

Oral Questions

An hon. Member: They are your words.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: It is still a disaster.

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HOUSING

INQUIRY RESPECTING AMENDMENT OF BILL C-89

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the minister responsible for housing. The Solicitor General, in a letter to the Toronto Real Estate Board, criticized the minister's housing proposals and said the budget was seriously flawed and, from a political point of view, a disaster—that coming on top of the criticisms of two other cabinet colleagues. The latest figures released by CMHC yesterday show that the total number of units built last year under MURBs amounted to 53,900. We can only expect 15,000 units under Bill C-89, notwithstanding the minister's assurances to the contrary. In view of the critical housing shortages, especially in the rental sector, does the minister now intend to bring in amendments to Bill C-89?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I am sure that with the holiday period of the House in January during which all hon. members had available time in which to study Bill C-89, and with the further holiday period that the hon. members have enjoyed during the last—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cosgrove:—couple of weeks, the hon. member asking the question would have realized, as I pointed out in answer to his last question in this House before he went on holiday, that this government—

An hon. Member: Be serious!

Mr. Cosgrove:—is showing its priority concern for housing and has allocated \$350 million to that end. That will provide not only the 15,000 units of which we have spoken, but an additional opportunity for more. Section 40 of the National Housing Act, for example, was responsible for and made possible the announcement this week by the minister of housing from the province from which the hon. member comes, showing that 130 units of public housing will be built in his province under Section 40. Therefore I am sure that if the hon. member takes into account the continuing programs of CMHC and this government and the initiative of the \$350 million, he will find that to be a response which has not been equalled and certainly has not been followed by the provincial governments.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE MEETING

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, the minister may try to mislead the mayors of this country,

as he did in a telex on March 12, but he cannot mislead this House. In Bill C-89 there is still only allowance for 15,000 units, and that will not come anywhere near meeting the critical shortage in this country.

I want to ask the minister a simple question arising from what he said about parliamentary holidays. Why did he and his House leader instruct the chairman of the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works not to hold a meeting which we agreed to hold on March 4 to deal with Bill C-89, which we thought was so urgent?

• (1440)

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. member's opening remarks, the people of Canada, I am sure, are not going to be misled by the histrionics of the theatre of the hon. gentleman. They will not be misled by that ploy any longer. They cannot understand, Madam Speaker, when we indicated that there is a potential for 40,000 units of affordable accommodation—whether it is through the regular supply plan, non-profits or Co-ops, that potential is there for housing under that plan and with the jobs which would be created by it—how the hon. member can stand up with such histrionics and avoid the fact that that legislation has been available before this House on notice since November 12 and he still has not been able to read it. He has not bothered to read it. The hon. member still fails to see that this government has committed \$350 million, which will provide all of the opportunities for jobs which we set out.

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AGRICULTURE

SITUATION FACING YOUNG FARMERS

Hon. John Wise (Elgin): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. I am certain that the Minister of Finance should be well aware of the financial dilemma which many Canadian farmers are facing today, particularly those producers who are in the red meat sector, those farmers who have very little equity in their operation, and particularly the young farmers. In fact, Madam Speaker, the situation is so severe that we have many of our young Canadians in colleges and universities who are assessing the financial status of the Canadian agricultural industry. And even though those young Canadians have family farms to go home to, they are reluctant to make a decision to go home because they fear they will not be able to maintain the family farm which generations have worked so hard to establish. That is not an over-exaggeration; that situation is real; it exists and it is extremely serious. Given that situation, what hope, if any—and, if no hope, what advice—can the minister provide for these young Canadians?