

representatives of major lending institutions, including banks, mortgage companies and private mortgage insurers, to communicate just that thought, that assistance to the home owners facing mortgage renewal should be accommodated. They have responded and a number of companies are extending amortization periods and dropping the term of a mortgage. So we are concerned about housing. We have taken steps to react to the representations that the hon. member has requested.

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ENERGY CONSERVATION

SUGGESTED LOWERING OF HIGHWAY SPEED LIMIT

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Hamilton West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of the threat of diminished availability of oil supplied by Alberta, and in order to conserve energy while at the same time decreasing substantially injuries and death on our roads, would the minister, in conjunction with his provincial counterparts, consider lowering the speed limit, which although it is 100 kilometres per hour legally is not being respected on our highways?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It is, indeed, a very valuable and worth-while suggestion. I must inform him, however, that this matter has been raised repeatedly with provincial ministers at federal-provincial conferences, and while the ministers of energy were generally supportive of such a move, it would appear that some other provincial ministers, whether provincial ministers of transport or from other departments, were not as eager to act on this subject as some of the provincial ministers of energy would wish them to be. I can only tell the hon. member that I hope the provincial governments concerned will reconsider the situation and give favourable support to his suggestion.

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● (1150)

HOUSING

SHELTER ALLOWANCE FOR LOW AND AVERAGE INCOME FAMILIES

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Public Works responsible for housing. A recent study by the city of Vancouver planning department estimates that 25 per cent of city housing, or 40,000 households, are experiencing some form of serious housing problem. In addition, with the effective vacancy rate at zero, some people are living on the beaches, on the steps of city hall and in buildings that are slated for demolition. Since the MURBs program announced in the federal budget will only offer relief to those people who can afford to pay \$1200 per month rent—which is the average advertised price for a two-bedroom townhouse in my riding—will the minister tell the House what relief he plans in the form of shelter allowances for low and average income families?

Oral Questions

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question, I should like to indicate that it was as a result of the conditions she has described that the Minister of Finance reintroduced the MURB provision, with the hope that it would address the problem directly or that there would be an indirect impact which would assist the people she has identified.

I would also draw to the attention of the hon. member a report that she should be thankful was not adopted by this government. It is a secret report prepared for the former Conservative government called the Matthews report which, in addition to recommending cancellation of the community services program, identified the non-profit and rental housing markets as areas to be totally dissociated from funding by CMHC. We should be thankful that the programs outlined in this document are not in place today because they certainly would not help the people that the hon. member appears to be concerned about today.

An hon. Member: That is shameful.

Miss Carney: Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the same minister. I can advise him that the report he refers to was not adopted. The report with which I am dealing shows that 28,000 of those 40,000 Vancouver households have inadequate income which, of course, is defined as 30 per cent of gross income spent on shelter, and therefore they cannot qualify for mortgages. Since the average price of a home on the lower mainland is \$120,000 or roughly twice the national average, and since a buyer requires an income of \$36,000 per year in order to qualify for a \$75,000 mortgage at 14 per cent, what meaningful assistance does the minister propose to give first time home buyers?

Mr. Cosgrove: Madam Speaker, there is in place already, of course, a plan which permits first time purchasers of homes to set aside \$1,000 per year for a five-year period with tax relief in order to assist them in achieving their first down payment. Secondly, in response to that target group, the 5,000 increase in social units that I announced this year was in addition to an existing 25,000 unit commitment across the country. That program is in place and it will continue over the next few years. From personal experience I know that it is addressing specifically some of the problems that the hon. member has raised today.

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GRAIN

WHEAT—RELUCTANCE TO INCREASE INITIAL PRICE

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport who responds for the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. In response to a question put to him yesterday by the hon. member for Vegreville, the Minister of Transport indicated that it was not the intention of the Canadian Wheat Board to increase the initial price for Canadian red spring and durum wheat. I am sure the