

*Supply*

I just want to comment on a couple of things that the hon. member mentioned or omitted. One point was the fact that aboriginal people have the poorest housing. I did not hear the word aboriginal once in the whole presentation.

The other point was that I did not hear anything, other than Canadian or global, about how many houses are needed in Northwest Territories or in British Columbia. I just heard the statistics in Quebec.

I know that the member is a member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and I think the member should represent all Canadians. I did not hear that.

I would like to comment also on her comment about the hon. minister for external affairs. She seemed to contradict, telling us that we were not aware of all the housing needs and then quoting the hon. minister. The minister must have been representing his constituents and Canada when he made his concerns known about housing and therefore did not need lessons from the hon. member about not knowing what was going on in our ridings over here. Does the hon. member have any understanding of the housing needs of aboriginal people across Canada as well as in Quebec? Does she have any statistics about the state of poor housing in areas other than Quebec?

• (1555)

**Mrs. Guay:** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to answer the member in English. Maybe he will understand me better and he will not need the translation.

The hon. member should know it is not the first time I have spoken about social housing. I have talked about aboriginal people also and their problems. He probably was not here to hear it. I always talk about social housing across Canada not only in Quebec. I gave statistics about Quebec because we are from Quebec. However I always speak for every Canadian in every riding everywhere.

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the hon. member for putting forward a motion which discusses some very substantive issues relating to social housing.

I do not wish to be too congratulatory to my colleague opposite, however the subject matter before us this afternoon can be debated in a very civilized way and perhaps suggestions from all quarters can be put on the record. We can then present them to the Minister of Finance, who as we all know, is in the process of preparing his budget.

Although I thank the hon. member for putting the subject matter before the House I cannot concur with the way in which the motion has been written and placed before the House.

I want to assure all hon. members that as the minister responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing, I take my mandate very seriously, as does the government. We fully understand the challenges ahead and we are committed to carrying out the government's agenda in the area of housing.

Make no mistake about it, the government is committed to maintaining a strong role in social housing across the country. Our commitment reflects our desire to help the least advantaged in our society and we will continue to do just that.

In the speech from the throne the government clearly signalled its resolve to address the fiscal situation while at the same time acknowledging the continuing importance of social priorities. The government is respecting its promises within its current financial capabilities. I want to underline that because I have been asked questions numerous times on the floor of the House. I have gone out of my way to make it abundantly clear that the fiscal capacity of the Government of Canada is somewhat limited as the previous administration basically left the cupboard bare. The deficit of the Government of Canada is \$12 billion over and above what we had anticipated and what we had been told during the election campaign. I am sure hon. members opposite have concluded that it does limit the fiscal capacity of the government to move in all the social areas in which we might wish to move.

Having said that to the substance of the motion before us, I cannot concur with the way in which it has been written, although I am happy about the subject being debated just days before the budget.

• (1600)

It should be clearly stated that the government is providing close to \$2 billion for the direct financing of some 652,000 households across the country. That is a very substantial amount of money which is lent under the auspices of the direct lending program, administered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

To suggest otherwise is being totally irresponsible in my view. I direct those comments not necessarily to members opposite but to those who are outside the Chamber and those who may come into the Chamber and speak to the issues, that the government is making an important contribution to social housing. The hon. member made reference to the fact that this administration is the same as the old administration. That is not true.

The throne speech which was tabled in the other House and which has been referred to by the Prime Minister and by myself on several occasions, talked about social housing. We have put down \$100 million over a two-year period for the residential rehabilitation assistance program.

With a limited fiscal capacity, we are providing \$100 million to individuals in order to improve the quality of the stock of homes. This is a significant contribution in terms of the health