

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 82—THE HOMELESS

Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel—Ahuntsic) moved:

That this House condemn the government for its total lack of leadership in the area of housing, as a result of which

- a) the present number of 100,000 homeless people, including women and children, increases every day despite the economic recovery;
- b) there is an ever-growing number of Canadians with unsuitable housing who risk becoming homeless and those people are not provided with preventive programs;
- c) the number of new social or cooperative housing units cannot satisfy the increasing demand;
- d) the majority of our aboriginal peoples are badly housed, in conditions that the majority of Canadians would not accept;
- e) it is becoming more and more difficult for average Canadians to buy a house;
- f) since the government has turned over powers to the provinces, it has given up its responsibilities and has lost control over national housing issues;
- g) the housing policy of the government is restricted to reducing the deficit; and
- h) the lack of a national policy deprives Canadians of the right to have a roof over their heads.

—She said: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party decided to dedicate today's Opposition Day to housing to prove there is a lack of leadership on the part of the Conservative Government in this respect. Since the Government delegated its powers to the provinces, there has been no national housing policy, no priorities have been set. There has been no direction and, especially, no co-ordination among the various policies and programs, and no co-ordination among the various levels of government. The ship is off course, Mr. Speaker. And even worse—although by now we should be used to this sort of thing on the part of the Government—I was appalled when I heard the Government will very shortly start construction of a prestige building for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation here in Ottawa.

The plans and specifications have been submitted and approved. Public tenders have been examined. The contract will be awarded to the private sector, and the new headquarters will cost Canadians about \$40 million.

All of this is occurring under the very eyes of Canadians who are either homeless or living in substandard housing. It is scandalous! It is shameful! It is shocking! And it is appalling!

Moreover, Bill C-111 is another example of this Government's lack of interest in housing. It includes many positive steps and incorporates the findings of a study sponsored by Mr. André Ouellet, the former Minister of Urban Affairs in the previous Liberal Government. Believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, the Government had announced this Bill in the summer of 1987. It waited until February before introducing it in the House of Commons. Bill C-111 remained for at least 15 days on the House's *Order Paper and Notices* and since the

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Government controls the agenda, why is it procrastinating with this Bill?

Having realized the positive potential of Bill C-111, the Liberal Party has informed the Government that it is prepared to get on immediately with Second Reading, with only one Member taking part in this debate, with a view of referring this Bill to a legislative committee as expeditiously as possible. This does not mean that we will let the Bill pass blindly, but that it deserves a quick study. We are already in the middle of May, and there is still nothing. If the Bill were so perfect and if housing were a Government priority, we would have had Second Reading a long time ago. This delay reflects the Government's lack of concern for housing. Meanwhile, several concerned Canadians, including the members of the Canadian Manufactured Housing Institute, are still waiting for the Government to make up its mind.

Bill C-111 would make it possible for purchasers of mobile homes and floating homes to obtain mortgages from Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Second, it would raise the ceilings for the expenditures and loans authorized by Parliament to the Corporation. Third, it would facilitate the administration of mortgage titles and mortgage insurance. Fourth, it would improve working relations between the provincial and federal Governments.

In a little while, the Government will brag about all the money it has spent on the homeless. What it will fail to say is that this money was used on studies and conferences. As far as we know, the Government has established no policy which might help the homeless get back into the mainstream of our Canadian society.

The Government has not yet recognized the permanent nature of the homeless problem and the fact that is much more difficult for the homeless to get back into the mainstream of the Canadian society once they have left it. The Government has really missed the boat during the International Year of the Homeless. In view of all the studies it has sponsored, the information it has obtained at the Canadian Confederation held to mark that year, the Government should have been in a position to come up with adequate policies. Mr. Speaker, those who attended this conference agreed that what was lacking to solve the homeless problem was the political will to act. The Government has shown that this question is of no interest and set a limit on all operating and other grants. This may be acceptable in the short run, but no effort has been made to find a lasting solution to the problem. The homeless and the army of volunteers who look after them are running out of breath and will soon be back asking for more money.

The Government deals with homeless people as if they were beggars. This attitude is totally unacceptable to the Liberal Party, just as it is unacceptable to all Canadians.

Who are the homeless? In Montreal, for instance, there are 10,000 transients. The average age for men is 34 and for women 33. I did say women, because what causes much