

Urban Affairs

People are now working to institute a real co-ordination of federal policy efforts in the cities. We are now building a strong research capability that will allow policy analysis and development to proceed systematically on the best available information. This research function will include the capacity to test—I repeat to test—specific policies before major new financial or administrative commitments are made.

One important role will be to clarify to other departments the consequences of the different federal policies being implemented now and in future. Mechanisms for determining Canada's urban objectives through intergovernmental consultations are now being explored, and the ministry will devote much of its efforts to consultation, with the objective of joint co-ordination and rationalization of efforts between the federal and other levels of government.

I want to repeat what I have said many times, that this work is going to be supportive, co-operative, usurping no jurisdictions, imposing no federal urban policy on the country. We will build techniques by which proposed policies can be tested and work with the provinces so as to determine what sort of process may be developed.

I would now like to table the report, Mr. Speaker, and to add that the research monographs, providing detailed technical and analytical documentation for the report, are being printed and will be made available shortly.

Mr. S. Perry Ryan (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, believe it or not, and despite the daffodils, today Ottawa has been out-snowed by Vancouver, and what a snow job that has been. It makes it difficult for us to get down to business, but I am sure there is pleasure in every heart in this House and across the entire nation as we congratulate the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on his successful daring, and extend our very best wishes to his bride, Mrs. Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Now, I think, we can understand the content of the Prime Minister's speech to the faithful at Toronto a couple of nights ago.

I thank the minister responsible for housing and urban affairs for his advice yesterday that he would finally be tabling in the House, this morning, the Lithwick study of urban problems in Canada which was commissioned by the government about one and a half years ago. I received the minister's statement and a copy of the study about one hour ago. This study or report has been in the hands of the minister and of the cabinet for about one year. Everybody in the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, as well as numerous other government officials across the land, seem to have read Mr. Lithwick's work and discussed it long before today. But there has been no opportunity, until now, for opposition members on this side of the House to read it. I assume the same holds true of backbenchers on the government side.

Although 85.4 per cent of Canada's population in 1981 will live in urban centres of over 1,000 people, neither you, Mr. Speaker, nor other members of this House will expect me to discuss Mr. Lithwick's report in detail this morning. After all, it is 236 pages long, and is extremely

technical. However, I have thoroughly sampled its author's style in the symposium "Urban Studies: A Canadian Perspective" which he and Mr. Gilles Pacquet published in 1968, and which is to be found in the Library of Parliament. We are told, in that work, that we know very little about the process of urbanization in Canada or about the structure and functioning of our cities. However, much work had been done in the United States to accumulate a certain stock of knowledge about approaches to the urban phenomenon. Mr. Lithwick has criticized the Canadian bureaucracy on the ground that it feels its own expertise to exceed by far any to be found elsewhere, thus making dialogue unnecessary.

The author has also criticized the government for its miserly approach to internal research effort. Furthermore, he came down hard on the CMHC for failing to carry out the serious hard work involved in urban renewal, low rental housing, mortgage financing and so forth, accusing it of stringing most of its programs together on an ad hoc basis. So, it seems to me he was an excellent choice to carry out this study.

There is no machinery in Canada, Mr. Speaker, capable of arriving at a national urban policy. The report before us would provide the basis for designing such a policy, likely a good one. Its findings coincide with the long-standing recommendation of the Progressive Conservative party that a federal department of urban affairs and a national urban council be established. It deals with possible policy options for urban growth and also envisions a central research agency for serious urban research and a large-scale data development program.

May I suggest to the minister that the conclusions and the recommendations in this report be considered by a special joint committee of the House and of the Senate, as well as in the light of representations from all three levels of government and those of other qualified and interested parties? Time is of the essence because the complex urban phenomenon is still very poorly understood. In these circumstances, Canadians generally and the CMHC in particular, are entitled to know what their roles are to be. Is the CMHC to be our great urban planner? From its history, I hope not. But it could do some things very well.

Mr. Lithwick, we are told, has revised his report over the period of a year. The analysis, and the conclusions reached, are not to be regarded as those of the government but rather as those of a consultant. The voice of the minister, and of the cabinet which has considered these documents for so long, must, nevertheless, have exercised a great deal of impact upon the alterations which have been made. From a quick consideration of the minister's statement, it would appear that much has been accomplished by the report in influencing the government's thinking about urban Canada as a matter of federal concern. This, I sincerely hope, will prove to be the case.

• (11:30 a.m.)

The report is of great value if it does nothing more than communicate emphatically to all levels of govern-