

*Housing Programme*

sary to confine the issuance of housing construction licences to projects which are needed to provide homes for those without essential accommodation. Projects which aim merely to provide improved accommodation must be deferred until the period of scarcity is over.

This means that housing construction licences are being issued only in those areas where houses are required and only within the limits set by the expected availability of materials. Our latest survey shows that lumber, bricks, tile, concrete blocks, plumbing fixtures and furnaces are all in short supply in most areas. Those materials which are now available, or will become available in wartime, are not necessarily of the same type as in peacetime, and in many instances substitute or alternative materials must be employed. With such materials, buildings of inferior quality may result. This situation underlines the advantage of deferring construction, wherever possible, until the war is over.

It also emphasizes the necessity for careful planning of any construction which may be necessary at this time. I would urge every builder to blueprint his projects in accordance with the type of materials available.

The demand for lumber, particularly packing and crating lumber, required for war purposes in Canada and in the United Kingdom, the United States and empire countries continues to rise. Every effort is being made to increase the quantity available for housing in Canada and exports are being permitted only for direct war uses. In some areas, particularly on the west coast, the supply of lumber determines the number of houses which can be authorized.

In normal times Canada would have in stock at this time of year, 40 to 50 million bricks and 35,000 tons of structural tile. To-day such stocks are negligible. The brick production is now at a rate of only 68 per cent of what it was in 1940 and tile at a rate of 76 per cent. The rate of output of concrete blocks is even lower. It stands to-day at 37 per cent of the 1940 rate.

It is expected that the number of plumbing fixtures which can be produced in 1944 will not be sufficient to provide for the housing and house-conversion programme and, at the same time, for replacements in existing homes. To attain our goal—the creation of additional housing accommodation—it will be necessary to ensure that the available supplies of fixtures be channeled, as far as possible, into additional housing units rather than into the improvement of existing homes.

The supply of hot air furnaces will not meet by a wide margin our over-all requirements for replacements and new housing. The shortage of steel sheet, and a reduced foundry output, have combined to decrease the produc-

tion of such furnaces. Thus it becomes necessary for the wartime prices and trade board to arrange a controlled distribution system by means of certificates of essentiality for the sale and delivery of hot air furnaces.

My purpose in giving the house this summary of the present supply position, as it relates to housing, is to emphasize that our housing programme is still on a minimum basis and that there can be no relaxation of this policy so long as our armed services and the conduct of the war require the full support of our production resources. Housing will be provided where it is essential and deferred under all other circumstances.

I would also like to point out to the house that these same shortages of bricks, lumber and tile will affect, equally, the construction of industrial or commercial buildings. And there is another shortage of particular concern to such projects. The recent increase in our shell programme has required that production of structural shapes for construction purposes be sharply reduced in order to transfer the maximum quantity of steel over to the shell programme. In fact our present steel rolling schedules call for not more than 3,000 tons per month of structural shapes, a drop of 55 per cent from the production in the last calendar quarter of 1943.

The combination of these shortages will make impossible the construction of any industrial or commercial building which is not immediately necessary and I would ask those now in possession of licences for such projects to consider seriously the advisability of postponing their construction until such time as the present period of scarcity is over. Such voluntary curtailment of construction, when coupled with the restrictions now being imposed by the controller of construction, will have the added advantage of building up a backlog of construction activity which will stand us in good stead when the pressure of war has been relieved.

Mr. GORDON GRAYDON (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the parliamentary assistant? I do not want to find fault particularly with his statement, because apparently many of the materials required for housing appear to be in short supply. But it is not many weeks ago—this is my reason for rising to protest—that I heard the Minister of Finance describe in some detail the terms of the proposed new housing legislation that was to be brought before the house. If my memory serves me correctly, and I have not the record here, he said that he was making the statement so that those who intended to build would know what the future held for them with respect to finance