

*Urgency of Housing Debate*

house today. I understand that today in the west he is still talking about housing, as he has been for the past year and a half. But no action has been taken. We have no indication, for example, of when the budget will come before the house for debate.

I maintain, therefore, that in view of the serious developments that have occurred during the past year, the further anticipated increase in the mortgage interest rate by October 1, and the freeze on mortgage funds for direct lending by the government, there is an urgent requirement for debate today by this house on this most important matter. For those three reasons, Mr. Speaker, I submit there is an urgent requirement for such a debate.

**Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me there is every reason to agree on the urgency of debate on the subject which has been introduced. As a matter of fact I had such a motion ready to introduce, because I think this is a matter of the utmost importance. All the members of the house who have just come from their constituencies must know that the housing shortage in this country is now reaching critical proportions.

All the indications are that targets set will not be reached. The Economic Council of Canada said just recently that we ought to be building 190,000 houses a year. The government's original target was 170,000 houses, later cut to 150,000. According to the best reports we are able to obtain it is doubtful now that we will even reach the target of 150,000 housing starts this year.

This situation has been worsened by the announcement of the Prime Minister in August that the \$300 million of additional funds that it was hoped would be made available for housing is not to be made available. The Economic Council in its fourth annual review is most critical of the application of a tight money policy to house construction.

• (3:20 p.m.)

The Prime Minister said in the middle of August that this whole question of additional funds for housing should be reviewed again in the fall. Some two months have elapsed and the government has had ample time to review this matter. It seems to me that it is the right of this house and of the people of Canada to know what the government's intentions are with respect to housing, whether or not they are going to make this \$300 million available or whether we are going to continue to fall short of the targets with the results

that are now apparent, namely that houses are becoming scarcer and rents are increasing. People in this very city of Ottawa are being evicted from homes at the present time. The situation has become such that one of the leading housing authorities in Canada has said that in 1968 we will face a housing crisis such as this country has never before experienced.

It is because the government has not announced any policy and has not put forward any program that we are entitled to a debate in order that we and the people of Canada may know what the government intends to do if anything. Surely there is nothing that can be more important than to have a full scale debate at this time in order that we may know the government's plans and whether or not the government intends to grant the \$300 million additional mortgage funds which, it was hoped all along, would be made available.

**Mr. Raymond Langlois (Mégantic):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to put forward my own contribution to this debate and express the views of this group concerning the housing situation in the country. This is not a new problem. We have been faced with it many times prior to the adjournment of this session and it has been growing with increasing speed ever since then.

I do not intend at this time to debate the urgency of the matter because we all know that it is a very urgent one in view of the fact that the two most basic necessities of human beings are food and shelter. There need be no discussion of that. There is a need for housing and we all realize it.

So far as urgency of debate is concerned may I suggest that we refer to Beauchesne's fourth edition, citation 100 (2) which states that a matter "must be so pressing that public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention". In my opinion there is no matter that is more pressing and more urgent than this one now. Public interest will definitely suffer from lack of housing and therefore it is our duty, if at all possible, to put a stop to the high cost and rising price of housing and to ensure that the house does its duty before this situation develops into a crisis.

Far too often we have waited in this house before acting on important matters. We have waited until the situation became critical, at which time it is very difficult and sometimes practically impossible to deal with it. In such cases the measures we take can only be very hasty ones and not necessarily the right ones.