at my finger-tips, but I shall be glad to get it and have it when we reassemble at eight o'clock. I believe it varies in the various sections of Canada. It is revised from time to time, to keep in step with realistic building costs. But I cannot tell my hon. friend what it is for the Vancouver district at the present time. I shall get the information for him, and have it available at eight o'clock.

Then, as regards meetings between the cities, the provinces and the federal government, to place the responsibility for housing, let me say that there is no doubt whatever as to where the responsibility for housing rests. The British North America Act states that responsibility for property and civil rights shall rest with the provinces, which places the immediate problem with the municipalities. The federal government has accepted a responsibility for dislocation of population during the war, and for the providing of housing for returned veterans.

We have had cooperation from cities and provinces in varying degrees. Some cities and some provinces have been most cooperative, and have undertaken almost anything the dominion has asked them to do. Other provinces and other cities have not been so cooperative. The major difficulty in many cities is the assembling of the land, which is a joint responsibility of the city and the province.

For example, as I have said before, in Toronto there is hardly a square inch of land inside the city limits which would be available for low-cost housing; and that city cannot annex adjoining land which would be available for low-cost housing, without the cooperation of the province. I believe consideration is being given to that problem, and I mention it only as being typical of many cities.

The position of the federal government is quite clear. We seldom refuse an invitation from a city to build Wartime Housing in that city. That involves certain cooperation from the city, by way of making available suitable property, and in the fixing of a tax rate compatible with the type of housing that Wartime Housing builds. But I believe that, in meeting all requests for that type of housing, the dominion is going a long way toward discharging any responsibility it has in the field of housing.

Then, the federal government has accepted the responsibility for making available low-cost money for private home building. Under the National Housing Act funds for housing are being made available at rates lower than have ever obtained up to this time. Furthermore, it has instituted the integrated housing plan, which provides assistance to builders who are willing to limit their profits to a proportion that the crown believes reasonable. In that way the government has taken direct action by making available cheap money for private building, and in the field of government-sponsored integrated housing, and by guaranteeing the builder against loss, if the builder will guarantee the purchaser against excessive profit; and by offering to build Wartime Housing when requests are made by cities, and when the need is real.

What further cooperation can reasonably be asked of the federal government, I am not sure. It hardly seems to me that the government could be in closer contact with the provinces and cities than it is at the present time. I can assure my hon. friend that if either cities or provincial governments wish to sit down with the federal government to work out a concrete proposal, the federal government will be very glad to participate.

Mr. MERRITT: When the minister brings in figures with respect to the lending value per square foot, could he bring in a figure showing cost per square foot in Vancouver, and in any other city concerning which he produces lending value figures?

Mr. HOWE: Yes.

Mr. MERRITT: Last year the minister said that in his opinion the cost of construction had increased 150 per cent over 1939. It was on that ground, I believe, that he raised by ten per cent the lending value in cost per square foot. Today he has referred to the fact that prices and costs are much higher than they were a year ago. Will he say what percentage over 1939 costs of construction have reached at this time?

Mr. HOWE: I shall be glad to give that.