

*National Housing Act*

● (1150)

I also realize that this Government, having put this country deep into debt, in a totally irresponsible fashion, has hardly any room to manoeuvre. This is really too bad, because if the country had had better government, we would now be able to do more to give Canadians a chance to own their own homes. As a result of its mismanagement, the Government has sunk the country so deep into debt that it simply has no room left to operate constructively when it has to deal with such basic and vital issues as home ownership. Members on this side of the House can certainly not be held responsible for that. But given the current context, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I will try in committee to call in credible witnesses who might be able to make to the Minister and ourselves more relevant and more challenging suggestions likely to make it easier for us to reach our objective, Mr. Speaker, which is to offer more assistance to Canadians whose ambition is to become homeowners. As a corollary, we know how important it is to enable more Canadians to own their home, because a Canadian homeowner usually has a more positive approach. In fact, he becomes a better citizen since he has a direct interest in his home, his municipality and his province simply because he owns something. There is a very significant social connotation with respect to the family, of course and a Canadian who owns his home has a different outlook on life. For all those reasons, including our Canadian climate and the economic impact, we will indeed be receptive to any housing legislation that provides assistance and implements a policy designed to meet the needs of Canadians.

Unfortunately, it is a little bit late to come up with the solution sought by Canadians. The Government has introduced a Bill which will offer some kind of protection but, as I said, it is not what Canadians have been asking for. I doubt that this Bill will have any impact on the recovery of the house construction sector. This legislation will probably only protract a problem which is already too serious, Mr. Speaker, but it will not succeed in rectifying the situation that we wanted to rectify as recently as four or five years ago; if people had listened to us then, they would at least have had a solution to meet the needs of the time and this solution could have been amended and improved. This would have helped avoid the problems thousands of Canadians have had to face and the difficulties they are still having.

The Minister introduced this Bill today. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that we shall examine it with all the objectivity we are capable of and must have to promote home ownership for Canadians. As for consideration in committee within a relatively short time and then in Committee of the Whole, I am quite prepared to have a very interesting and serious debate. I think that consideration at the committee level will probably have to take longer than expected in view of the importance of the issue and of our desire to listen to those who could help the Government do more to meet our objectives, which are to help Canadians and make homeownership more

readily accessible, as well as provide the stability and security needed in the housing industry.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I say once again to the Minister that we view this Bill positively. We shall ask for further amendments at the committee stage. We shall insist on knowing the position of the Provinces as concerns the financial assistance the Minister wants to provide for native and rural housing and we sincerely hope, Mr. Speaker, that we shall succeed, in a very positive climate, in developing and approving amendments which would make this legislation even more helpful and encouraging for all Canadians who are trying not only to buy homes, but also to keep the one they have already bought. With this, Mr. Speaker, I leave the floor to other Members who will certainly show as much interest in this matter as I did myself and as the Minister did this morning, and we hope that, thanks to our work at the committee level, the Canadian public will hear proposals that are even more interesting and encouraging than the one we heard this morning.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill):** Mr. Speaker, we in the New Democratic Party will be opposing this Bill for a number of reasons. We oppose it mainly because we believe that fundamentally it provides a rationalization for higher interest rates by giving borrowers the illusion that they have some kind of protection when in fact their best protection—long term, stable mortgage rates—has been taken away. It has been taken away over a period of time as a result of the Government's actions. I will review what the Government has done in that respect later.

This Bill also provides the context within which public criticism of the banks for its high interest rates might be muted through the illusion of providing protection.

This Bill represents an admission by the Government of helplessness. It is an admission that it does not have the political or moral will, the economic knowledge or a combination of those factors, to have an independent interest rate policy and a lower interest rate policy in this country. Instead of getting to the heart of the matter, the Government has chosen through this Bill to get into the protection racket as far as mortgages are concerned. It is not challenging Canadians to work with their Government to develop a low-interest rate policy and an independent interest rate policy.

What is provided in this mortgage rate protection plan, or MRPP as it will be known by acronym? For a fee a home buyer will be able to purchase mortgage insurance to cover some of the increase in monthly payments if interest rates rise very quickly. On the surface this sounds as though the Government has finally come around to recognizing the problem faced by mortgage holders some three years ago. Thousands were losing their homes or giving them up voluntarily at that time because mortgage payments were increasing from \$200 to \$400 monthly.