

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 8, 1974

The House met at 11 a.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

HOUSING

PROGRAM FOR RURAL AND NATIVE HOUSING—STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short report to the House on some meetings I had yesterday, together with officials of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, with representatives of provincial Métis and non-status Indian organizations and the Native Council of Canada.

During the course of those meetings I outlined to them the elements of a federal rural and native people's housing policy. I am happy to report that these plans were very well received. I should like to inform the House about these consultations and the important new policy initiatives which we are proposing to meet the housing needs of people in the rural areas of Canada.

Before I go further, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say that I had instructed that copies of this statement be distributed in the usual way to members opposite. I understand there has been some complication and members obviously have not received copies of the statement, for which I apologize. If they will look at my behaviour in this regard in the past they will remember that I have assiduously tried to observe that courtesy.

Mr. Stanfield: It must be the Post Office.

Mr. Basford: While there are still some aspects of implementation and administration to be discussed, the native people's organizations have indicated to me in a general way that they welcome the initiatives we are taking. We emphasize, however, Mr. Speaker, that this policy and its programs will serve all people in isolated and rural Canada according to need or according to income and without regard to race or ancestry. Hon. members will recognize, however, that such a policy could not be successful if it did not also meet the particular needs of native people who, in many areas, require new housing on a priority basis.

The goal of this policy will be to build or acquire up to 50,000 housing units for rural and native families in the next five years.

We will invite the provinces, and I have consulted with them, to participate in achieving this goal through a federal-provincial partnership arrangement under section 40 of

the National Housing Act which provides for sharing of capital costs, 75 per cent by the federal government and 25 per cent by the province. By this technique we can provide housing in rural and isolated areas for purchase at monthly payments directly related to income which, in many cases, is extremely low or non-existent.

With provincial concurrence, we will also extend the benefits of the new residential rehabilitation assistance program to rural settlements, in cases where people's needs can best be met by permanently improving the dwellings they already occupy.

In addition, the federal emergency repair program which began three years ago will, as requested, be continued for a few more years for those native families living in substandard dwellings until new units are available.

CMHC will give special assistance to rural people to ensure that they are able to make the greatest possible use of the whole range of NHA programs, including assisted home ownership, non-profit and co-operative housing.

Special standards of residential construction will be developed to accommodate the special needs of rural and native communities.

Wherever possible, we will see that housing projects provide not only shelter but opportunities for employment of local people, job training and local economic development. All federal programs which can have an effect on the health, welfare and social and economic well-being of the people concerned will be integrated with the housing activity. This will involve such federal departments as Manpower and Immigration, Indian Affairs and Northern Development, National Health and Welfare, Regional Economic Expansion, Finance and Secretary of State. To this end an interdepartmental and intergovernmental committee will be formed in each province in Canada.

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A key factor in the success of the program will be the direct involvement of the people themselves in the planning, implementation and administration of the programs. Native people's organizations in particular have been very successful in recent years in developing self-help projects and we will continue to provide financial support for these organizations and for any others who are willing and able to take this kind of initiative. Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, as requested, will take immediate steps to recruit and train people at corporation offices and to set up other short-term training programs to increase the skill and knowledge of those involved in native housing organizations and housing programs, in order that they can take full advantage of the legislation and the budget. In addition to strengthening the head office staff which deals with native housing matters, the Corporation will second