

*Supply*

• (1545)

Mr. Speaker, this situation is scandalous and unacceptable. Canada, a supposedly wealthy and developed country, has a poor record in this area. The Liberals have no choice but to re-establish the budget for social housing.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs is very familiar with and has always been a staunch advocate of social housing. On May 5, 1993, the hon. minister rose in the House to call upon the former government, and I quote, "to act as soon as possible to save the social housing and co-operative housing program in Canada". Not even a year ago, the minister was claiming that the government was trampling the fundamental right of every individual to decent housing.

I would hope that the Minister of Foreign Affairs will continue to champion this cause. I challenge him to press his colleague, the Minister of Finance, to untie the purse strings and make funds available for social housing. I challenge him to make his colleague aware of the plight of the poor in Canada. At the time, other ministers, including the Minister of Human Resources Development and the Minister of the Environment and Deputy Prime Minister, also defended social housing programs. I hope that they have not had a change of heart, simply because they are in power. I challenge them to prove that they are concerned about social housing and to take some concrete action!

Other options must be explored in order to find the funds to help the most disadvantaged in society. The government will make major savings by eliminating certain tax shelters. It is important, if not essential, that large corporations and the wealthy contribute to our society. How can we say to the poorest people that the government's coffers are empty when the wealthy do not contribute anything?

Every month, hundreds of thousands of tenants ask themselves the same question. How am I going to pay the rent? They wonder how they will manage when their income consists of social assistance, unemployment insurance or old age benefits, or derives from a precarious, low-paying or part-time job. These households are forced to make desperate choices, which can mean cutting either their food, clothing, transportation or basic care budget.

How can we stand by while young people go hungry every month? The members opposite and the Minister of Finance should give some serious thought to this question. We must never lose sight of the fact that these children are the generation of the future. We have a responsibility to provide for them. Moreover, the government must not shirk its responsibility. It must work to eliminate social and economic disparities between members of our society.

Social housing is the only way to provide affordable housing for all Canadians in need. It offers much better housing than the private market, housing which can be adapted to specific needs and requirements. Co-operative housing, especially, helps people pull themselves up and take greater control over their living conditions. It helps physically improve old neighbourhoods, keep the resident population and generally enhance the quality of life.

Social housing also creates jobs. According to Clayton Research Associates Limited, building 1,000 co-operative or social housing units creates 2,000 jobs; renovating them creates 800. Furthermore, very significant savings on health and social services can be made. Families will be better housed, better fed and better clothed.

Economy and employment—that is what the Liberal platform is all about. What are you waiting for to act? We, in the Bloc Québécois, feel that the Government of Quebec should have full responsibility for housing. The Société d'habitation du Québec should be the only one in charge.

• (1550)

As long as Quebec is part of the federal system, we will demand a major and equitable financial contribution from it.

The Liberals, and especially their leader, kept hammering away on the theme of dignity and pride before October 25. Dignity and pride everywhere and always. Now we need action. It is time to prove that you yourselves have pride and dignity.

I conclude by telling you about Jacqueline Cayen, a 32-year old mother of three children, who lives on \$1,442 a month. She went back to school recently and intends to obtain a high school diploma in January 1995. She says, "My rent costs me \$350 a month, and electricity is \$150 a month. In winter, it is cold near the windows and I heat the shed. To pay \$500 on rent, I have to cut on food and clothing and especially hope that nothing unforeseen will happen".

So it is up to the government to act.

[English]

**Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):**

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I trust members of the Official Opposition will not expect a simultaneous translation of those comments. I think the people upstairs are probably wondering what to do about it now as well.

**Mr. Anawak:** If I was not wearing my earpiece earlier I probably would not have understood a word the hon. member was saying.