

Oral Questions

FOOD PRICES REVIEW BOARD

POSSIBLE STRENGTHENING OF POWERS OF BOARD—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to the question put to the Prime Minister by the hon. member for York South. As the New Democratic Party has now been converted to the position taken by the Official Opposition that the federal prices review board as presently constituted is ineffective, and as this point of view now constitutes the opinion of the majority of members of the House of Commons, will the Prime Minister bring forward legislation and/or regulations changing the terms of reference of the prices review board so as to make it an effective instrument to halt inflation?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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HOUSING

DROP IN NUMBER OF STARTS—SITUATION IN TORONTO—
GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS TO ALLEVIATE

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. In view of the fact that housing starts in the first six months of this year show an increase, as compared with the same period last year, of a mere .0001 per cent, would the minister tell the House what steps the government intends to take to alleviate the housing crisis?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): As the Minister of Finance stated earlier, starts in the first six months of 1973 exceeded those in 1972—92,038 in 1973 as opposed to 91,824.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hees: That is Liberal dynamism.

Mr. Basford: I might add that starts on single family dwellings increased by more than 6 per cent as compared with 1972. Our prediction based on the information we have at present, is that more housing units will be built in 1973 than in 1972. Moreover, only a few weeks ago the House passed important major amendment to the National Housing Act. Together with the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, I am making every possible effort to see that this legislation is put into effect as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker: The minister's answer was nearly as long as the question.

Mr. Broadbent: In view of the fact that housing starts in metropolitan Toronto are down by 17 per cent, and the related fact that the cost of housing in that city is the highest in Canada, can the minister, in his sweet, complacent way, indicate to the House what the government intends to do about housing in that area?

[Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton).]

Mr. Basford: We are working with the Ontario government—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Basford:—in order, for example, to get on to the market some major land assemblies in that whole area of Ontario. We are presently consulting the Ontario government with regard to the opening up of the Malvern land assembly project. I could go on and on, but Your Honour has cautioned me about not giving long answers.

STUDENT CO-OPERATIVE PROJECTS—ALLEGATIONS OF
IMPROPRIETY—REQUEST FOR PUBLIC INVESTIGATION

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, my question, too, is directed to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. In the light of the minister's suggestion yesterday that officials of the CMHC had withheld from him for some months information with respect to allegations of criminal activities in relation to projects financed under the National Housing Act, will the minister now agree to set up an independent judicial inquiry rather than rely on the in-house inquiry which involves CMHC investigating itself?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): I have requested that a report be prepared for me on this subject and it is in the course of preparation. As I have indicated, any evidence of wrongdoing on the part of public servants or private citizens which comes to my attention will be referred to the proper authorities. In addition, with regard to the financing of Rochdale and those other matters, the foreclosure action involving Rochdale has been set down for trial. I hope it will be dealt with as a matter of urgency in order that the subject may be dealt with in judicial proceedings as soon as possible.

Mr. Hellyer: A supplementary to the Prime Minister. Has the Prime Minister demanded an explanation from the Minister of State for Urban Affairs and the former minister of the circumstances in which, after allegations and admissions that CMHC tenders for Ontario student co-operatives were rigged, the minister and the corporation continued up until this spring to award contracts to the individuals concerned and their companies without any thorough investigation of the allegations?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I have discussed this matter with the minister and with the former minister. I have not discussed the details contained in the question. I will consider them and decide whether I should ask for further explanations with regard to it.

Mr. Hellyer: In order to achieve a credible public explanation of these matters, particularly the spectacular failure of the minister and the CMHC to act, is the Prime Minister now prepared to appoint an independent inquiry to investigate the situation and, if not, why not?

Mr. Trudeau: The position of the government is that stated by the Secretary of State for External Affairs last Friday when I was absent from the House, as hon. members will recall.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!