

The Budget—Mr. Danson

fires in Canada in 1972 alone was 50,552, and the property damage amounted to \$82,187,000.

I need not document further the damage that is being done in homes across this country and the loss of life that is taking place through the lack of programs to assist Canadians to prevent fires. However, I want to take a few moments in concluding yesterday's remarks to make what I think would be a useful suggestion to the government. We do have in this country programs like National Fire Prevention Week on which considerable money has been spent on advertising, but the fact of the matter is that the program in many ways has really been unsuccessful. Each and every year property damage and loss of life as a result of fire are increasing. Therefore, I would submit to the government that it seriously take into consideration giving a full tax write-off on any fire safety equipment that individuals instal in their homes, in small businesses or in farming operations.

I think this is a request that is not too gigantic to ask of the government, especially in light of the fact that had all Canadians had fire safety equipment in their homes, this country would have saved something in the neighbourhood of \$80 million a year, according to the National Research Council, and something in the order of 200 lives per year.

I wanted to wrap those remarks up yesterday, Mr. Speaker, by making a representation on this issue. Since most of the fires in homes in Canada occur in family homes of low income, I think it is necessary that as a nation we move away from an advertising campaign to something that does make real economic sense. I would, therefore, encourage the government to take into consideration granting complete tax write-offs on any fire safety equipment installed in homes, small businesses or farming operations so that we in this country can tackle what is a shameful situation and reduce the number of lives lost and the property damage caused by fires. Certainly we are not paying attention to the individual in the same way as institutions. I simply encourage the government to take that representation into consideration.

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate and to follow the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Malone). I am glad the House saw fit to give him additional time to speak about a rather important aspect of the whole housing scene, one to which Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation addresses itself very seriously indeed. I was also interested in his suggestion that the budget be subject to a vote of the people of this country. The success the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) has had in taking his budgets to the people across the nation for a vote has been pretty good and I would not mind trying this again. I think all hon. members have recognized the enormity of the task faced by the Minister of Finance, one that he has faced very squarely and honestly.

In so far as the housing measures are concerned, I am far less interested in speechmaking than I am in getting on with the job. Certainly I would have liked more funding; that is no secret—any minister would. I am sure the Minister of Finance would have liked to provide more. But I am by no means shattered by this situation. This is the

[Mr. Malone.]

reality that we have to face when we have the responsibility of government, not the theories of those who do not have that responsibility. I have been given substantially more tools to do the job and I plan to use those tools as effectively as I can.

In terms of the capital funds allocated for housing—this does not include land and infrastructure or other activities in the social and organizational field of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation—these amount to an increase in our budget for housing alone of 20 per cent, from \$1 billion to \$1,200 million. Then other non-capital budgets of CMHC apply to other programs, so we are approaching a total outlay of \$2 billion by the federal government in the housing field alone. Housing is the highest priority of the government in this budget. No other single item for this year has been allocated such high priority or so much additional funding—an extra \$200 million this year, with five months of the year already gone. It is the largest single item, which indicates that even in these very difficult times of tough economic circumstances, the government continues to give housing the priority it has given for all this time. There is no doubt that this will have a significant effect on continuing efforts to produce housing for Canadians in 1975.

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There is equally no doubt that we have programs at our disposal to build homes for Canadians in the moderate and low income ranges. Our assisted home ownership and assisted rental programs have met with unquestioned success, and new funds will guarantee their continuation. Never in the history of federal government housing programs has everything moved so well, with such success, for the right people in the right income ranges. This is coupled with the 100 per cent increase in privately-funded Assisted Home Ownership Program grants, from \$600 to \$1,200 yearly. Family people in the low income groups can borrow money privately if these rates are too high, so we are able to subsidize them by another \$100 a month instead of \$50 a month as it was previously. We have granted an increase of 50 per cent, from \$600 to \$900, under the rental assistance program. This should go a long way toward providing more Canadians in the lower and middle income ranges with good and affordable housing.

I must admit that these last two subsidy programs have been slower in moving than I had hoped, but they have only been in force for two months. I think hon. members opposite should realize that after the long delays in committee in getting this legislation through, these programs have only been in force for two months. As I pointed out before, the success of these programs depends to the greatest extent on the participation and co-operation of approved lenders: the banks, the trust companies, the caisses populaires, the insurance companies and other institutions some of which, in my view, up to this time have not played the role they should in providing mortgage money. I refer to pension funds, union funds and other sources, including investment corporations which are just coming on stream.

Clearly, there are very heavy demands on capital markets and, secondly, there has been a scarcity of capital funds for new residential construction in the lower and moderate income ranges. Indeed, the resale of existing