

Supply

Mr. Nickerson: Mr. Speaker, I would not like the Hon. Member to get away without having to answer a question, so I will ask him this.

Mr. Reimer: Ask him why he is wearing that shirt.

Mr. Nickerson: I will make no comments about his shirt, Mr. Speaker.

In the perfect society the Hon. Member envisages, would it be that housing would be provided by the state or would it be that housing would be provided by the people themselves?

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, I only outlined this issue in my speech but I have spoken on it at greater length on more than one occasion. I am asking that housing should be primarily provided by co-operative and non-profit organizations—the people—not by government bureaucrats and a few wealthy builders, even if they are surrounded by a few would-be wealthy builders.

In the City of Toronto, most of the housing plans are determined by a very tiny number of people who control the mortgage money and the building operations. I am asking that the people who live or hope to live in those houses have a chance to have some say in what will be built, where it will be built, of what quality it will be and how it will be managed. There are a variety of ways of doing that. Some ways are called co-operative, some are called non-profit. In all cases, these methods provide for a board of directors, either chosen by the people who live in the housing units or by some publicly responsible non-profit outfit, and that—

Mr. Oberle: Where does the money come from?

Mr. Heap: Where does the money come from? Where does it come from now? Every cent of the construction costs of the 11,000 homes built by Cadillac in Toronto was paid by the people who live in those homes. No one paid for those homes but the tenants. Cadillac did not pay for those homes. Cadillac received the money from the tenants, paid for the homes and had so much left over it could not spend it in Toronto and had to go to the United States to contribute to American inflation. Every cent that built those apartments in Toronto was paid by tenants, and it would be the same for co-operative or non-profit buildings, but there would be some public accountability that would reduce the exorbitant profits that have been made by the builders in cities like Toronto.

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate and to recognize that the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) has made a commitment to directing social housing policies to those households that are in need. However, I noticed that the original motion put forward by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East yesterday, the motion I received around 3 p.m., indicated that the “core need” will include all Canadian families living below the poverty line as defined by the Canadian Council on Social Development. Later on, I suppose because the Hon. Member could not make whatever point she

was attempting to make, the motion was changed to read that “core need” will include Canadian families living below the poverty line as defined by the National Council on Welfare. I do not know what great leaps over logic or furniture the Hon. Member is taking, but I can say that I am very pleased that the Hon. Member recognizes that housing policy should be directed to those households most in need.

As Hon. Members know, last December I announced to the House significant changes in the federal Government’s social housing program and Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. The major objective of these changes was to be more responsive in targeting federal housing dollars and resources in order to provide fair, equitable and effective national housing solutions for Canadians in those households that needed assistance.

One of the key features of the new direction is the provision of a high degree of regional and local sensitivity in social housing targeting. This new direction for housing solutions results from an extensive process of policy development including the consultation mentioned by the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap).

My Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon. Member for Burin—St. George’s (Mr. Price), my staff, officials and I met with such organizations as the National Anti-Poverty Organization and with both private and public associations involved in social housing. Groups representing organizations concerned with the elderly were also involved, as were groups dealing with the disabled. Native groups were consulted, and in fact those organizations representing those members of society most disadvantaged when it comes to housing were extensively consulted. Their views were represented later in the program.

This consultation was in addition to the consultation that took place between industry and financial institutions at the time. We also discussed with the Territories and Provinces of Canada what they would undertake in providing for solutions to the housing situation in Canada.

During this complex and far-ranging consultation process with the diverse groups I have mentioned, a consensus did emerge. This consensus indicated that the new direction for federal housing should have improved targeting to ensure that federal housing resources are directly focused on those in need of housing assistance.

• (1430)

There was also a consensus that to be effective the housing solutions should contain a mix of program options so that there would be flexibility to provide assistance appropriate to the housing problems experienced in each particular area of Canada. This was done in recognition of the fact that there are different housing and economic environments and housing market conditions across this great country of ours.

The federal Government’s new package of social housing programs, with all assistance directed to households in need, reflects the concerns and recommendations raised during the