

National Housing Act

progress in housing. There now lies ahead of us a period of even greater growth of Canadian cities and towns. In this growth and redevelopment our national legislation will undoubtedly be a major factor.

Mr. Donald M. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Speaker, three days ago at the resolution stage preceding the introduction of the present bill we had an opportunity of debating housing in general. As far as I am concerned, the debate that was held on Monday affords me an opportunity of making my remarks today rather briefer.

The minister has stated that the bill which he has submitted contains several important amendments. I think I may say at once, Mr. Speaker, that the bill contains no great surprises. While I am not going to discount the importance of any amendment in relation to a subject as important for all the people of Canada as is housing, I do not think it could be said that the changes made in the act are in any respect of a major character. Certainly they are not major when viewed in the light of the kind of changes that were made in the scheme of the act two years ago. There are some changes that come in the category of normal revision in the light of needs that arise in the administration of any measure. There are some provisions that are designed to make other existing provisions of the act more flexible and more useful, particularly in relation to such important matters as urban redevelopment. Then with respect to all of the various parts of the act there is an increase in the amounts of money made available.

Last Monday I made some comments of a general nature with regard to the type of amendment that was indicated in the minister's statement on the resolution. I said that the house has never at any time taken a penny-pinching attitude toward any measure that promised any alleviation of our housing problem or contribution to its solution. I think that will be the attitude the house will take with respect to the present bill. Moreover, any measure that will make the provisions of the act more flexible will, I think, command sympathy on the part of the house. It is not easy for the parliament of a nation that extends across a continent to make legislative provision to meet every possible situation with regard to a subject as important, intimate and varied as is housing. Consequently, the administration of any such measure plays an important role in the success or failure of the measure. We of Her Majesty's loyal opposition of course intend to support the bill. We intend to try to evaluate the bill. We shall look to those charged with the administration of the bill for the production of the kind of results

that we think we are justified in expecting when we place such wide powers and such ample sums of money at their disposal.

Housing is going to continue to play a major role in the development of Canada. All of us take satisfaction in the volume of house construction last year and the year before; but it is well for us to remember the facts. While we applaud the fact that, as the minister said, this year there will be built in Canada the one millionth housing unit brought into existence since the war, let us not forget that we entered the post-war period with a substantial backlog of housing need and that with all that has been accomplished, particularly in recent times, we have on the whole just about met the new need of housing which has arisen since the war. Account must be taken of the increased population due to natural increase and to immigration. In this post-war period, with all the opportunities we have had, we have done little, if anything, more than keep abreast of the net family formation in Canada, with its resultant need of additional housing units. This is no time to be resting upon our oars or to be taking any smug attitude toward housing.

In the submission recently made by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to the Gordon royal commission investigating Canada's prospects for the next 25 years, the corporation has recognized the extent of the housing needs that must be met by new construction in the period of 25 years that lies before us. In its calculations the corporation has estimated that in that period—that is to say up until 1980—there will be an increase in our population of 10,500,000 persons. According to their estimate, the population will be 26,500,000 by 1980. It is estimated by the corporation that our urban housing stock must double within that 25-year period. In other words, it will be necessary to construct 3,400,000 new houses at an estimated cost or, as it is put, a possible cost of \$35 billion. Further, according to their figures, it is estimated that prospective owners will provide \$15 billion of this sum and that mortgage lenders will provide the balance of \$20 billion. These are gigantic figures even for a country with a developing economy like Canada. In the face of needs of that kind that will require to be met in the period that lies before us within the lifetime of many hon. members of this house, let no man content himself with the thought that this problem has been disposed of or that the records of the past two years are going to do more than point the way and emphasize the necessity of maintaining a dynamic rate of home construction in the future. Canada needs housing.