

that the minister is requiring that these remain affordable rental units.

I congratulate the Minister of Finance, who is also not in the House, for at least removing MURB tax write-offs. Once again, he overruled the minister for CMHC, who has been extolling the virtues of MURBs for the last year. He wanted tax write-offs for multiple unit residential buildings. Perhaps we can be modest and say that our continued criticism finally got through, at least to the Minister of Finance.

The government lost \$45 million in MURB tax write-offs last year, and it gained very little increase in the stock of affordable rental housing as a result. It is true that it got some luxury apartments, and today in the House we heard that they are the kind which are going up because construction people rush to try and take advantage of MURBs. However, affordable rental accommodation was usually demolished in order to build MURB-type luxury apartments. This was no solution.

There are a number of very positive steps that we in this party feel should have been taken and could have been taken to improve the housing situation if this government only had the will to change its priorities. Most housing developments have spin-offs to create more jobs and reduce lay-offs in our building trades and our forest industry. We have the trees, we have lots of skilled tradesmen and skilled labour, and we have a desperate need for housing. What we lack, of course, is government initiative and long range planning.

The priorities of this government's budget are all wrong. How can the minister justify increased expenditures for defence? I hope hon. members in the House will listen to this. Defence expenditures will increase from \$5.9 billion this year to \$9.8 billion over the next five years. There is a five-year plan for defence, but there is not even a two-year plan for building. The minister allocates only \$350 million for housing compared to \$5.9 billion for defence. Why does the minister responsible for CMHC not come into this House with a five-year plan for housing with some teeth in it, such as the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne) must have done for his department?

Housing is a social investment; it is not just a welfare program. We are investing in permanent structures for people. It is an essential commodity and a human necessity. Surely Canadians have the right to expect a decent, affordable place to live. Surely our country can afford to invest in housing if we can spend \$9.8 billion on defence in one year.

The New Democratic Party will continue to press for the following housing priorities which we believe Canadians need and deserve. First of all, concerning interest rate policy, the government should freeze mortgage renewal rates, not subsidize increases. Legislation should be introduced immediately to require stable, long-term mortgages with interest paid at the rate of inflation. CMHC should get back into the direct lending field and financial institutions should be required under the Bank Act to establish an affordable mortgage lending portfolio.

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Second, we need long-range planning. CMHC should, of course, come in with a five-year plan for housing development based on population movements to the areas of growth where we have the greatest housing problems. We have problems across the country in urban centres. It is interesting to note that most of the immigrants also settle in the urban centres which have the lowest available housing and a zero rental vacancy rate.

We should also be thinking of the increasing number of young people, documented in the budget papers, who are forming households and need homes. There should be integrated planning with other government levels. This is absolutely essential. There should not be little trips out to see the different ministers of housing to talk about mortgage referral; there should be real, comprehensive planning which will involve land banking and housing programs for the future.

Concerning land for housing, federal and provincial Crown lands should be assessed, released and serviced for affordable housing developments. We have land. We could trade some of it off, in certain areas, for land banking programs which are absolutely essential. Along with that, we need long-term leasing policies which are desirable to retain affordable housing in the future. This is a social investment; it is not a giveaway.

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With respect to native and northern housing, the federal government must assist with infrastructure and servicing costs on Indian reserves and in the remote areas of our country. It must provide adequate funds for new housing and home repairs. Assistance should be given for home repairs, renovations and energy conservation. RRAP funding should have been increased by this budget and the funding spread more widely. However, the money in the home insulation fund for this year should go first for reparation purposes to urea formaldehyde insulation victims. These people should be compensated and given first priority in this year's budget. This assistance could come from the allocation for CHIP or RRAP. As I have already mentioned, rental and co-op housing is another priority of the New Democratic Party which must be adequately financed by CMHC.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation financing should be beefed up. The level of financing should return to at least the 1976 amount, which was \$1.8 billion. They need to decentralize operations and give practical help to home builders and non-profit developers so they can build and repair affordable housing. We hope the minister responsible for CMHC will somehow develop a conscience and show real leadership when he presents the proposed revisions to the National Housing Act. Palliatives for the minister's real estate friends are not enough. Canada needs and deserves a long-range plan for housing development with policies and a budget to support it. This is the time when the Liberal government must recognize that affordable housing is a social right for all Canadians. This is a mean and regressive budget and Canadians deserve better.