

the downtown area of Toronto. With conversion this could accommodate the type of neighbourhoods people want. But the government must be prepared to allocate a significant portion of its land banking funds for this purpose. However, if the previous record of this government and CMHC is any indication, virtually all of the \$100 million per year will go into suburban areas for the acquisition of raw, unserviced land. This, of course, will do little to alleviate the immediate housing shortage and the high prices.

Also, let me ask the minister what happened to the throne speech proposal to relocate downtown railway tracks to the edge of the cities. Surely, if this were anything but an empty promise the minister would have mentioned it last Thursday in the context of his remarks on neighbourhood improvement and land banking schemes. There is a great potential here since much of the land that would be freed from the railways could be easily converted to residential or recreational use.

I would hope that in the near future the minister could indicate publicly what downtown railway tracks in what cities are to be moved, and in each case the extent to which the land will be made available for residential and recreational purposes acceptable, of course, to the residents of adjoining neighbourhoods. I would suggest to him that he look at the CPR freight line running across midtown Toronto which goes through much of the residential heartland of that city and which should be a prime candidate for this relocation program.

Finally, to the opponents of neighbourhood improvement and rehabilitation who argue that it is too expensive as opposed to new development let me say this: Be careful how you determine basic costs. There are so many social costs involved in living a long distance from your job or in seeing your neighbourhood destroyed and being forced to relocate that accurate comparisons in human terms are virtually impossible. There is a very delicate social balance at stake here which involves something more than the determination of how many dollars per square foot. In my view, if the character and vitality of our inner cities are to be preserved, then we simply cannot afford not to rehabilitate and improve existing neighbourhoods. This is surely one of the keys to promoting and maintaining a stable urban society in Canada.

**Mr. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport):** Mr. Speaker, I have just a few observations on this very fine bill that really attempts to come to grips with the complex problem on how to make housing and community facilities available to every Canadian. This afternoon it was rather refreshing to hear positive remarks made by the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle) which were so much in contrast with the erratic performance the other night by his colleague in the Conservative party, the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams). It is good that these remarks are put on the record for everyone to see how polarized can be views on the same subject within the Conservative party.

• (2140)

It seems to me that the success of the housing policy, namely, how houses can be made available at a cost which is within the reach of all members of society, depends on

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three aspects at least. One is the supply of land in locations that are conveniently connected with a man's working, educational and recreational facilities. Second, it depends on the rate of demolitions which we have witnessed over past decades which were required for the construction of urban expressways. Third, it depends on the incentives that are offered for the improvement of existing housing facilities and neighbourhoods, particularly now in our metropolises.

Tremendous and interesting opportunities are offered by this bill with respect to home improvements and construction by co-operatives, and I welcome the support of the minister's program. But to be successful with the other two aspects of the reasonably successful housing policy of the minister needs a change in our methods of transportation which rely so heavily at present on the car. We need a considerable switch in emphasis in favour of public transportation.

We should move away from the construction of urban expressways, which had been the method adopted in our cities, and move toward an urban rapid transit policy such as we are beginning to witness in the 1970s in the movement of people between towns and cities. We need a policy that would far better utilize existing railway rights of way. When they are built, traditional urban expressways eat up thousands of urban dwellings and increase levels of pollution in built-up areas. They cause congestion in downtown areas. They demand space to park cars downtown where space is least available, and they cause the decay of our downtown neighbourhoods.

Clearly, that is not the way to develop a sound urban policy and with it a sound housing policy. The federal government needs the help of the municipalities and provincial governments because a change in favour of a vigorous public transportation policy in our cities will mean the reduction or elimination of house demolitions, the rapid movement of large numbers of people and less damage to the environment. This process would be accelerated if the federal government were to help municipalities and provincial governments interested in the development of modern urban transportation systems, as was hinted at by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) a few months ago when he spoke in Edmonton and mentioned this very aspect of federal intervention.

The understanding of urban Canada by the federal government and, in particular, by the Department of Transport is essential. In most parts of Canada we have very valuable and costly railway lines. They lie idle, or almost so, in many of our cities. These lines could provide relatively inexpensive commuter services within a city. How about the potential offered by the underused lines between cities and towns from Windsor to Ottawa, just to mention one region? This is why some of us were so enthusiastic about the content of the Soberman report last November when it was published, and about its recommendations. If our small towns are to provide the housing that is needed, if they are to attract industries and people and if the land around them is to be developed for housing so as to reduce pressure on the large metropolises, they must be linked with the rest of the country with fast and frequent transportation services. They should not be made into satellite centres or dormitory towns, a sterile