

National Housing Act

and unnatural kind of concept, but into centres with a character of their own.

Land is cheaper in the rural areas of Canada, and so are houses built there. There is no point in raising the question of the cost of land in Toronto. It is obvious that when millions of people congregate in one area, the cost of land will rise there. I do not know what spokesmen for the opposition are really suggesting, as did the hon. member for Calgary North the other day, when they ask, "what would you do with this amount of money in Toronto alone?" Toronto alone could utilize fantastic sums of money and yet produce, in proportion, a small number of housing units which would not meet our needs. It seems to me that the answer is, rather, in reducing the pressures on metropolitan centres and providing incentives for people to settle in fully developed communities away from metropolitan centres and in the surrounding regions.

The other factor that strikes me as important in reducing the pressure on the metropolises, besides urban and inter-urban public transportation, is the success of our agricultural policies and whether we will be able to arrest or even slow down the process of urbanization because we will have been successful, through a set of federal and provincial agricultural policies, in permitting Canadians to live decent lives on the farms. This is why it seems to me that we Members of Parliament from urban Canada have a vital interest in the success of Canada's agricultural policies when we look at Canada as a whole.

Now I would like to make a few brief observations on the details of the legislation. First of all, I congratulate the minister on the fact that considerable adjustments have been made to the housing programs proposed last June. It seems most desirable that when it comes to the formulation of the regulations, the widest possible public discussion and consultation take place. We all know from experience how powerful and important regulations can be under any act, and this one is no exception.

It seems to me that a 25 per cent federal contribution toward the acquisition and clearing of land for the purposes indicated in section 27 does not appear to be sufficient to encourage the relocation of noxious, non-conformist uses in residential areas; and we have many of them in our downtown urban districts. Frequently, in older areas of the city, noxious uses present serious blighting influences the removal of which is essential to the success of an improvement program. Land thus released may afford the only opportunity to build new housing, an important component in the struggle to increase the housing stock.

The apparent confusion which arises from the use of the terms "occupancy and maintenance standard" and "minimum standard" is another concern. It would seem useful here to suggest that these two terms should be clarified in the definitions section. With regard to rehabilitation of existing family housing units, it is good that the federal contribution is not contingent upon it matching the provincial contribution. However, the amount of the loan that can be forgiven ought to be increased from \$2,000 to \$4,000 for the lowest income families. The experience of groups has been that estimates are extremely difficult to obtain for residential rehabilitation. It is impossible to establish the extent of the work until the job

[Mr. Caccia.]

is undertaken. It is therefore recommended that the minister consider that funding be provided for the development of neighbourhood work groups which would work on a salaried basis. It would also stand to reason that landlords benefiting from the grants and loans program should be subject to rent restraint agreements for a stated minimum period of time. Then comes the question of the multiple use of larger and older dwellings, which is a useful way to increase housing for individuals and families. There does not seem to be provision for grants and loans for conversion of larger residences for multiple use, yet the conversion of this kind of house is frequently a good economic use. Therefore, perhaps this is a serious oversight.

• (2150)

In the case of co-operative housing, the wording should be very carefully reviewed to ensure that non-profit funding is available for par value or non-profit housing co-operatives such as Alexander Park and Ashworth Square projects in Toronto. A percentage of the units produced through the non-profit program should be made available through a rent supplement program to individuals and families who are most seriously disadvantaged in the housing market. Supplements associated with non-profit neighbourhood corporations would ensure that no part of the supplement would add to the profit margin of a private landlord. It would seem also, Mr. Speaker, that any rigid requirement that a fixed percentage of residents must be committed to the co-op housing project before a loan commitment could be executed would be a roadblock to this program.

Finally, on the question of land assembly, long-term leases at rates below market to non-profit corporations would facilitate the production of non-profit and co-operative housing. Fifty-year Central Mortgage and Housing loans for the purpose of land assembly will enable leasehold arrangements over an extended period of time. The assembly of underused urban land in intercity areas, available through leasehold, would encourage the development of moderate density housing where it is most needed. The disposal of this land should be at the discretion of the local planning group and municipal authority. This is the point that I believe was made by the hon. member for St. Paul's (Mr. Atkey). He noted that such criteria made for harmony in planned programs. Any requirement that land thus acquired must be disposed of by public tender would seriously interfere with the program.

In closing, may I say that two sections of this bill are very promising and exciting. The first is section 27.2 which, if adopted and implemented, would permit the construction and acquisition of day nurseries and neighbourhood recreation or social facilities. I believe this is a "first" in federal legislation. The second is sections 45.1 which deals with new communities and the acquisition of land to be used for transportation corridors linking communities. I believe this is a tremendous step toward emphasizing the importance of transportation in relation to a successful housing policy for Canada.

Mr. Atkey: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?