

Request for Housing Statement

contributed to this debate today have made comments on the present situation and described the various aspects of the problems in connection with housing. Some members have taken the trouble to put forward proposals; some, like the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert), have put forward a lengthy list of proposals in an endeavour to provide some alternatives. But by and large, we have had a recitation of statistics and generalizations of the sort that have been made in this House in years past about a very complex and difficult subject.

However, one thing has emerged from this debate today, and it is that practically every hon. member opposite, with rare exception, has deplored inflation and indicated that inflation has had a negative effect on housing. I could not think of a better compliment in recognition of the efforts that are presently being made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) to break the back of inflation than this common theme that has been followed in the debate today. Even hon. members opposite seem to recognize the importance of this aspect.

A look at housing policy over the past two years indicates a gradual reduction in the size of the housing problem. The problem is being approached area by area, beginning with housing for Canadians who are at the bottom of the income scale. Before this task could be initiated, the federal government ordered a document produced by a task force which, perhaps for the first time, provided a clear indication of the complexity of the problem of supplying Canadians with housing.

As far as federal responsibility is concerned, except for four or five, the major recommendations of the report have been implemented. It is true some of the recommendations have not. Some of them had to wait until the right time. One recommendation saw the light of day last Wednesday when the Minister without Portfolio in charge of housing (Mr. Andras) announced in Halifax a three-level council. This announcement was made possible as the result of a radical change of attitude on the part of a major province in this country, Quebec. This announcement having been made, one hopes that other provinces will follow suit and endorse the idea of a three-level council, including, of course, the province of Ontario.

In his speech this morning, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) gave examples of the complexity of this problem by reading advertisements pub-

lished in a Montreal newspaper which showed that the situation in Montreal is quite different from the situation, for example, in Toronto. He quoted advertisements offering houses for sale in Montreal at a price of \$14,500, with a \$500 down payment. So that in fairness, one cannot generalize and describe the housing situation as a national crisis. There are variations from region to region, from province to province; and in each area the components of the variations differ.

The next aspect that has been given attention during these years has been the priority given by the government to producing housing for Canadians with low incomes. Figures to this effect have been cited by previous speakers. In other words, considering the resources available, it has been possible to give precedence to that portion of the total housing problem which is of a most urgent nature; that is, the provision of decent housing for Canadians who cannot afford a roof.

● (4:50 p.m.)

Within this general policy, last April we saw a new development when new rental fees and new regulations were announced for people occupying low income housing. Also there was a very important inclusion in the National Housing Act to permit something which was not possible before. I refer to the inclusion of social and recreational facilities in future projects in recognition of the necessity for these in projects of any size. Another step within this area was the provision of \$27 million this year for loans for limited dividend housing. This again is for that spectrum of the population in Canada which is in need.

Another measure for low income Canadians is the provision of \$200 million. This is an encouragement and an invitation to Canadians to produce new ideas, new approaches and new designs, I would assume, for the government to produce houses for middle income Canadians. This measure is an indication that today we are at least approaching the question of housing within the limitation of the resources available, rather than approaching it on a gigantic universal scale as proposed by some opposition members. Probably the effect of these measures will be felt during the second half of 1970. Therefore, today we are debating statistics and figures that really do not present the picture for the entire year 1970. Whatever the total figure may be—and we do have reason to hope it will be a fairly encouraging one—certainly, we all agree