

Why? Because all those houses were built according to the same plan, the same alignment and at a time when similarity was the order of the day in both architectural and social concept.

Madam Speaker, questions are being asked nowadays about the value of certain old neighbourhoods. One knows indeed that in such neighbourhoods, there usually exists a community tradition. Our cities have not become metropolises overnight. For instance, less than 50 years ago, there were about twenty municipalities within the territory of the island of Montreal. All those municipalities had a city hall, municipal services and an institutional structure to sustain a community life. And the same can be said of all the large Canadian cities built 50 years or more ago.

Now one realizes today that the development occurring in suburban cities prevents us from re-creating the same quality of community life that still exists in old neighbourhoods. If we let them grow old and worn out, as can be seen in certain areas in this country, a time will come when it will be impossible to recover the ancient housing structures; it will then be impossible to re-create that institutional life.

I would be remiss in not reminding the House the degree to which the era of polyvalent schools during the sixties constituted an extension of that urban bigness. Nowadays we realize that the professor-student relationship should be revalued, as should the employer-employee or the citizen-city relationship, because there is an irreplaceable quality of life within an already built neighbourhood.

Madam Speaker, the NIP program as set up is designed precisely to protect that quality of life in neighbourhoods that my colleague described as presenting particular characteristics.

That program, Madam Speaker, is particularly timely in that it contains one of the most interesting innovative aspects there can be. I will limit myself to drawing the attention of my colleagues to National Housing Act section 15 under which a non profit corporation can buy certain abandoned and decrepit houses, receive loans, grants, and rehabilitate them and make them available to people or groups of citizens who need public assistance to meet their needs in decent housing conditions.

As far as I know, there are now only three projects of that kind in the Montreal area—one in the riding of Saint-Henri, another in the riding of Saint-Jean, and one underway in the riding I represent.

The initiative of that project comes mainly from people in the neighbourhood interested in participating in the effort to rehabilitate the neighbourhood. Those people from a non-profit corporation, as set out in the legislation, and explore themselves the housing market to find structures that are abandoned or could be bought at a relatively moderate price. Once that is done, they assess the orientation of the neighbourhood, that is to say they check to see if the territory is registered, whether it is still residential-oriented, and particularly whether the project is within an overall approach of rehabilitation of the neighbourhood.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, I think it would be utopian to rehabilitate a house or blocks on a street or in a neighbourhood that are eventually intended to be left open to land speculation or if it is intended to leave the district

### *National Housing Act*

with all kinds of aging industrial structures, in other words without devising a global approach of the district rehabilitation. In fact, not only should aging structures be renovated, but those districts should also often be provided with urban services which have become necessary in a context of planned urban life. Mini-parks often have to be created, and districts also have to be provided with adequate public services. For instance, the whole urban transportation network has to be reworked in such districts in order to connect the district being revitalized with working areas, professional business areas where most of their residents will have their working place.

Our approach to district rehabilitation therefore has to be a global one, and should not be aimed at dwelling structures specifically. It should also encompass industrial structures and urban commodities.

All in all, I think the amendment as it stands would only extend the program to the whole land without in my opinion respecting its basic philosophy.

I think my colleague will realize to what extent I and several of my colleagues share his views on the priority to be given urban rehabilitation. But I think that if we are to ask ourselves what the outcome of that program was, we should also strive to recognize the efforts of municipalities to share in its implementation.

Let me point out, Madam Speaker, that within the city of Montreal our whole approach to those problems was reconsidered and the policy objectives of the city are of course not just to rehabilitate the residential structures. For example, the city of Montreal has also established a program of rent subsidies; it means that, when you have restored a house, you have not necessarily contributed to give this housing to poor people. You must also be able to help them meet the additional costs of housing due to these renovations.

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For, if an owner invests \$60,000 in the renovation of a house, he will of course increase the rent at the end of the year, so that he may recover the parts of the costs which have not been covered by a loan or a subsidy. For that reason, you must also give a subsidy to the tenants who live in this house. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, we must have provisions allowing us to intervene on a full area. For example, we must have targets in our renovations. We must also undertake the renovation of two or three housing structures which seem to have priority in a street, so that the structures which are going to fall into disrepair will be looked after as soon as possible.

We must also think of passing provisions to release land around residential areas, so that life in the open should be possible and appropriate parks could be organised. We must also be able to drive out of these areas all the undesirable elements which may have settled in the past, when our municipal by-laws were very flexible. In other words, we must have a global program of district renovations.

I believe that if we must bring an original contribution to this debate, we must rather aim at improving our programs on this global basis, and not at limiting them only to housing structures, because finally only a minimum part of the objective would be thus reached.