

Housing

127,000 dwellings under construction at the year end was 24,000 higher than at the end of 1967. Residential construction last year represented an investment of \$2.8 billion, 18 per cent more than in 1967. In addition, National Housing Act loans were provided to finance construction of some 14,000 new hostel beds for elderly persons and students, compared with 6,000 beds two years earlier. While all types of dwellings contributed to the increase in starts in 1968, apartments and row houses, with a 36.5 per cent growth, accounted for most of last year's performance.

All regions and most metropolitan areas shared in the residential construction boom in 1968, the Atlantic provinces together showing the largest relative gain of 31.7 per cent. This was followed by the prairies, with an increase of 27.1 per cent, while Quebec had an increase of 23.2 per cent. A somewhat smaller but still significant increase occurred in Ontario where a year to year gain of 18 per cent was recorded. This year the exceptional performance in housing has continued and new starts in urban areas increased at a record annual rate of 227,000 units in the first quarter of 1969, up from the previous high of 196,000 units in the fourth quarter of 1968.

For all areas these rates imply that the good results of 1968 will be substantially exceeded this year, and it is evident that 1969 will again be a record year for residential construction in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Baldwin: Except for the people who need houses.

Mr. Trudeau: On the question of long-run national requirements, the report of the task force on housing and urban development suggested the need for a housing program of one million new housing units over the next five years, or 200,000 units a year. It is clear on the basis of performance to date that the current rate of construction is well ahead of meeting this target. With the implementation of many of the key proposals of the task force, an even greater part of our resources will undoubtedly be channelled into providing shelter for Canadians in all parts of the country.

It is important that a substantial proportion of those resources be invested in housing for low income families. The government is actively concerned in stimulating this kind of construction. Although different people can reasonably come to different conclusions about how much should be done and how

[Mr. Trudeau.]

long it should take to do it, it is nevertheless quite evident that the priority given by the federal government to its housing policy is now, as in the past, showing good results. So much for the present facts about housing in Canada. It is these facts which I ask the opposition and the country to test against their expressions of crisis.

An hon. Member: Why have a task force?

Mr. Nesbitt: Then why did Paul Hellyer resign?

Mr. Trudeau: Presumably, according to the leader of the New Democratic party, because of the constitution, not because of the housing crisis.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: Let me talk a little about the current policies of the government, because the implication of the motion before the house is that the government is not dealing expeditiously with new housing proposals.

An hon. Member: Why don't you read your letters?

Mr. Trudeau: The present housing record, as I have indicated, is a good one, but it is good because of policy decisions the government has taken in the past. We are equally determined to press ahead as rapidly as possible with new policy decisions to ensure that the future housing record is even better. Hon. members will recognize that it is not appropriate for me to speak in any detail of the process of cabinet consideration of housing policies—

An hon. Member: Or possible.

Mr. Trudeau: Well, you will see them. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, hon. members will recognize that it is not appropriate for me to speak in any detail of the process of cabinet consideration of housing policies, but in broad terms the issues which must be examined in the light of the report of the task force can easily be deduced. Hon. members will see if there have been any decisions.

Extensive consideration has been given to these issues since the receipt of the task force report. Federal housing policy inevitably touches upon many areas of government policy. It involves financial policy because of the level of interest rates and the provision of mortgage money, and because housing is one of the federal government's largest spending