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CANADIAN HOUSING AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Canada's approach to the post-war housing problem has necessarily been of a dual character: provision of accommodation to meet immediate needs, and provision of adequate, improved housing over a period of years.

To tackle the job - a job that has called for ingenuity, imagination, energy and money - Canadian builders, planners, scientists, labour leaders and government departments have joined hands in an effort which has produced housing units at new record levels and which has witnessed many radical changes in procedure. In 1945, 48,600 new dwellings were completed. The following year, the figure jumped to 67,300 and, in 1947, to another all-time high of 80,000, a three-year aggregate of nearly 196,000 units.

The Problem

Canada's housing shortage has been accumulating since the early years of the present century, although it did not reach acute proportions until the last few years. Canada's population grew rapidly as a result of large-scale immigration in the years immediately prior to 1914. World War I brought a vigorous industrial growth which resulted in a radical shifting of the distribution of the population from rural to urban districts. Out of every 1000 persons in the country at the census of 1911, 546 were resident in rural and 454 in urban communities. By 1941 the figures were reversed with 457 persons out of every 1000 residing in rural and 543 in urban communities.

During the economic depression of the 1930's the effective demand for housing naturally fell off and the building industry operated far below capacity, so that Canada entered the war with a large backlog of necessary housing still unbuilt and an estimated 175,000 sub-standard housing units which were in need of replacement.

In 1939 with income paid out to individuals of approximately \$4.25 billions, there were in Canada 2.8 million family and non-family units requiring housing. The housing inventory at that time was about 2.6 million units with a vacancy ratio of about 3%. Even in 1939, however, 10% of the housing units were occupied as shared accommodation.

Between the years 1939 and 1947 income paid to individuals more than doubled. During this same period the number of families increased by 24%, with an unprecedented marriage rate of 115,000 annually in this eight year period, as compared with the previous high of 77,000 in 1929. The increase in the number of families requiring accommodation and in individual income soon absorbed most vacancies and placed extreme pressures upon the short supply of housing available at that time. It was possible during the 1939-1947 period to add only 400,000 housing units to meet a net family