

### Decline in starts on new housing

Housing starts during September were at a seasonally-adjusted annual rate of 186,100 for all areas, according to preliminary figures released recently by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This brings the nine-month seasonally-adjusted rate to 238,400 dwelling units.

Actual starts during the month in the urban areas were 13,085, a decline of 34 per cent from the 19,879 recorded for the same month one year ago. Cumulative urban starts for 1974 reached 135,053, a decline of 12 per cent from the 154,140 starts in the comparable nine-month period last year.

The January-September totals show that starts of single-detached dwellings remained practically unchanged from the same period in 1973 while multiple housing activity declined by 21 per cent.

### Veterans' benefits improved

Significant changes in veterans legislation were announced last month by Minister of Veterans Affairs, Daniel J. MacDonald, when he introduced in the House of Commons a bill to amend the War Veterans Allowance Act (WVA) and the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act (CWA).

For the first time, it is proposed to make provision for the payment of additional allowances to recipients with dependant children which, Mr. MacDonald says, is a milestone in veterans' legislation.

Until now, a married couple with children received the same allowance as a couple without children. Effective October 1, 1974, the new legislation will provide for the payment of \$50 a month for each child, less the amount of Family Allowance paid in respect of the child. Widows and widowers with more than one child and orphans of veterans also will benefit.

The acts now provide that the additional allowance paid on behalf of a child of a widow or widower, or an allowance paid to an orphan, may be continued to age 21 as long as the child continues his education. The bill will extend the age limit to age 25.

Changes in the method of escalation of allowances are included in the bill to ensure that benefits are not eroded by increases in the cost of living.

Escalation of the income ceiling and the rates will now be made quarterly instead of annually, and will be made on the income ceiling with the rates being increased correspondingly. The WVA/CWA income ceiling will be escalated 5.3 per cent and the rates by similar dollars, effective October 1973. Changes will be made quarterly from then on in accordance with the consumer price index.

In line with the general policy of the Government to provide equality of status for men and women, several amendments to the act are proposed in this regard.

Changes in the method of escalation will have the following results:

As of September 30, 1973, the single recipient had a monthly income ceiling of \$191.14. The new monthly income ceiling, effective October 1, 1974, will be \$223.66, reflecting a 17 per cent increase, or \$32.52.

The recipient receiving the allowance at the married rate had a monthly income ceiling of \$327.21 on September 30, 1973. This will be increased by \$55.69, providing for a new ceiling of \$382.90 a month on October 1, 1974, or an increase of 17 per cent.

In calculating the adjustments to be made in the case of WVA/CWA recipients who are age 65 or over, the quarterly escalations in the OAS/GIS (Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement) payments since October 1, 1973 will have to be taken into account.

Mr. MacDonald pointed out that because of the large number of accounts to be adjusted some delay in processing could be expected. He stated, however, that everything would be done to bring any increased benefits approved by Parliament to WVA and CWA recipients as soon as possible.

### Spruce budworm threat to forests

Seven million acres of forest land may have to be sprayed next year to combat the spruce budworm which, if not contained, could seriously damage the forest industry.

New Brunswick Natural Resources Minister A. Edison Stairs said he was

alarmed at current scientific predictions of increased budworm destruction in 1975.

He described the budworm threat as "a real emergency".

"We may be in for the worst outbreak since the 1920s unless we give the forests adequate protection by aerial spraying," he said. "Estimates based on surveys of tree conditions and egg masses laid by budworms in 1974 indicate that the fir and spruce trees on 7 million acres require protection from being killed or seriously damaged." Several million additional acres of forest are also infested with hazard to trees slightly less than those in the 7 million acres of extreme hazard.

In recent weeks the New Brunswick Legislative Select Committee on Renewable Resources has been giving the problem priority consideration in an effort to determine what can be done to prevent widespread damage to the forest.

Mr. Stairs said that while the problem was not confined to New Brunswick — Maine and Quebec are also hard hit — it could have a far-reaching impact on the province.

### Alberta/Japan dairy exchange program

To encourage Alberta dairymen and dairy researchers' co-operation in the Alberta/Japan dairy exchange program, Dr. Hugh Horner, Alberta Minister of Agriculture, announced an increase in travel subsidy and supplemental wages for Alberta dairymen participating in the program.

At present, says Dr. Horner, there are eight Japanese dairymen and one instructor in Alberta participating in the exchange but there are no Albertans in Japan. He feels that the main obstacles preventing Alberta dairymen from going were travel costs and the lower wages paid in Japan.

The Government of Alberta will subsidize dairymen's wages to \$400 a month before taxes when working in Japan. Previously in the program workers in Japan received just over \$100 a month.

Travel costs will also be subsidized. Minimum subsidy will be 40 per cent for a six-month stay ranging to 100 per cent for a work period of 12 months or over.