

Housing

rates were running at 0.1 per cent last October. We have a growing crisis in the affordability and availability of accommodation in Canada. It is essential that the government recognize this fact today and be prepared to bring new measures before Parliament which will address the problem and begin to correct the difficulties which were caused by its misguided budget.

Even where there is available housing, there is a second concern that housing is rapidly becoming unaffordable. In the Liberal constituency of Kitchener, an average house sold for \$58,746 last year. In the Liberal constituency of Guelph, an average house sold for \$57,402 last year. In Toronto, an average house sold for \$100,373. We are finding that affordable housing is being taken away from Canadians, and that the dream of many Canadian families of owning their own homes is becoming a forgotten dream because of government policy.

No one who looks at the bill which was put before us by the minister responsible for housing could make a claim in any honesty that it will address the problem. It presents a band-aid or a palliative which mitigates against some of the worst effects of the policies of the Minister of Finance, but it does not give the dramatic stimulus that is necessary if we are to make housing affordable and available to all Canadians.

Mr. Kelly: That is not so.

Mr. Beatty: This fact was recognized by the ten Liberal Members of Parliament who sent that open letter to the Prime Minister. They knew what was in the bill. It is striking that the hon. member for Scarborough Centre (Mr. Kelly), who just spoke out, did not have the courage to speak out on behalf of his constituents. The members from Montreal were left to do so by themselves.

Mr. Kelly: Are you going to vote against it?

Mr. Beatty: The hon. member is asking whether we will vote against band-aids. No, we will not vote against band-aids, but what we will do—and what the constituents of the hon. member asked him to do—is to speak up for people by saying that it is time for housing to be made affordable and that the policies of the government which are directly designed to cost ordinary Canadians their homes must be stopped and changed. His constituents are calling upon him to say that ordinary Canadians are finding their businesses are being taken away from them because of the policies of the Minister of Finance. They are calling upon him to speak up and represent them. Also they are saying that an unprecedented number of working Canadians are having their jobs taken away from them, with tremendous economic and social consequences for all Canada. It is time that the hon. member for Scarborough Centre spoke up instead of remaining silently complicit in the government's scorched-earth economic policies. Also they are saying that it is essential, when ordinary Canadians find their farms being taken away from them by the policies supported by the minister for housing and the hon. member for Scarborough Centre for new policies to be designed so that farming in

Canada be made possible in the future and that family farms do not cease to exist.

What is in the budget or in the bill before us today that offers hope to Canadians? The answer is, very little. I should like to take a look at the specific provisions in the bill. On budget night the Minister of Finance gave an estimate to the House of the number of Canadians whose mortgages would be coming up for renewal over the course of one year. He pointed out that there were approximately five million home owners in Canada. According to the Minister of Finance and his budget papers, over the course of the last half of last year and this year, which is essentially the period covered by the budget, some 920,000 Canadians will be put in the position of renegotiating their mortgages. Anyone who has had the experience of renegotiating a mortgage under the present economic conditions set by the high interest rate policy of the government knows the serious problem it poses for many ordinary Canadian families. How many of them will be helped? How many families whose mortgages are coming up for renewal will be helped by the proposition before us today?

I ask the hon. member for Scarborough Centre and the minister for housing for their attention. When the minister spoke the other day, I followed his remarks very carefully. He did not mention how many Canadian families would be helped by the band-aids he put forward.

Mr. Cosgrove: All those with over 30 per cent.

Mr. Beatty: I ask the minister to correct me if I am wrong, that the number of Canadians who will be helped by this provision, in terms of assistance for them with their mortgages, will amount to approximately 50,000 of the 920,000 Canadians whose mortgages are coming up for renewal this year. It will amount to 12,500 Canadian families who will receive up to a maximum of \$3,000 in assistance, and it will amount to another 37,500 Canadian families who will be allowed to defer interest. Let us make very clear what the minister is proposing. Is he proposing direct assistance to 37,500 Canadians? Is he proposing some relief which will subsidize interest rates? No, he is not. He is proposing that their indebtedness should increase, and next year they will find themselves with higher debt loads than they had this year. This is what the minister is proposing, and this is his idea of assistance for people in dire straits.

The minister has the responsibility, when he is proposing this legislation, to be honest with Canadians and to indicate that he recognizes it is simply a band-aid and will not address the serious problem which the ten Liberal members from Montreal felt the government needed to deal with urgently, without any further delay. Yet the government presents palliatives as a means of distracting the attention of Canadians and as a means of trying to convince them that the government takes the problem seriously and is prepared to show some leadership in this serious economic crisis of today.

Over the course of the Christmas recess I had a chance to talk with my constituents. There was one message which they gave me time and time again. It was the same message I heard