

Supply

It recently informed us that it will spend money on residential rehabilitation. But this money does not do anything to help the homeless because they have no residence to rehabilitate in the first place.

While this kind of program creates jobs, these jobs too often lead to a rise in the cost of private rental housing. By improving housing, owners raise rents. This, in turn, makes it worse for low-income households who must shell out more money.

The Liberal government's declarations clearly show that it is moving toward maintaining the policy put in place by the Conservatives in this area. The Liberals' first 100 days are nothing to reassure poorly housed Canadians. They are following in the footsteps of the Conservatives whose policies and decisions could be called the "social housing massacre".

Available figures confirm beyond question that a massacre occurred between 1984 and 1994. Until 1984, some 25,000 new social housing units were being built in Canada every year. It took the Conservatives 10 years to kill that formula so that, since January 1, 1994, the federal government no longer contributes to the construction of a single social housing unit. It is quite a record to go from 25,000 to zero. We can see that their decisions helped them to break another record, from 152 to only two members in this House.

These alarming figures show the abdication of the federal government in this area.

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The government also asked the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to become more efficient, in other words to cut costs. There are worrying indications that CMHC is looking for ways to save and is contemplating rent increases in social housing to increase its revenues. Basically, they would be taking money out of the pockets of the less fortunate, attacking their slender income to help other people with housing problems. What a shameful thing to do.

That is what we are headed for with the government's silence. The members opposite are not reacting. It is as if there were no housing problems in their ridings, and all their constituents had decent housing. I think that is hardly the case. I would ask them to go out in their riding and see how things really are. Then come back and get in touch with your Minister of Finance to apprise him of the situation and urge him to make funds available in his next budget, on February 22, to re-establish and increase budgets for social housing programs.

Of course, the Minister of Finance has been going on and on with the same story for weeks. He is putting us to sleep. He is trying to make us bite the bullet of austerity. This budget will be

a tough one, we are told over and over. But the money is there. It is only a matter of making the right choices. The government must take its responsibilities and act with courage and fairness.

We, in the Bloc Quebecois, have suggested that the government go over each program, each item of government expenditure to cut the fat, the squandering, the costly duplication within the federal administration. This process could have allowed us to find funds to help provide housing for the less fortunate segment of our society. Unfortunately, the minister opted for travelling across the country to hold meaningless pre-budget consultations instead. During that time, public funds are spent lavishly and inefficiently. Year after year, the Auditor General has a lot to say on this subject.

Here in this House and the Hill, we can see examples of squandering of public funds every day. Apparently, the sky is the limit. Simplicity and efficiency are not commonplace. Specific examples: Public Works are repairing roofs in winter and rebuilding stone walls in minus 30 degree Celsius temperatures. To carry out summer jobs during the winter comes at a premium and certainly does not do much for the productivity of the workers. It is sheer squandering!

Other departments are literally devouring public funds. The Department of National Defence for instance, with a \$12 billion plus annual budget. Piggish! Incredible amounts are swallowed up by that department's equipment programs. The Canadian patrol frigates will end up costing us \$9 billion, while the ADATS air defence system initially designed for our military bases in Germany, but which will not be used and has been classified as non operational, has cost us all of \$1 billion.

Governments will soon embark upon infrastructure programs that will require substantial funding.

How can we tell the less fortunate that the government does not have any money for social housing when it is spending all this public money, often astronomical sums of money?

How are we to explain to Mrs. Johanne Lepage from Châteauguay who is spending 46 per cent of her monthly income of \$1,524, or \$700 a month, on rent, heat and hydro for herself and her four children, how are we to explain to her and her four young children that the government spent \$1 billion on useless radars but does not have money to build decent social housing that she could rent for just 25 per cent of her income? This lady is not the only one in such dire straits. In Quebec, 404,000 households spend over 30 per cent of their income on rent and there are 273,000 more Canadian households in the same situation. And there is worse: 194,000 Quebec households are spending over 50 per cent of their income on rent. In Canada, there are 584,000 in that situation.