

Adjournment Debate

Indeed, this policy abandons more than 500,000 low-income Quebec households. In Montreal, this cut means that 500 units will not be built this year, in a region where 10,000 people are on the waiting list for social housing and 615,000 live below the poverty line.

In light of these figures, the Minister of Public Works dared to say in this House not long ago, on April 30, that there was a surplus of social housing in some parts of Montreal. If there is really a surplus of social housing in the Montreal area, I would ask the government to explain why there are waiting lists. Why do people ask for social housing every time members of Parliament meet their constituents?

I must also say that since April 30, the minister has answered my question about surpluses in certain neighbourhoods. My office tried to telephone the minister to find out in what neighbourhoods these surpluses were, in order to refer my constituents who come every day asking for social housing.

I do not know how the parliamentary secretary will answer this question, but I hope that, with the minister's answer, he will give me the addresses or the districts where these surpluses are so that starting tomorrow morning, we can contact our people in Saint-Léonard who need social housing or co-operative housing and refer them there.

Mr. Speaker, you are indicating to me that my four minutes are up. Thank you for your patience and I eagerly await the parliamentary secretary's answer.

[English]

Mr. Dave Worthy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I would like to try to respond. First, the hon. member has expressed concern with the social housing efforts of the government. We have had to fit our program within the general restraint that we experience right through government. We have to live within the 3 per cent increase of expenditures for social housing, but that does not mean that any people have been abandoned. There are over 650,000 households in Canada now that the government is assisting and will continue to assist. There will be 18,000 new households that will get new assistance this year.

The member also mentioned the co-ops. He is concerned and I am concerned about those with the greatest need in these waiting queues. They should be served. We

know that the co-op effort, as admirable as it is, is not totally targeted to those in need. As a government member I would be surprised if the hon. member would want to take funds from those who have real targeted needs to subsidize others who do not have the same need.

The final point he addressed was on the surplus, that actual portion of the budget. With respect to the availability of social housing in Montreal, it is done in conjunction with the Société d'habitation du Québec. A study done by the society indicates that out of a portfolio of approximately 16,600 units, 642 are currently vacant. About two-thirds of these have been spoken for and will soon be occupied. The remaining one-third is made up of vacant units currently being renovated or in need of major repair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret the hon. member's time has expired.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon members of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada marched on Parliament Hill demanding their justly earned pay equity settlements. Some 68,000 federal employees are owed money by this government according to its own pay equity legislation.

Over a month ago I asked the President of the Treasury Board to ensure that this government meets its pay equity obligation. He commented: "We feel that we have respected the law fully". That was from the President of Treasury Board.

The Canadian Human Rights Commissioner disagrees. In his annual report he highlights the weaknesses of the current legislation, adding that these were accentuated by the government's refusal to implement full pay equity for women working in the federal Public Service.

Not only does the legislation lack teeth, the onus to uncover inequities is left entirely to the employee, but the government will not comply even with this feeble legislation.

Only two days ago my colleague from Ottawa West again asked that the government live up to its pay equity obligations. This time it was the parliamentary secretary who evaded the question and he shifted the blame on to the unions. He chose not to mention that the government tried to ignore a key five-year study which the