

National Housing Act

Canada. It would certainly reduce the degree of lot price increases that have been taking place.

Third, the federal government must get rid of the red tape. It is high time that Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation stopped having requirements that they universally expect to be met from sea unto sea. Municipalities have different needs. If CMHC would accept the basic principle of financing, be it on the servicing side or the home ownership side, homes that are acceptable to the local community and stop drawing up their hard and fast rules as to what the house must have in terms of square footage, sewage, water facilities and so on, there would be a tremendous relief in the backlog of demand that now exists in this country.

It is time that CMHC got down to the grassroots, began diversifying and stopped this eternal centralization that seems to be the Ottawa answer to Canada's problems. Surely, when I can show the impact of 12 years, 1961 to 1973, of house prices in urban centres in Canada—

Mr. Stanbury: Ontario.

Mr. Stevens:—there can be no question but that CMHC is not doing the job it should be doing.

Mr. Basford: Twelve years of Conservative government in Ontario.

Mr. Stevens: It is 10 years that your government has been here, Mr. Minister. If the minister, his department and CMHC would simply trust the private sector a little more to produce, we would start getting some results.

I suggest that CMHC is an interesting contrast to the comparable company in the United States. There, the bulk of the financing is from the private sector and the corporation is owned by the private sector. The tendency in Ottawa is to have Crown corporations 100 per cent owned by the federal government and 100 per cent financed by the federal treasury, and that is bad. It should not be allowed to continue indiscriminately and indefinitely as the Trudeau government has allowed. Surely, the nation should expect more than Basford fiefdom's and Trudeau government fiddling with this whole question of housing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Fox (Argenteuil-Deux-Montagnes): Mr. Speaker, the act to amend the National Housing Act now under consideration is part of the lengthy progress of the Canadian society to carry out a housing policy consistent not only with the needs but also with the aspirations of our people.

A housing policy throws a lot of light on the government which promotes it. Is it a reforming government? Is it a government which is responsive to the various needs of the people? Is it a government which has drawn up its policy based on needs which could vary from an area to the other in that huge country? Is it a government which has secured the support as well as the willingness to act of other levels of government and the private sector, without which only a measure of success could be achieved?

[*Mr. Stevens.*]

[*English*]

The government's achievements in the field of housing and urban affairs since 1968 indicate the extent of the efforts made to achieve these objectives: From mid-1968 to the end of 1971, almost 750,000 housing starts were recorded. Forty per cent, or 315,000, were financed under the National Housing Act and 160,000 of these were, in turn, homes built for low income families thereby exceeding the total produced in all previous Canadian history. Nearly \$11 billion was invested in housing during this period. Of this amount, \$6.6 billion was injected under the NHA and 2.7 billion of that was direct federal funds loaned by CMHC.

[*Translation*]

Federal-provincial meetings about urban and housing matters were also quite successful. This has to be pointed out, however, since usually, only contentious cases in federal-provincial relations are referred to in his country.

Being aware as well of the gaps of the previous legislation, which failed to meet the ever growing needs of the Canadian society, the government has proposed the new measures which are now before us. The minister responsible for this legislation pointed out that these measures had earned the support of the provinces at the federal-provincial conference in January.

If we analyze the text that was put forward in the House, use can find that the minister proposes ten new measures or programs which will enable people to get a decent dwelling at a reasonable price.

Let us look briefly at these measures. The new communities program is designed to secure urban growth in ways that the unregulated spread of cities. We are all aware of what such growth of their urban centres has cost our American neighbours, and it is important to avoid their mistakes.

What about the land assembly program? Land prices undoubtedly represent one of the most costly features of housing. The government proposes an overall strategy designed to encourage provincial and municipal governments to become more active in getting land in order to meet future housing needs. The federal government is ready to spend some \$100 million each year, for the next five years, towards public land assembly, including land for new communities.

Moreover, the government is thinking about the development of an assistance program for homeownership. I wish to speak at some length, Mr. Speaker, about this part of the amendments to the act. I suggest that it is difficult nowadays to state as principle that one should rather be a tenant than an owner. Some people may prefer, for worthwhile reasons, to be tenants rather than owners, or vice versa. The important thing is that our society make this choice a little more real, and insure to a larger number of people a choice in fact rather than in theory in this regard. And the bill which is now before the House represents a big step in that direction.

In his March 15 speech, the minister gave as an example that a wage-earner with two children and an annual income of some \$7,500 would be able to purchase a \$19,000 house by monthly payments of \$137. It means that houses of \$14,000 to \$15,000 would be accessible to families with incomes lower than those the minister mentioned.