

he came down advisedly against the kind of unplanned expansion that has blighted cities and nations across the world. He suggested the kind of co-operation between the federal government and the provinces and, I would like to add, the municipalities, that is needed to pull urban programs and strategies together. I applaud the speech he made.

I would like, as a British Columbia member, to devote part of my speech to the conference that was announced in the throne speech on western economic opportunities. May I say to the Premier of British Columbia, who said he hoped the conference would not be a reason to delay action on various matters, that that is not the intention. The purpose of such a conference is to assure, in a co-operative way, that we will be expanding and developing the potential economic resources and opportunities of western Canadians. The three agenda items suggested in the throne speech are, of course, preliminary ideas. Action will be taken quickly to follow up with an agreement on the kind of agenda that we should have. I am glad that the western premiers as a group have welcomed these plans that we have put forward, and are anxious that the conference be as productive of results as possible.

The hon. member for Lachine quite properly noted a crystal clear emphasis in the Speech from the Throne. That emphasis is the federal government's urban commitment. This commitment, this major sense of direction on behalf of the great majority of Canadians who live in towns and cities, is an activist commitment spelled out in some detail in the throne speech. This urban commitment will be spelled out further in more detail in my speech this afternoon, and will be spelled out in totally new legislation regarding housing, the building of new communities, land banking, and measures relating to neighbourhood improvement and rehabilitation. It will be illustrated in initiatives to be introduced at an early date allowing the federal government to assist the revitalization and rebirth of city cores through the relocation of railway tracks and yards. It will be spelled out in the urban commitment to Canada that will be the subject of a federal-provincial conference to be held in this city on January 22 and 23, and in policy and budgetary initiatives to be taken by CMHC which are to be announced as they are taken.

The kind of life that Canadians have in our cities and towns is the kind of national life we have. This country is rapidly heading toward being 90 per cent urbanized, or more. That unconstrained urbanization, and so far really unmanaged urbanization, is being concentrated in a relative handful of larger cities and metropolitan areas. It can, conceivably, lead to congested chaos in some areas and isolated rustic poverty in others. The British, who have been attempting to cope with heavy urbanizing trends for a long time, know this. I quote the Chairman of the Greater London Council:

Cities are indeed national assets, but they are not permanent assets.

Like all assets, they need to be preserved and developed, and it is time that central governments recognized more clearly that investment in the future of their cities is as vital to national prosperity as it is to the well being of the cities themselves.

The federal government appreciates that national investments are required for the future of urban Canada and for the future of the nation. We are talking here of

investments of planning and co-operation, and setting of priorities, as well as investments of money. We have made major moves in these directions.

I have been Minister of State for Urban Affairs, and the minister responsible for federal housing policy and for the National Capital Commission during a year of great activity and change in our cities. Much more activity and much more change—not only physical change but social change, and change in what people find important to them—are upon us. Canada, to cope with this change, is on the threshold of developing urban policy in new ways, ways that accept that urban Canada is too complex to plan and work for without radically new forms of sharing knowledge, planning and application of resources.

I do not want to dwell on the past, but I do wish to report on the tri-level conference on urban affairs held in Toronto last November, the first such conference with federal, provincial and municipal representation. It was an important breakthrough, and I am happy to take this opportunity to report its success to the House. It was the first gathering by the three levels of government to discuss specifically urban issues—how to cope with the pressures and challenges of urban Canada.

The federal government was successful in winning support at that conference for the three main goals that I expressed there. I said that the consultative process should be joint and involve all levels, that it should be continuous and an on-going process, but not a process of constitutional change, rather one of discussing priorities and fitting them in with the proper jurisdiction. All of these goals were attained and we are now in the process of organizing the next conference for 1973. I have already suggested, when discussing the national tri-level conference, that its agenda could be. It should set down issues such as provincial development strategies and regional plans so that the federal government could be supportive of those plans, such as the Toronto centred regional plan which is a provincial plan. We could sit down and discuss those policies and be supportive of them in our federal policies. I have said and I suggest that we should consider in this process problems of municipal finance, problems of housing, of social change, of transportation and the more specific issues such as land cost and sewerage treatment. The Toronto conference affirmed the principle of a national forum for all the three governments to examine major issues and to take representations back to governments which retain all their powers and jurisdictions.

• (1410)

Mr. Speaker, it is not a method of amending the constitution and it is not a method of interfering with the proper jurisdictions and responsibilities of governments but it is, it seems to me, a way of assuring that the constitution is not used as an excuse for inaction; in urban Canada it is a process of consulting on objectives, on goals, on priorities and on strategies.

As was agreed at that conference, Mr. Speaker, we are proceeding, with considerable success, to set up regional tri-level consultative processes involving the federal government, all provinces or groups of provinces and local governments. We are also setting up, and have working, action committees in such cities as Winnipeg, Montreal