

garbage disposal is available to about 60 per cent of the Indian communities across Canada. Is it any wonder, after 30 years under these conditions, that homes have fallen into disuse or that reconstruction is essential?

Time does not permit me to undertake a review of the evolution of the housing program. Nevertheless, it is important to take a long look at the current housing program administered by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It might best be described as one which is great in theory but a failure in practice. The procedures under the present housing program begin with an estimation of the manpower needs by district departmental staff in consultation with local Indian band councils. That is delay number one. The resulting estimates are then submitted to the regional office for approval. Delay number two. Subsequently, funds are allocated to the district offices on a priority basis, taking into account five-year forecasts and the needs of a reserve in relation to others in the area: That is delay number three.

● (1520)

Then comes the crunch. Locally, band councils establish priorities on the basis of the greatest need and are responsible for the allocation of houses built on the reserve with the funds provided from appropriations. I ask, is it any wonder that chiefs and councillors are not only politically but chronologically aging with such a process? Imagine, if you can, Mr. Speaker, receiving funds for two houses when the established needs and priorities in that particular area are for thirty, and being confronted with deciding who should have those particular homes. Imagine, if you can, receiving only enough money to build half a home on a particular reserve, and attempting to do it if you can. Then, finally, imagine the incredible circumstance of receiving funds for building homes when in fact you have indicated to the department there is no need for a particular home building program during that current year.

Without going into detail, it is apparent that the present subsidy on reserve housing program, which provides financial assistance up to \$10,000, depending on income, to Indians living on the reserve is insufficient to obtain adequate shelter in view of today's construction costs. Similarly, the on-reserve housing program under Central Mortgage and Housing is outmoded, as is the Indian off-reserve housing program negotiated in 1966 under the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the veterans' land administration branch of the Department of Veterans Affairs for Indians who are regularly employed and living off the reserve.

Finally, and not surprisingly, the National Indian Brotherhood, in desperation, attempted to offer meaningful input into future housing policies. Their policy paper entitled "A Declaration of Indian Housing Policy" was presented to the former minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in August, 1974. The initial response to the department's suggestion that there should be a joint Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation program established was rejected, and rejected obviously on the basis of previous experience in these two

Housing

areas. However, agreement was finally reached to establish a joint working group made up of officials of the department and representatives of the National Indian Brotherhood. Despite what appeared to be an agreement in principle between the two groups, the minister has failed to take action. Again native housing is in limbo and the chance of the future housing needs of the native people being met is as remote today as it was when the government first met with leaders of the National Indian Brotherhood.

I am sorry that the minister is out of the House at the moment, but I am sure he will be back.

Mr. Ouellet: I am not away; I am right here.

Mr. Holmes: I was referring to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Allmand). I will get to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) in a few moments.

If the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is sincere in his approach to his new portfolio, and if indeed there is an interest in correcting this very serious social problem to which I have referred, I hope that if he enters the debate later today he will take the opportunity of responding to a few simple questions which I suggest will help him to restore some confidence not only among the native community but also among members on this side of the House. I put these questions because if the minister can answer them I am sure it will be of great assistance in terms of giving added confidence to the House.

Firstly, since the National Indian Brotherhood and the department of Indian Affairs have reached agreement in principle regarding Indian reserve housing, when is the minister going to make a formal commitment to the National Indian Brotherhood and status Indians across Canada? Secondly, will the government raise the subsidy for Indian housing on reserves to a level that is consistent with existing conditions, bearing in mind that there has been no change, at least in the last five years, in the subsidy, and the cost of living during this period has continued to increase?

Thirdly, since the government agreed to establish a mechanism for Indian people to participate in plans for housing and community development on reserves, it would be most important for the minister to indicate what he has done to promote that policy at this point in time. Fourthly, would the minister agree that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development should act as the single centre of responsibility and accountability to mobilize funds and technical resources needed to deliver Indian housing? Fifthly, is the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development prepared to secure program commitments from key agencies such as Manpower for job training and work opportunity programs, from DREE for certain infrastructure programs, and from CMHC for loan fund programs?

That particular group of native people, the Indians of the so-called non-income group, and their need for housing and related programs—which is really an emergency-type situation—require priority and I would ask whether the government