

Statements by Ministers

ernment would act only after consultations with industry and the provinces. We will be working to assist Canadians to finance their homes by promoting the availability of stable, long-term mortgages and access to high ratio mortgage financing. We expect mortgage-backed securities to permit longer-term mortgages, and we will continue to provide public mortgage insurance as a means of providing high ratio loans.

● (1540)

I believe there is a clear need to continue federal leadership in the role of housing research and development while improving co-ordination of research initiatives with the provinces and the industry. I propose to set up a housing research committee to co-ordinate federal, provincial and industry involvement in housing research. Also, options for improving CMHC's inspection service and the materials evaluation service will be reviewed.

These and other initiatives will enable the federal Government to use the present level of funding to concentrate on helping the one million Canadian households which do not enjoy acceptable affordable housing. While the private market, if permitted, can provide most Canadians with comfortable, quality housing, all levels of Government must be prepared to work together and join their resources to assist those Canadians who do not have the income to secure that type of housing.

I think the process just concluded has been useful and effective. It is important that our housing policies be based on a genuine and realistic consensus as to what can be provided with the resources available through Government. I am willing to meet again, after an appropriate period, with the groups and individuals involved in the consultations to discuss and evaluate the success of the new direction we have taken.

I believe these changes are necessary and represent a fair allocation of housing dollars among competing interests. I look forward to continued contact with all of those who, by providing me with their ideas, have contributed to this national direction for housing solutions. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank those individuals who have assisted me greatly over this period of time.

[Translation]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, we have just found out today that a Minister is quite prepared, like Pontius Pilate, to wash his hands of the whole issue of social housing for Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I was rather surprised that the Minister would say he did hold consultations. He even claimed he was party to such consultations—

[English]

“My Parliamentary Secretary and I met personally with some 21 groups active in housing.” When I was in British Columbia about three weeks ago, I met with nine groups in a day. The Minister is presenting an extremely major document which will change the face of housing policy across this country after meeting with only 21 groups?

Mr. McDermid: How many were national groups?

Ms. Copps: Let us hear about the kind of consultation the Minister had with the handicapped. What kind of consultation did he have with those people? Even though our phones were down for one of the two hours I was trying to prepare my response, I managed to contact a representative from COPO, with which I am sure the Minister is familiar because it is a coalition which represents provincial disabled organizations across this country. Was Mr. Lorrie Beachill contacted by the Government? Yes, officials got in touch with him in November asking him to consult with them the next day. When he was unavailable that particular day, they never met with him.

Mr. McKnight: Not true.

Ms. Copps: The Minister states that is not true. In fact, I spoke today with Mr. Lorrie Beachill and he told me he was not contacted.

Mr. McKnight: On October 24 we met with the coalition of provincial organizations of the handicapped.

Ms. Copps: In fact, he was in Toronto and unable to meet with the officials and was never contacted again. Susan Kitchener, of government relations with the Ontario March of Dimes was not contacted even though the Government trumpets its actions in the area of changes in housing for the handicapped. What the Minister did not tell the House was that it was this self same Government which cut back the CMHC funds which had been available by regulation to the handicapped when they used to be treated like every other citizen. They had the capacity under past Liberal Governments to qualify for funds in the same way as any other housing organization but they were gutted by the Minister and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the current and past program was replaced with a \$1,500 subsidy which they are now talking about increasing to \$5,000.

We know at this point in time from the figures which came out today that we are at a four-year low in terms of vacancy rates. What the Minister has produced is essentially a housing policy for developers. Let us look at the increase for RRAP funding on a unit basis. What the Minister did not tell the people was that as a result of the Budget of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and the Deputy Ministers' cut-backs, the RRAP funding was gutted by 25 per cent by this Government. Now the Minister is suggesting that on rental units, the amount of money available will be increased to \$12,000 per unit, which presumably will go to benefit the landlords. Pure and simple mathematics will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that if we are going to have \$12,000 allocated per unit and the Budget is cut by 25 per cent, thousands fewer Canadians will be able to take advantage of the RRAP program as a direct result not only of the Minister's announcement today but because of the other housing cut-backs.

The Minister talks about the new relationship with provincial Governments. We know that the Government is on the verge of signing an agreement with the Province of British Columbia in the area of social housing. Let us take a look at the record, and what this Minister is prepared to do in terms of