

*National Housing Act*

covered? There is nothing to guarantee Canadians any particular position there. How many new units, beyond optimistic hopes, will this produce, and what kind of new units are they going to be? How many are going to be single family housing, row housing, garden homes, condominiums or rental apartments? How many are going to be homes for senior citizens, and how many are going to be homes for veterans?

I sat in this House and heard the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) argue that we should forget the provisions of the Veterans Land Act because there was going to be a whole new program of housing for veterans. I did not buy that, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure a number of other hon. members did not buy it either. I look at this first housing bill of this minister and ask: where is the legislation to help veterans as promised by the Minister for Veterans Affairs? It is not in this bill.

I read the mail I get each day and the thing that concerns me—I know it does not concern the hon. member who just interrupted and I am not surprised at that—but it concerns me that whether this House is sitting or not, each day I get a letter, or several letters from people who cannot manage to live in the housing which they have. Their housing problems are not being met by this government's programs, and from what they tell me they will not be helped by this bill. I get letters from senior citizens in municipalities where there is no senior citizen housing, and I ask myself what can be done for these people? I know the hon. member does not particularly care.

**An hon. Member:** Speak to your friend Bill Davis.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** They ask how we can help them. I look in the legislation to see if there is anything that will help with housing for senior citizens, and I see nothing.

We will support the legislation, but we are not very hopeful of the results in the long run. My friend over there said I should speak to Bill Davis. I should like to put on the record something that occurred long before the present minister took office with respect to this government and the government of Mr. William Davis.

My provincial colleague in the riding of Carleton is the Honourable Sidney Handleman, who was recently honoured by returning to the front bench in Queen's Park. Before he took ill, when he was minister of housing in the province—he occupied this portfolio for only a short time before he became ill—he wrote a letter to the minister's predecessor volunteering the co-operation of the provincial department of housing in integrating programs of the province with programs put forward by the then minister of state for urban affairs. That happened before the federal election.

● (2140)

Knowing of the ego trips of the former minister, he said he would give him and the government of Canada full credit if it participated. He said many federal and provincial programs parallel one another, overlap one another, and that this is a great waste of public money, public enterprise and public energy. He wrote his letter before the election, but there was never a reply accepting his most reasonable proposition. I do not know why. The

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

reason may have something to do with the circumstances of the time, or with the attitude of the then minister. But that is what happened. The provincial government of Ontario wanted to co-operate with the federal department.

In the past the federal government has suffered from what I call "federal-provincial jitters." I hope this will not happen under the present minister. I do not think we have tested the waters, so to speak. We do not know the exact jurisdiction of the federal government in this field, and the extent to which the federal government can show leadership in the field of housing and use its tremendous financial assets.

The government has not tested its ability to acquire land or its legal power to take a large parcel of land and develop it, not for sale in lots, but as lots which it can lease in perpetuity, so that people can lease land in perpetuity. After all, all Canadians may not want to own a piece of land; they merely want the right to use it for purposes of shelter. They want a home on that land. I do not think we have really tested the constitutional powers of the government of Canada in this field. The people of Canada are not interested in fine legal arguments about the jurisdiction of the government of Canada and the province of Ontario or any other province. They want to know where the houses are to be built. If the houses are built the people of Canada will give the minister credit, and so will I.

I do not know whether Central Mortgage and Housing or the ministry has carried out studies relating to the government's legal position in owning or leasing. I daresay that there is as much power to own land for the development of housing as there is to own land for the development of airports, but the legal aspects of this matter have not been tested. Again, policies of different government departments have not been co-ordinated.

On the one hand the Minister of State for Urban Affairs has introduced legislation which he hopes will lower the price of houses. On the other hand the Minister of Finance went only half-way in removing the silly, iniquitous and outdated sales tax on building materials, when he could have removed the tax entirely when presenting the budget. Even so, the Minister of Finance is not certain if any tax saving will be passed on to the purchasers of building materials. We know how much it costs to administer any tax program, but I submit that it costs as much to collect a 6 per cent building material tax as it does to collect an 11 per cent building material tax. I wonder why the government does not abolish that tax entirely.

An hon. member opposite asked what we, in our party, would do in the field of housing. I have touched on the importance of directing federal moneys wisely in the field of housing, and on the importance of consolidating and integrating provincial and federal housing policies and plans. Most of these plans are good and basically sound. Often federal and provincial plans could complement each other and could benefit from what I call a cross-fertilization. All the same, we must consider how important is the sales tax of building materials to total federal government revenues.

We must also look hard at the possibility of providing tax relief for the purchaser of a property, the ultimate owner. To help him carry it, we must consider giving income tax relief with respect to municipal taxes. I know