

*Supply*

contribute to the revitalization of the economy, because there is a return on your investment.

I could give you some compelling examples that would convince you. They do not come from me or from some partisan groups around the Bloc Québécois, but from people with expertise who know about the reality in the social housing area.

I will mention, first, the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada which conducted studies the findings of which I could hand out to the parliamentarians who are not yet convinced of the merits of government investments in social housing. I know I am not allowed to read in this House and I acknowledge having circumvented the rules on a number of occasions today, but I just want to bring to your attention four lines which clearly reflect the spin-offs of government investments in social housing.

Building 1,000 co-operative housing units, in terms of construction or renovation, would create lots of jobs, especially in the construction and manufacturing sectors. In the construction sector, over 2,000 jobs would be generated this way. Renovation projects generate less jobs, in fact about 800 jobs for every 1,000 housing units.

Therefore, I think it is fair to say that there are very few sectors in our society where you can claim that a government action would create and generate such great economic spin-offs as those identified by the Federation.

• (1750)

In spite of it all, in spite of the fact that we are aware of those figures, in spite of the fact that, since last December, the FRAPRU and other pressure groups have continuously been making representations to the government, in spite of the fact that less than three months after this government came into office, stakeholders in social housing were already active, in spite of the fact that we made representations, we can see that the government, on the social housing issue, is timid, spineless and certainly not too daring.

It is sad. It is sad, because such an attitude fosters prejudices. And as you know, there is a lot of prejudice in our society. Such an attitude fosters preconceived ideas to the effect that the best government is one which governs little, while we know perfectly well that if the government was able to take its responsibilities and to allocate money, not necessarily a lot of it—some years, 35,000 co-op housing units were built in Canada—if only we could have maintained that rate, I think we could have built up a strong housing inventory. We could have succeeded in revitalizing perhaps not all but some urban areas which are deteriorating.

It is for that reason that we, in the Bloc Québécois, are making an urgent appeal to the minister. We do not have many government members with us today; nonetheless, we are making an urgent appeal, and we will not back down; we will keep at it and work on all fronts so that this government understands how

necessary it is to invest in social housing, not in the timid renovation program it is offering. It is an interesting beginning, a trial run, but we would be extremely disappointed, together with Quebecers and Canadians, if the government was to limit its action in the field of social housing to such a timid program.

There was talk about the economic spin-offs of social housing investments, but I would like to explain, from a social and human perspective, why we have to invest in social housing. I will start with a reality known to every member, I think, and that is the low-cost housing situation. If there is no change in the status quo in 1994-95-96, not one low-cost housing unit will be built.

This afternoon, we witnessed conflicting styles and genres. I heard the minister say, and he was quoted several times later, that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation was going to invest \$35 million; every time a government member uttered that number, there was a sense of ecstasy. We must tell people who are listening that this \$35 million will not be used to build new units, if I am wrong I will take it back, but we checked and it appears that it will be used to pay the interests on the money borrowed to build the existing housing inventory. The basic truth that should not be forgotten is that not a single low-cost housing unit will be built if the Minister of Finance does not change the status quo.

Why is it that the low-cost housing units are so important? We could very well, you and I, end up in low-cost housing when we get to be 60 or 65. Why are they important? Because it is a form community life. The people who live in such dwellings are not necessarily incapacitated. In any event there is no cafeteria in low-cost housing buildings. They are really only apartment buildings, but there are community rooms where residents get together to play cards or whatever. Any member of Parliament who is close to his constituents knows that there is a real community life in this type of housing. The lack of low-cost housing is sorely felt and we hope the government will be able to put the situation to right.

• (1755)

As far as co-operatives are concerned we know their economic significance but we also know that those who are part of a co-operative are people who invest in society. Each of them has tasks to perform: paint the fence, take the garbage out, take charge of public relations with the neighbouring community. Those people give and receive and this is why that formula has become so popular.

In conclusion, we sincerely believe that if the present government, which in the past has associated liberalism with generosity, is serious and has a social conscience, I believe that the Minister of Public Works—we do not even call him Minister of Housing since housing is so low on the list of priorities—should march to the beat of a different drummer. He should be the social conscience of that government. He should not be afraid to stand