

*The Address—Mr. Pearson*

not made possible, by federal assistance, as indeed has progress in urban development generally, assistance in a form which has been quite substantial but also acceptable to all the provinces and municipalities.

Despite generally good progress in the housing field so far, however, Canada's programs have fallen very far short of need, especially for persons of low levels of income. For example, of the approximately two and a half million new dwellings constructed since the war only 56,400 units were directly intended to meet the needs of our low income people. The challenge that this involves to all three levels of government in Canada today is going to increase in the future, and in the very near future. In little more than the decade that lies immediately ahead we will have to produce another two and a half million dwelling units just to ensure that Canadians are adequately housed. That is as many new units as we have produced since the war, and we are going to have to produce them now in less than half that time. That is the immediate and most urgent problem but there is a need also for a better quality of living environment in Canada which goes along with this need for housing.

Housing itself is of first importance but it is also important that we do not get just horizontal rows along streets and vertical rows up and down elevators. Therefore I hope the government will be able to put forward proposals for legislation at this session which will help the provinces and cities in dealing with the housing problem and also ancillary problems of urban development.

There is also a growing need for federal co-operation with the provinces in reserving land as open space within urban areas and in developing new suburban communities. Urban living is becoming steadily more concentrated. I was informed a few days ago, although I do not know whether the statistics are accurate, that in a very few years 80 per cent of the people of Canada will be living in half a dozen great metropolitan areas. This emphasizes the need for recreational open space to be shared in the form of parks and conservation areas.

It would not be sensible to offer assistance in the development of new urban communities without being able to see these developments as parts of a whole city and metropolitan region. It is only within a regional framework that intelligent decisions can be made about the main transportation routes and utilities, about open space and

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built-up space, and about the focal points of communities where traffic, high density housing and commercial services will be concentrated. The federal government is prepared to discuss with the provinces—indeed discussions have already begun with my colleague the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson)—how it can usefully co-operate in these wider matters, as it already does in urban renewal.

We have the same problems and same requirements existing in less developed and less urbanized regions of our country, and here the same kind of public effort and private effort at all levels of government is needed to solve them. For instance, the regroupings of populations in Newfoundland, New Brunswick and in the prairie provinces, aided both by the ARDA programs and the provisions of the National Housing Act, are also in a sense exercises in urban development. Better housing and community facilities are essential steps for many Canadians, and are essential steps to be taken by Canadian governments.

These ideas, Mr. Speaker, are ones which I hope we will be able to put before the house before the end of this session. They are very much before our minds as a government now. If they are finally agreed upon in whole or in part they would involve extensions and improvements in the federal assistance role under the National Housing act, and we propose to bring amendments before the house during this session which would make that kind of improved assistance possible. But before we do this, since on the federal level we do not have information on all our regional and local needs I think it would be desirable for the government to explore this idea with the provinces as to how best we can work out co-operatively programs of this kind. I hope we will soon be in a position to invite the provinces to join us in practical discussion of these matters leading to a co-operative inquiry. This would perhaps be something new in our history, and this is the kind of constitutional development that can take place without any amendments to the constitution. It would be inviting the provinces and the federal government to conduct a joint inquiry, if you like, a federal-provincial royal commission, reporting back to both levels of government. This, I think, is something worthy of consideration.

The right hon. gentleman had a great deal to say about the constitution and how we should take advantage of centennial year to set up machinery for its revision and alteration and, indeed, the amendment he has moved