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HOUSING IN CANADA

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Canada is a young and rapidly growing country. In the space of a few hundred years it has become an industrialized nation of more than 16,500,000 persons. House-building, inevitably, has played a major role in the country's development.

To the early settlers, adequate shelter was not merely a matter of comfort. Theirs was a race against time, a race to put a roof over their heads before the first snows heralded the start of another harsh winter. In more recent years the building of homes has gone hand in hand with the opening up of new territories, the development of the country's natural resources and the expansion of industrial centres. There has always, therefore, been a pressing demand for housing in Canada.

Since the Second World War the population has grown rapidly, and this has posed an immense challenge to the house-building industry. In 1941 there were 11,500,000 people in Canada. Today there are more than 16,500,000, a gain of more than 5,000,000 in a period of 16 years. The country has one of the highest birth rates in the world; the average age at which marriages take place is young by European standards; and there has also been large-scale immigration since the end of the war.

This expansion is expected to become even more pronounced during the next 25 years and, in fact, a Royal Commission which in 1956 investigated the economic prospects of the country forecast that by 1980 Canada will have a population of some 26,000,000.

Urban Growth

Paralleling this growth in population there has been a steady shift from rural areas to towns and cities as farming becomes more mechanized and the country more industrialized. In 1957, two out of every three Canadians were living in a town or city of more than 5,000 population. Prior to the 1920's more than half the population lived on the land. The movement towards towns and cities is expected to continue. The Royal Commission estimates that within 25 years the urban population will double. These two tendencies--continued rapid growth and greater urbanization--set the pattern for Canada's housing development.

The Housing Stock

There are more than 4,000,000 dwellings in Canada. They range in size from the small single-family house to the huge apartment buildings of some of the biggest cities. They