

Housing

there was the establishment of intergovernmental and inter-departmental committees to ensure that federal and provincial governments were directly involved so that they could be assured the rural and native housing groups attained their goals.

I doubt if there has ever been greater expenditure of energy, time and money for the reallocation of personnel for a specific project that has been a total failure. Is it any wonder provinces were less than enthusiastic about the program and that many delayed signing the necessary agreements? What have been some of the anticipated failures? The most obvious and inhumane is the small number of new homes built, purchased or repaired. The central concept of client involvement resulting in community development and rehabilitation was not implemented. The development of local housing societies or co-ops did not materialize to the degree anticipated. Disunity developed between provincial housing officials and native housing organizations as well as with local housing societies where they were formed. CMHC regional branch offices gave little or no encouragement to the program. There are innumerable additional problems that could be outlined, but surely it is obvious the game plan was so structured that problems had to occur which would undermine the ultimate success of the program.

In conclusion, I would simply reiterate that the sensitivity of the government to native problems can only be measured by the end results. We know the end results. A native housing crisis exists and is increasing, and the policies of this government are totally inadequate to meet their needs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet).

Mr. Paproski: Maiden speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Some maiden.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see how interested hon. members on the other side are in this innovative program through which this government wants to help rural and native people enjoy better housing conditions.

I appreciate very much the fact that hon. members opposite have decided to devote one day to debate this important issue. I am particularly pleased to rise today, for I think this housing program for rural and native people is not as clearly understood as it should be, especially by hon. members in this House and, of course, by most people living in urban areas of this country.

I think it is important to point out that this is a housing program launched in 1974 to help people living in remote areas of Canada, including native people, to purchase, build or renovate 50,000 housing units over five years. And I want to state immediately, Mr. Speaker, that with the co-operation and participation of those who benefit directly from this program we are going to reach our goal. This year, with the

[Mr. Holmes.]

help of those community associations created in rural areas, we have purchased, built or renovated some 6,800 housing units, for the most needy individuals and families. Implementation of the program is being carried out at a stepped up pace from month to month, and we have just started to give it the speed at which the government would like to see it move.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is interesting to note how this program has developed over the years. As early as in 1971, extensive studies were being carried out and plans prepared to find solutions to problems arising from housing built according to acceptable standards in rural areas, mainly those designed for native people.

In 1974, after numerous consultations with local organizations and once project submission were made by the National Native Council of Canada, plans had been sufficiently underway to allow my predecessor, now the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford), to lay before the House of Commons the government's policy concerning rural native housing and to set up the objective of some 50,000 housing units for the next five years.

Well, it is unquestionable that the first months that followed should have first been used to set up a body to implement that program, including negotiations with other levels of government which must join with us to implement several aspects of that program, and the need to help local community associations to prepare themselves to play a role in the elaboration and implementation of their own housing programs.

Those preliminary actions, Mr. Speaker, were essential and must, of course, be phased in before we can really start producing housing units. Actual housing production in the other months of 1974 was negligible, I must admit. But in 1975 we had reached an annual production approaching 3,000 housing units. At the end of this year we will have more than doubled that number. And I want to add that we can predict by the end of 1977 a housing production under this program with an annual rate of nearly 1,000 built, acquired or restored units for the people living in the rural and remote areas of Canada.

If we continue at that rate I believe we will have an excellent chance of reaching our goal by the deadline we set for ourselves. As hon. members know, that assistance is being extended under mainly two sections of the National Housing Act. Under section 40, we are making well built, well administered and economical houses available to families and people living in rural and remote areas who could not otherwise afford one. Those houses can be either leased or bought by monthly instalments in proportion with the occupant's income. The federal government pays 75 per cent of the capital cost and operating deficits resulting from that program. The federal government provides the rest, and municipalities sometimes pay part of those costs. The other main source of financial help comes under the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program—known as RRAP. In designated rural areas RRAP provides for loans of up to \$10,000, including up to \$3,750 which can be forgiven. That money is used to repair, restore and improve units whose condition is judged to be below acceptable standards, to make them healthy and safe and