

high proportion of their income for housing. The problems faced by these people are likely to grow in the years immediately ahead as the population becomes older and as energy costs rise.

The principal programs designed to help poorly housed people who have inadequate incomes are the co-operative and non-profit housing programs which provide federal contributions to reduce the mortgage interest paid by sponsoring groups to an effective rate as low as 2 per cent. These programs have been extremely popular and there is no lack of public-spirited organizations, such as churches, service clubs, unions and the like, who are anxious to sponsor a project.

This method of assisting people who for whatever reason cannot provide for themselves has certain obvious advantages over the conventional public housing system which tended to isolate tenants from the rest of the community. I am not satisfied, however, that the co-operative and non-profit programs over the next few years will be able to make significant inroads on the backlog of nearly three-quarters of a million Canadians whose housing is less than satisfactory.

My predecessor had begun to seek more effective and less costly ways of dealing with that problem and I intend to continue and encourage those efforts. In the same vein, I intend to pursue the work already well under way to improve the Rural and Native Housing Program, the principal instrument in our hands for alleviating the housing conditions of our native people and other people of low-income living in rural and remote parts of the country.

Another important and very successful program with a social orientation has been the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, known as RRAP. This program provides forgivable loans of up to \$10,000 to help with repairs and improvements designed to restore deteriorating housing to acceptable standards of health and safety and to prolong its useful life.

The maximum income of home owners eligible for RRAP assistance was recently increased from \$16,500 to \$23,000 a year. At the same time the forgivable part of the loan was increased from \$3,750 to \$5,000 for home owners and from \$2,500 to \$3,000 for landlords. In addition, a maximum loan of \$13,000 was offered to home owners who intend to make their housing more accessible to disabled people. In that case, \$5,250 of the loan is forgivable.

● (1250)

The objectives of RRAP, unlike the Canadian Home Renovation Plan, are essentially social. There are limits of income on eligibility. Nevertheless, it too has its economic side effects and it is estimated that the \$170 million allocated for RRAP in 1982 will generate over 11,000 jobs.

I would like to conclude by saying that I am looking forward to my new responsibilities with a great deal of interest and enthusiasm. I am still finding my way about this new portfolio but I already have some idea of the broad direction I wish to pursue.

Supplementary Borrowing Authority

I am very conscious of the current and urgent economic priority. I appreciate that some of the most effective levers for employment generation lie within my hands as the Minister responsible for housing. The recent announcement by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, makes substantial new resources available to intensify and prolong these job creating efforts. I am very much aware of the difficult decisions that had to be taken to free up those funds. I can assure the House that I, and my officials at CMHC, will see they are put to the best possible use.

At the same time, I do not propose to lose sight of the fact that good housing is a basic social need and as long as there are families and individuals anywhere in Canada whose shelter is inadequate or unaffordable, the Federal Government has an obligation, in the name of equity and justice on behalf of fellow Canadians, to offer them help.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, would the Hon. Gentleman permit a question if there is time?

Mr. LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I will certainly permit a question. I hope I have the answer.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): At one time I had asked his predecessor, given the difficult situation with respect to tenants and renters in terms of rents as part of the family cost, whether or not he would be prepared to convene a meeting of provincial housing Ministers and the federal housing Minister with respect to the problem of rent review generally and other problems facing tenants. Unfortunately, his predecessor said no.

So that the Minister is clear, rather than meeting with them individually, I am talking about a federal-provincial conference. He may not be able to answer me directly today, but would he undertake to consider the convening of such a conference with respect to this problem, given the final statements in the Minister's speech this morning?

Mr. LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, obviously, I would have to assess whether that approach would be the most useful one. I certainly detect a spirit of co-operation on some of the present problems and economic issues in the country. I must confess to the House that that aspect of the portfolio is not one with which I have become completely familiar. I hope to give a fuller answer to the Hon. Member in the days and weeks to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): As a courtesy to the Hon. Member for Brampton-Georgetown (Mr. McDermid), I can indicate to him that if Hon. Members find the intervention of the lunch hour discomfiting to their address to the House, they sometimes seek unanimous consent of the House to call it one o'clock and begin at two o'clock. Obviously, that is the choice of the Hon. Member for Brampton-Georgetown.

Mr. McDermid: Mr. Speaker, we are lean and hungry over here. Looking over there, they look like a hungry bunch also, so may I call it one o'clock?