

*Housing Prices*

yde released from the exhaust of his car, which is distasteful to me.

If I followed the hon. Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) to Drummondville, it would be the same, and I am sure the minister has managed to find himself a little lake near Drummondville.

Whether it is in the direction of Sherbrooke or elsewhere, everyone is seeking nature, which is quite normal.

As for town living, why does one do it? To get employment, security of some sort. But if such security were available away from the cities, I can guarantee, Mr. Speaker, that they would not be crowding two million strong as, for example, in the city of Montreal, but there would be decentralization so that human beings could breathe, not merely with the permission of finance, but breathe freely the air with which the Creator filled the world so that we could live decently.

Mr. Speaker, in the field of housing, there is ample space for improvement. Above all we ought to try to reduce the sales tax which contributes to increase construction costs. It would also be necessary to reduce interest rates; not long ago, we were mentioning interest rates of 6 per cent. The minister might very soon announce that we will have to pay an interest rate of 10 per cent. I say that Canadians should not pay one cent more than the actual administration cost for building houses. What would that mean? That we would only have to pay an interest rate of 1 3/4 or 2 per cent to offer the directors a decent salary. On the other hand, we should stop paying a tribute to those who only provide credits for the construction of houses.

Mr. Speaker, the Cr ditistes hope that we will succeed one day in providing all Canadian families with wholesome housing instead of letting a good number of them suffer, as we do now. If we took every necessary step to build new homes perhaps we would not have any unemployment this summer in Canada, because there is an urgent need for housing. We could give a job to university students as well as to thousands of unemployed. So we could provide Canada with new riches, consisting of wholesome one-family dwellings for all families in Canada.

[English]

**Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of State for Urban Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) has chosen to use one of their opposition days to debate housing and urban affairs. It gives me a chance to discuss some of the government's thinking in terms of a housing policy and, hopefully, to get some ideas from the opposition as to what they think the housing policy should be.

I listened with a great deal of interest to the spokesman for the official opposition, the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave). I listened to his very thoughtful speech on the question of housing. I am delighted to learn that his thinking and ideas follow closely along the lines of what was predicted in the Speech from the Throne issued by the government at the beginning of this session and follows closely the line adopted in my own speeches on the subject of housing. I am glad that the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants agrees with me that we

should introduce the amendments to the National Housing Act, which the government wants to introduce and wants to introduce forthwith. On learning the thinking of the opposition which obviously agrees with the government's proposals, I hope that the legislation will have very easy passage through this House in the next few weeks.

The hon. member speaking for the Conservative party also talked about repair and rehabilitation, land costs, servicing costs, the process of urbanization, land banking, the Audain report, the comprehensive demand for housing and a program to assist in home ownership. Some of those points will be dealt with by me today. Many are dealt with in legislation before the House or which will be introduced very shortly. Other points will be dealt with by other speakers this afternoon. I do want to thank the hon. member for a thoughtful and comprehensive speech on the subject of housing. He covered so many subjects on the cost of housing, he illustrated far more effectively than I can that the cost of housing is made up of many factors. There are many things responsible for these costs and many policies responsible for keeping these costs down. There is no one easy, simple answer to the question of providing reasonable housing at a reasonable cost.

I listened with amazement to the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert) speaking on behalf of the New Democratic Party. I always do. He seems to think houses can be built or other policies solved by engaging in sarcasm, clich s, catchwords and smart-alec expressions. I have never found that that builds many houses. Canadians have a housing need but it will not be solved by acting in a partisan way. The hon. member for Broadview is in the habit of making a series of unsupported assertions but they are really no substitute for concrete policies and proposals. For example, I was amused to hear him describe the government's amendments to the Housing Act as "tinkering with the National Housing Act". These amendments have not even been introduced yet, so how he could describe them as tinkering is beyond me. Such a criticism can only come from a man who is reckless with his words, and reckless with the House of Commons.

• (1440)

The debate this afternoon gives me an opportunity to put on record briefly and quickly what has been done in the last four years during the life of this government. Listening to opposition speakers one gets the idea that nothing has been done, though, in fact, houses have been built in Canada over the last four years in record numbers and at record levels.

**Mr. Orlikow:** For whom?

**Mr. Basford:** For the low income people and the senior citizens. I shall come to that. The number of housing starts in 1971 reached an all-time record of 233,653, a total of more than 830,000 starts over the last four years. The opposition says numbers are not important in housing, but it seems to me an essential element in housing policy is to build houses. That is what we have been doing, and we have been doing it at a record pace. All the indications are that even this record will be surpassed in 1972, with more than 240,000 starts. This is a tribute to my predecessor, it is a tribute to the government's housing policies and