

Adjournment Debate

• (1820)

In order to induce us to rent that apartment at that time, the landlord actually offered us one month free rent. In fact, other landlords in the same community were offering free trips to Florida just for signing a lease for an apartment there. That is really a thing of the past as far as Metropolitan Toronto is concerned. I have heard that in Montreal, for instance, they are offering as much as three months free rent for signing a lease, but that is not the case in Metropolitan Toronto these days.

At the moment, in fact, the rental housing situation is really drastic. The vacancy rate is less than 1 per cent, in fact it is 0.1 per cent. Do you know what it is in Edmonton, Mr. Speaker? I do not know either, but I do know that in Calgary it is 5 per cent. The vacancy rate is much higher in Calgary than it is in Metro Toronto at the moment.

The whole situation started to change in the early 1970s. Changes in our federal income tax, which prevented developers from writing off extra expenses and raised their taxes and rent control by way of the rent review process which the provincial Government implemented, combined to reduce the amount of rental housing that was built until there is now a real shortage of rental housing.

It is not only in rental housing that there is a problem in Metropolitan Toronto. There is a shortage of all sorts of affordable housing. For instance, the average price of a single-family home these days in Metro Toronto is somewhere around \$200,000. A two-storey three-bedroom square plan house, the kind that my parents bought in 1939 for about \$7,000, the kind that Louise and I paid about \$18,000 for 25 years later in 1962, now sells for about \$325,000 in Metropolitan Toronto.

That is incredible. In the first 25 years it went up by about \$10,000 and in the most recent 25 years it has gone up \$300,000. That is not affordable housing. Louise and I could not have afforded to buy a house like that if we were starting out today and, quite frankly, we could not afford to buy it right now, even on the enormous sums that you and I make, Mr. Speaker, as Members of Parliament.

Thank goodness that Louise and I have a house, but I wonder about our daughters, Kim and Andrea. Kim is finished university now. She is working but she is living at home with us again. She is back at home. Andrea is at university now but she will be through in a couple of years. What are both Kim and Andrea going to do and what are so many young people going to do these days? They will not be able to afford to buy a house like Louise and I did, my parents did, or my grandparents did, and they will not even be able to find an apartment.

Kim and Andrea are not alone. They are like thousands and thousands of other young people who are really stuck in the housing market in Metro Toronto. Besides young people there are middle-aged people, senior citizens, and people who have come to Toronto from other communities such as Edmonton

and Vancouver. People have come to Toronto looking for work and they cannot find a place to stay either. As well, of course, there are people coming from other countries who cannot find places to stay either. There is just not any affordable housing available.

What about the 17,000 seniors, middle-aged people, and singles who are on waiting lists in the greater Metropolitan Toronto area for affordable housing of one sort or another? There is just nothing for any of them. What is the answer to this problem?

Of course, some responsibility must lie with the private sector, some with municipal Governments, and some with the provincial Government. You, I and the Parliamentary Secretary know that the federal Government has a responsibility to provide affordable housing for Canadians.

• (1825)

The Parliamentary Secretary will tell us in a minute what the Government will do about this. However, I do not want him to tell me that CMHC built 4,800 new units in Toronto in the last 18 months. I do not want him to tell me that CMHC is involved in construction or renovation of 15,000 homes across Canada, and I certainly do not want him to tell me that my daughters, Kim and Andrea, better live in Calgary, Edmonton or Vancouver and commute to Toronto to work.

I want him to tell me what the Government will do. That is what I and other Canadians want to know from the Parliamentary Secretary and the Government tonight.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, at the outset, the Member omitted one other chilling fact regarding the housing industry in areas like Toronto. It is that if there should be a reversal in the economy in the city, and a family has bought a \$300,000 house which, a year later, is valued at \$150,000 if there is a recession, they have lost a fortune. Alternatively, if they work for a company and are transferred to another part of the country, they may do well selling the house in Toronto and moving to Moncton or Vancouver. It may be difficult for a family which has to move from Moncton or Vancouver to Toronto, however.

I recall some eight years ago when the housing market was so hot in Vancouver. When the crash came, a number of people were very badly hurt because of an artificial market.

Is the Hon. Member asking the Government to get into the financing of the housing industry? I suggest to him that there are some financial institutions that would express concern about a government heating up the market too much with easy money by getting into the housing industry. That would not solve the problem in Toronto. If it becomes too easy to finance, the market could be heated up even further.

The Government has helped in social housing in places like Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Montreal. While people may choose of their own volition to move from the downtown