

National Recreation Policy

tance, and perhaps they will join with me in seeking to determine a national recreation policy.

● (1600)

This country is presently in the throes of a national energy crisis, a crisis that did not appear out of nowhere as the government would like us to believe. Had we had a national energy policy some years ago, we would not now face an energy crisis because our plans would have been made a long time ago. The provision and maintenance of recreation requires the same sort of planning. Recreation needs a long-term plan which the federal government should have initiated some time ago. The federal government should establish, in consultation with provincial governments, municipalities, civic officials, and so on, a conference—which we might call a multilevel conference since we have heard of such things as trilevel conferences—to determine ways and means of arriving at a national recreation policy.

I am not exaggerating when I say that the problem of providing recreational facilities in this country has now reached crisis proportions. We as legislators are helping to thrust Canadians into a society of leisure. We are looking forward to 35 or 30-hour work weeks, to working just three or four days in the week. This is why we must be prepared for the dramatic change that this will bring in our lifestyles.

At the local level, whether it be village, town, city or county, the biggest recreational headache is the financing of recreational and leisure projects. The federal government does make available through Recreation Canada grants to various native groups and to other national agencies and associations. However, I have found it virtually impossible to obtain federal grants for my constituents for the purpose of subsidizing the capital cost of a recreational centre, arena or gymnasium in our community. No money is available to them through LIP or OFY, because they find their applications for grants are too capital-oriented and not labour-oriented. This is why, more often than not, applications are rejected. These people are looking for a grant to finance a capital project. In case they are unable to realize the required amount of capital, they want a long-term loan or grant of some sort to help them construct roofs, walls and to buy ice-making equipment.

Having talked to a number of recreation directors in Canada, I find they look for two things. Firstly, they would like a long-term loan at low interest. Secondly, they would like a grant, not simply for capital structures but also to cover the first one or two years' operating expenses. One of the biggest problems when a project gets off the ground is finding money for operating expenses for the first two years until sufficient recreational programs are established to provide the necessary revenue.

I am fortunate to come from a province that is somewhat enlightened now it has a new administration, the Lougheed administration. The province has recognized this problem and is now making available certain capital works programs and grants to communities which would otherwise go without such arenas. However, I have found that they have had to make application to the Department of Agriculture. I recall working very hard this winter for

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the town of Spruce Grove which wanted to build an arena and swimming pool, but the only way they could get a long-term loan was to go through the ag society of the Department of Agriculture. In return they have to put on an agricultural fair once a year. They are willing to do this and will do so, but it does not seem fair that they have to go to the Department of Agriculture for a loan to build recreational facilities.

I should also like to point out that in 1971 the federal government provided the provinces with \$7.4 billion for education costs. In 1972-73 this figure increased to \$8.8 billion. If these funds are used for capital construction of school buildings, surely the federal government should stipulate that the gymnasium be a multipurpose structure. My community of Spruce Grove adopted this policy, and it is a very revolutionary type of project that I hope will be used all across Canada. The townspeople constructed a community hall in the school itself. The school gymnasium is used for recreational purposes and at the same time is a town hall complex. The building is a school from six in the morning until six in the evening, and then from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. it becomes a community building and is used by the townspeople for recreational purposes, dances and what have you. In this way we will not have facilities standing empty all across Canada. I think this is a very important improvement and I hope that in some way this kind of stipulation can be made when granting a loan.

Not included in these selected few are the poor people or the near poor. For them, enforced idleness or meaningless work at low wages or low returns is not recreation. The affluence of contemporary Canadian society may be slowly spreading to more and more Canadians, but it still appears that from 20 per cent to 30 per cent of Canadians find recreation a distant concept. They may have idle time or they may not; but for millions, after providing for food and shelter and for the maintenance of their health there is not enough disposable income to give them even basic satisfaction, let alone any hint of leisure.

I was talking to a recreation director in Nova Scotia, in the town of Yarmouth, who said that they had found the only way to get the poor people in that community into some recreational activity was by personal intervention. But there was only one recreation director in the whole area, and it was virtually impossible for him to establish some kind of personal rapport with the people and encourage them in some recreational activity. I suspect that, again, financing is required to bring more recreation directors to the areas where poor people live.

To my mind, one of the best ways to encourage, not just the poor but all Canadians to make the optimum use of their leisure time is to create a feeling of pride in our outstanding athletes and international competitors. Pride in these athletes will most certainly create an incentive for individuals themselves to become involved. In the past we have been plagued by generally poor standards of performance in international competition. I can think off-hand of only two or three athletes, such as Bruce Kidd and a few very good skaters, who have reached world fame in the athletics field. One of the major causes of the problem has been lack of good coaching in this country. John Hudson, one of Canada's few outstanding coaches, recently stated: