

Supply

curtail the development of much needed housing for those Canadians most in need.

That is why we condemn the actions of this government for its lack of support in the budget for housing programs to especially help women and their children.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from London East.

As you may know, Mr. Speaker, he was in the forefront when the national Liberal task force on housing worked on this issue about two years ago.

I remember this member saying that social housing ought to be the cornerstone of Canada's social policy. I agree. He indicated the tremendous benefits that this program would offer Canadians, particularly women and the poor. In fact, without affordable housing, we are condemning a family to poverty.

With such a good program as co-op housing, I would like to ask the member why he thinks this government deliberately killed this program. Is it because it was a Liberal legacy or just that this government does not care about women and children?

Mr. Fontana: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question and those kind remarks.

I think it is a bit of both. The co-op housing program was a very successful program, as acknowledged by this government because it has been committed to this program for the last five years. While it never delivered the number of units that it promised, the fact remains that there is a wealth of support from the government members for the co-op housing program.

There is no doubt that a number of government backbenchers tried to portray co-op housing as a program that was not well targeted, that it in fact allowed people with higher incomes to live in co-op housing and take advantage of certain subsidies. The fact remains that co-op housing is not only a form of social housing, it is a kind of community living.

To be able to say that the poor, especially women and children, should be relegated to public housing projects where 100 per cent of the people are targeted and receiving subsidies is to not deal with the facts that a mixed income community with positive social reinforce-

ments would be beneficial to women and to their children.

I still believe that the minister of state for housing is very supportive of co-op housing. We believe and hope that women and men, of course, those who believe in co-op housing, will in fact pressure this government to restore the funding.

Co-op housing has existed in the world for a great many decades. In fact, it is a form of housing tenure, and it is something of which we should not lose sight. The whole concept and philosophy of co-operative living is something that we should encourage and not reject by cutting the budget.

My colleague spoke about our task force. We have put forward our support for the co-op housing program. We urge the government to restore the funding. I believe it is committed to helping people who require housing. It seems to have this convoluted perception, unfortunately, that it has no responsibility, that the private marketplace and the provincial governments should perhaps look after social housing.

That is the tragedy of this government's action with respect to the budget cuts on housing.

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on this motion today.

I think it is useful at this point, after a few hours of talking about it, that we just read the motion again.

That is:

That this House condemns the government for its failure to protect and promote the fundamental rights of Canadian women, especially as reflected in the 1992 budget.

• (1700)

I certainly commend the hon. member for Halifax for putting forward a motion which I am sure in her view is a correct and constructive one. She has spoken at length and with passion and sincerity about the rights of women in Canadian society. I would say that the spirit behind this motion is probably a laudable one.

The hon. member has heard me praise her I am sure and will remember that as well. The spirit behind the motion I think is a very laudable one and the member is to be congratulated. To further the cause of women in Canadian society is of course what we ought to be doing and devoting a lot of time and attention to.