

Housing

housing starts that we are worried about. As the Prime Minister said today, it is the number of completions in a single year, and it is the soaring cost of those houses once they are completed.

Let us not forget that the 11 per cent tax that this government imposed represents one of the major elements in escalating the price of homes beyond the reach of ordinary Canadians. The more the value is inflated, the bigger the tax gets. A \$12,000 home five years ago is a \$16,000 home today, and the tax is applied to the \$16,000. Naturally, it becomes a bigger and bigger tax as prices go up.

We all know that action must be taken on urban problems. We all know that there must be a minister in the government with whom the provinces can deal, a minister to whom the provinces can turn with their problems, a minister with whom the municipalities can confer. We will have a new minister in charge of housing, I hope. I do not envy him that position because he will have the same problem as did the former minister, namely, the problem of getting this government interested in the "nuts and bolts" questions of keeping this country a good place for Canadians to live.

The Minister of Transport is not the issue here, nor the minister's resignation. The issue here is the Prime Minister and the policies or lack of policies which made that resignation necessary. It is up to the Prime Minister to explain to the house what his policies are. We do not want the wishy-washy cover-up we got yesterday, but a full, frank and complete exposé of the government's program for housing; their program for making land assembly funds available to municipalities; their program to combat pollution and the blight of urban decay. That is the only way in which the Prime Minister can deal with this situation.

Has he or has he not got a program? If he has, what is it? We have waited a whole year now for some sign of action on the part of the government, some realization on their part that there were problems in these areas and that something had to be done. There has not been the slightest indication that the government even recognizes the problems. Naturally, if they do not recognize them, they cannot solve them.

The issue is a simple one. Both the Minister of Transport and the Prime Minister cannot be right. One of them must be wrong. If what the minister said is true and the Prime Minister is taking a hand's off attitude about

some of the most serious and urgent problems affecting Canadians in every province, then he should say so and take the issue to the people. If the Prime Minister feels that his constitutional beliefs are such that the government can neither co-operate with the provinces nor show leadership in the fields of housing, pollution, urban transit, and slum renewal—and this is what the provinces themselves have charged—then let the Prime Minister say so in a frank and honest way. Let him take the question to the people so that Canadians can decide whether or not they want leadership in these fields.

Let him take the issue to the people and let us see whether they will believe the Prime Minister's lame, halting, confused explanation, or the clear, concise position taken by the Minister of Transport. This is a matter so important to the future of this nation that only the people can decide.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I regret that it has been necessary for me to miss a good part of the debate today. I realize that a great deal has been said on this subject and that many facts and figures have been adduced. However, I feel that, coming from the west coast, I have something to say on behalf of the people out there for whom a housing crisis does exist, as a matter of fact, for whom a housing crisis has existed for a long time. Many of these people will be terribly upset and disappointed when they listen to or read the words the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) spoke here this afternoon. He said that, in his opinion, there is no housing crisis in Canada at the present time. There is none for the Prime Minister. There is none for most of us here in the house, and there is none for a great many Canadians because the housing crisis is basically a crisis of income and those people who can afford to rent or to buy decent housing accommodation can do so. As for the other people, the two-thirds of Canadians who have incomes of below \$7,500, there exists a very great housing crisis, increasing in severity as one goes down the income scale.

It is not a new thing for the Prime Minister to have told us that no housing crisis exists. He said this last fall in the speech from the throne in which there was no mention of one of the major problems facing the Canadian people today, namely housing. Nor has there been any subsequent action which would result in providing homes for the people who