

of every facet of Canadian life. Three-quarters of the population of Canada lives in urban centres as defined by Statistics Canada. Not only do our policies in urban affairs affect the quality of life of this large segment of the nation; they affect the whole community. Take land use policy as an example. How much more valuable agricultural land is to be reduced to asphalt? These policies affect transportation systems, energy consumption, the physical environment, the emotional environment, our feeling of self-fulfilment, our recreational opportunities; even the lifestyles open to us.

Life in our urban centres has changed drastically since the early 1950s with the surge of technical and scientific advancements. Yet 20 years later we are still groping around to adjust to the new environment created by these changes. The worst and the best results of these changes are concentrated in our cities. Our cities have undergone significant changes in outlook, character, quality of life, physical appearance, and, most important, in size. I refer not only to the size in numbers of people in urban centres, which is a reflection of both population growth and major migrations from rural to urban centres, but also to space: huge, sprawling cities are the trademark of the seventies.

As a result, a whole new pattern of living has evolved, changes in the social structure and regional fabric of our society and changes in the vertical and horizontal structure of this great country. Yet the policies and legislation of this government fail to recognize this fundamental change. The National Housing Act still reflects the needs of the 1940s and the 1950s. Surely the 1970s demand a radically different approach reflecting Canada's new societal structure and regional diversity.

The great benefit of the technical and scientific breakthrough of the fifties and sixties is that it gave us a far more potent resource than capital to develop our country. That resource is knowledge. We have the technology; we have the money. What we do not have—and this is where this government has failed—is the political commitment, the political will to come to grips with the real problem. The government has relied in the past and, if this bill is an indication, will obviously do so in the future, on a little salve on the rash while prescribing no cure for the disease.

For years this government has been enmeshed in constitutional curtains and has been reluctant to accept responsibility in the area of urban affairs: municipal affairs were the preserve of provincial governments, it said with a shrug. But we are not speaking of jurisdictional divisions here. We are talking about leadership, co-ordination, direction for the whole country. We are talking about housing in the context of a country in transition. We are talking about transportation and immigration. We are talking about the balanced use of our financial resources. We are talking about the quality of our environment. The federal government has the responsibility of developing a co-ordinated approach involving all these considerations but, sadly, there has been little recognition on the part of this government of the growing need for integrated policies to create an orderly urban environment.

For the first time in history, mankind has the means of substantially improving the general well-being of every member of its society. We are better prepared to deal with human problems than ever before, to establish a harmoni-

ous balance in the life of the collectivity. We have the means of production. What we have failed to achieve is an equitable distribution of that production.

Housing is the cornerstone of a stable society. Inadequate shelter is fertile ground for the breeding and growth of most of our social problems. The housing industry is vital to the economy of the nation. Instability in the housing section of our economy has horizontal and vertical repercussions through the entire socio-economic system. Tenuous and direct results are felt on some sectors of the economy and untenuous, indirect results on still others. These repercussions create unemployment, social tension, financial strain, inflationary trends. The effects are like a nuclear explosion, some of them visible and violent but the fallout is extensive and wide ranging.

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Adequate shelter is a must for all Canadians. The government is, in effect, employing public revenues to help bring housing within reach of some people in our society. However, it is not acting within any comprehensive and open policy framework. We have a long standing commitment in the areas of education and health of assuring universal access, so why not extend this to shelter? Should not the government begin to face the fact that shelter as well is an essential, a commodity that we must assure is within reach of our population generally? Or is it content simply to devise ad hoc schemes and use public revenues in this area without facing the basic policy question? We see it in this legislation. There is no philosophy and, therefore, no competent strategy.

While in the field of welfare the government says it is striving to rationalize a maze of programs, to unify programs around distinct goals, in housing policy this government is creating a maze that someone else, at some time in the future, will have to sort out. If we are going to begin using public revenues to assist people obtain shelter, let us proceed with a concrete policy. The government, for example, might consider a single program strategy such as set out by the Brookings Institute in its study "Setting National Priorities, the 1974 Budget". It outlines the concept of a shelter allowance. Using this approach, the government would decide just what level of a family's income should reasonably be devoted to providing shelter and, then, with a single program, not a multiplicity of programs, assist those families to make up the difference when their shelter cost is beyond the level considered reasonable. There are serious questions about the effect such a scheme might have on the price side, and the amount of assistance would have to be determined according to just how high a priority we put on public resources in this area. However, the government has a responsibility to devise some kind of policy which establishes a clear and universal policy objective and employs public funds in a competent and unified strategy.

This is the basis of my main objections to this bill. I do not object in principle to any measures that will alleviate a burden on any sector of this country. But while one sector benefits, another suffers, and this has been the traditional position of every policy or program this government has put forth on housing. Select or particular groups receive a crumb or a hand-out, while others are further burdened or neglected. This bill introduces or