

*Adjournment Debate*

At that particular meeting they were interested in having some answers to the problem. They wanted answers from their municipal representatives, their provincial representatives and, of course, from me, their federal representative. You are aware I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that all three levels of government play some role in the housing and accommodation picture.

The municipal government has a role to play as far as zoning by-laws are concerned and are part of the approval process for building. The provincial governments have a role to play in the area of rent control, rent review, and the whole planning process. In spite of the fact that some people would like us to believe that the federal Government does not have much of a role in this, it does have a role to play as you and I know, Mr. Speaker.

How can the federal Government help in a situation like this? Any federal program must apply across Canada. That does create a problem for the federal Government, particularly in this sort of a housing climate, because there are different vacancy rates in different parts of the country.

In my City of Metropolitan Toronto the vacancy rate is .2 per cent. It used to be .1 per cent, virtually nil. In Ottawa here it is almost 2 per cent. In Halifax it is almost 6 per cent and in Edmonton, from where you come, Mr. Speaker, I am told it is almost 7 per cent. In Saskatoon it is almost 9 per cent and in St. John's, it is almost 11 per cent. They tell me that in Montreal some places will give you three months free rent just to rent an apartment. However, in Metropolitan Toronto there is virtually a nil vacancy rate. When the federal Government looks at what it can do for rental housing in particular in Metropolitan Toronto, it has to examine it in the light of the that situation across the country.

There is one thing for sure that the federal Government can do in this situation, and that is to make available some of the surplus land that the Government has in the greater Metropolitan Toronto area. There is a lot of land which has been discussed and talked about, but there is one area which has been identified in particular and that is the land at the Downsview air base. Perhaps 260 acres of land are potentially surplus and could be made available for badly needed affordable housing in the Metropolitan Toronto area by the federal Government.

● (1815)

The federal Government has to get going. It has to get moving to make this land available. It is not an easy process, I admit. That land is under the control of the Department of National Defence and it has to decide whether or not it is surplus as far as it is concerned. Perhaps it has to move some buildings from one part of the base to another.

The federal Government, through the Treasury Board and the Bureau of Real Property Management, has to make a decision that it is surplus land to all of the federal Government. It then has to decide on what basis it is going to release the land, who would administer its release, whether Canada

Mortgage and Housing or Public Works, and under what conditions the land should be released. All of these matters have to be decided.

I admit, and you know, Mr. Speaker, as does the Parliamentary Secretary, that it is not an easy task. But we have to get on with it if these people in the Five Rs Tenants' Association are ever going to have an alternative place to live.

I hope tonight the Parliamentary Secretary will start the process of releasing that land at the Downsview air base and, in Heaven's name, tell the poor deserving people of Metropolitan Toronto that that land is going to be made available. I am sure they will applaud the Parliamentary Secretary tonight if he makes that announcement.

**Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to commend the Hon. Member for York East (Mr. Redway) for the manner in which he has consistently, throughout the life of this Parliament, represented the views of his constituents and others. I say to him both as a member of the Government and as an individual that we are certainly well aware of the housing crisis which exists in Metropolitan Toronto. I can say that as a father. My daughter went to York University last year to study law and found just how difficult it is to find suitable accommodation. During the course of that year she, fortunately, was able to find suitable accommodation on campus, but we understand that is not an alternative which is open to all people, even all students. In an economy such as the economy of Metropolitan Toronto, which is, of course, one of the most vibrant in the country, there are many benefits, but there are also some disadvantages. A shortage of suitable housing and accommodation and increased pricing for that housing and accommodation is one of the by-products of that healthy economy.

I must say that some of us who live in other parts of Canada where the economy has not been so vibrant perhaps may be forgiven for wishing on occasion we had some of those characteristics of the Metropolitan Toronto economy. But there are certainly two sides to every coin, and with the benefits comes some problems.

As a result of our awareness that there is a shortage of suitable land for additional building, the Government began an inventory some time ago. It asked all its federal agencies, as the Hon. Member knows, to investigate its holdings with great care. Of course, the Department of National Defence was asked to do that as well. All of us in this House know that CFB Toronto's Downsview site is a very active military establishment. It is certainly anything but abandoned. It represents one of the nation's four military supply points. Nevertheless, the Department of National Defence has been asked to investigate very carefully its own plans for the future, its needs for the space, as have other agencies.

While I cannot give the Hon. Member the information he would prefer to receive, I can say to him that I understand the