

Yes, DREE money has come in very handy in the city of Saint John, and we need more.

Second, the great concern we had during the previous administration was that even though much DREE money was spent in Saint John, it seems strange that there is not one person working in any DREE office in my home city of Saint John. We do not have a DREE office in Saint John. If we want to deal with DREE we have to drive to Moncton, 100 miles, or to Fredericton, 60 miles. Ours is the only maritime city where in the last five years there has been a decrease in the number of federal jobs, and that situation is continuing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, I should like to congratulate you and your assistant on your appointments to these most important posts in the House. As this is my maiden speech, I should like to say something about my riding.

For a number of reasons I am proud to represent the Laurier constituency on Montreal Island. First of all, it is quite a privilege to sit as a member in the House of Commons, the highest legislative body in Canada. My constituency, named after the eighth Prime Minister of Canada, has been represented in the past by a long list of imposing personalities. For instance, it was ably represented during the last Parliament as well as the past 15 years by the hon. Fernand Leblanc, who has been appointed to the Senate. Senator Leblanc, like all those who had preceded him in the House, had always been close to his constituents. As a matter of fact, the people of this riding have always been privileged ever since it became a constituency in 1935. Their first representative was the Hon. E. Bertrand, a minister in the St. Laurent cabinet. After his appointment to the bench, he was replaced by the Hon. J. Eugene Lefrançois, later appointed to the Senate. Its next representative was the Hon. Lionel Chevrier, a minister of transport in the Mackenzie King and St. Laurent governments, and both a minister of justice and solicitor general in the Pearson government. He was later appointed High Commissioner to London.

All those men served their country loyally and constantly. For the benefit of hon. members, I shall explain the geographic and demographic situation of the riding of Laurier. Located east of downtown Montreal, it extends from Park Avenue in the west to Papineau to the east, from Sherbrooke in the south to Bernard St. and the railway track in the north. Amongst its better known streets let us mention Laurier, St. Joseph, Parc La Fontaine, the commercial street, Mont-Royal, St. Denis, St. Louis Square and St. Laurent or the "Main", where traditionally east Montreal joins west Montreal. The population of the riding is 65 per cent Francophone and comprises several minorities of which the main one, numerically, is Portuguese. It also includes considerable numbers of Canadians of various origins: English, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Chinese and eastern European. In fact, every corner of the world is represented in the riding.

The Address—Mr. Berger

● (1700)

The riding has been and still is one of the areas where one of the larger numbers of immigrants settle; to my mind, it truly represents the Canadian mosaic. Some time ago, the riding had a fairly large number of Jewish people who were immortalized in the writings of Mordecai Richler. Before going any further, Mr. Speaker, I should like to express all my gratitude to the people of the riding of Laurier for welcoming me so warmly as a candidate, and electing me with quite a large majority. I hope I shall prove worthy of the trust the riding has put in me.

Mr. Speaker, as a candidate taking his first few steps in the field of politics, I have noticed a mood of impatience amongst my electors, impatience with the governments at every level which take so long to find solutions to their problems. As an example of what I mean, I should like to describe the housing situation in my riding. Since the election I have received a great number of calls from people in their sixties who, after working for 40 years, want to move into low rental housing. These are often sick people who live in those three storey houses with outside staircases, typical of eastern Montreal. They can barely keep up their homes which are often badly heated. There is a lack of low rental housing in Montreal, as was noted in a newspaper article last spring, which stated that there were 9,000 such units which were occupied, with a waiting list of over 11,000.

A related problem is the shabbiness of these houses in general in my riding. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has a residential rehabilitation assistance program administered by the city of Montreal. The need for such a program is self-evident because our downtown areas are in dire need of renovation. However the problems that I have noted in the implementation of this program put its adequacy in question.

Some low-income tenants—some of whom have been living in the same apartment for over 30 years while others are ill and even often handicapped—have been advised that their lease will be cancelled at some future date when government approval is obtained. The owners are unable to set the rental rates before undertaking the construction. The tenants doubt that the projects will ever be undertaken but feel that the owners will rather make some superficial repairs to take advantage of government subsidies at their expense. Tenants' associations have been set up to fight against those projects or suggest some alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, when tenants move and buildings become half empty, the services worsen. The owners say that present subsidies are not high enough to meet ever soaring construction costs, with the concrete result that rents are higher after repairs and this prevents some low-income tenants from moving back into their apartment. No step has been taken to relocate the tenants during construction. In addition, there is no co-ordination between that renewal program and provincial