

Urban Affairs

Democratic Party (Mr. Douglas) has said that the fact that the Prime Minister has married a girl from British Columbia gives us reason to hope that the bonds that unite Canadians will no longer be broken because of the vastness of this country.

Mr. Speaker, we are both moved and happy about the decision of the Prime Minister and we hope that every time he goes off like this to meditate in hiding on his status, some change will be brought about in Canada's policies.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Fourth report of Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, in both official languages—Mr. Marceau (on behalf of Chairman.)

FINANCE, TRADE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Tenth report of Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, in both official languages (Mr. Clermont).

[Editor's Note: For text of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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[English]

URBAN AFFAIRS

TABLING OF REPORT, "URBAN CANADA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS"—STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister without Portfolio): I would like to table in this House and for public discussion a document entitled "Urban Canada: Problems and Prospects". It is a report commissioned by me and prepared by Dr. Lithwick of Carleton University, along with many associates. In the year since Dr. Lithwick produced his first draft, he refined the report and the government has considered its many public policy ramifications.

The document was sent recently to the premiers of the provinces with which governments a process of discussions about new ways to approach urban problems has already begun. This is Dr. Lithwick's study; the analysis and conclusions are those of a consultant, not of this government. It should not be read as representing government policy. It is the first attempt at a comprehensive overview of Canada's documentable urban problems, the separately known aspects and conditions of urban life analyzed in a total context as they affect each other.

• (11:20 a.m.)

The commissioning of the study was an important step by the federal government to explore and document the

[Mr. Fortin.]

nature of urban Canada, and to understand the rather phenomenal pace at which we are speeding toward giant cities and urbanized life in this country. The author makes no claim that this is more than an exploratory study. It has, however, influenced the government's thinking about the directions of urban Canada as a matter of national concern. Perhaps I might highlight, in the most general of terms, the report's principal findings.

On Canada's urban problems the report suggests that our urban problems are serious and getting worse, but they can be handled. They are still manageable and we have brilliant opportunities in this country to shape and direct an urban future of our choice. There has generally been a basic lack of understanding of the root causes and indirect consequences of major urban problems. These major problems of high housing costs, slums, traffic congestion, pollution and social unrest are greatly interdependent, and they are in large part a consequence of untempered economic growth and urban expansion.

On Canada's urban prospects the report suggests that urban growth will continue to be very rapid, and will be increasingly concentrated in our largest and most problem prone cities. Within 30 years, without applying some shape, direction and planning to that growth, one half of Canadians will reside in the three metropolitan areas of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. The most severe growth pressures will occur in this current decade; they are in fact right upon us now. The complex of urban problems that flow from this growth can well reach very serious proportions, as they have in other countries.

On Canada's capacity to solve these problems, the report says that there has been great fragmentation of federal efforts in the cities, and this has led to sometimes contradictory and sometimes perverse results. However, the co-ordination of the vast federal involvement in urban Canada provides a most important starting place for guiding future patterns of urban growth. The report mentions that policy making at all levels of government has failed to prompt governments to act in concert on the many problems requiring joint action and thought. The tools for dealing with our present and future urban problems are at hand, but the current lack of policy co-ordination within and between levels of government means those are not being used.

The report and the related studies led the government to a decision to seek to put our federal house in better order and to work with the provinces and, through them, with the municipalities, to find better ways to confront what had become national problems. The government is developing a new type of institution to deal with this kind of multifaceted problem, and that is the ministry of state. The ministry of state is a flexible instrument that can bring multidisciplinary insights to bear on complex problems without grouping them into the rigidity and constraints of yet another big government bureaucracy.

In urban affairs, the ministry of state will be a source and a focus for the development of comprehensive federal policies that will let our left hand know and affect what our right hand is doing in urban matters in Canada.