

would involve the commitment of federal housing funds to the provinces for longer periods of time than is currently provided. I think this would be a vast improvement, permitting federal, provincial and municipal governments, to plan what their housing programs would be.

One of my own most urgent priorities for the immediate future is to strengthen the federal-provincial partnership in the field of housing and community building, to improve the quality of communication between the federal and provincial governments and, through the provinces, with the municipalities. I am hoping, beginning with the federal-provincial conference scheduled for January 22 and 23, to develop new techniques for joint planning in the areas of policy development, program planning, allocation of resources, and particularly joint efforts in research and development which will rapidly expand our common knowledge about the character and dimensions of the problems which we face together.

I would hope that at that conference—and I have suggested to my provincial colleagues that this be the case—local governments and municipalities would be invited by the provincial representatives because I think we all realize there will not be a home building or community program in this country without the involvement of local government. I would hope the federal government through the National Housing Act would respond to local government needs as effectively as it possibly can.

**Mr. Marshall:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister where that conference is to be held.

**Mr. Paproski:** Is it to be held in Edmonton?

**Mr. Basford:** No. It is to be held in the national capital area, I might reply to my large friend from the Conservative party.

**Mr. Paproski:** Larger than you.

**Mr. Basford:** I am fast catching up with the hon. member.

Before this conference takes place, I expect I will have placed before the House of Commons the proposed amendments to the National Housing Act, so that delegates to the conference will have before them an explicit statement, for their consideration, of the government's proposals. The proposed legislation and other policy proposals which do not involve legislation, can be modified and improved through discussion and debate in this House and outside, with the provinces and through them the municipalities, before being put into effect.

Mr. Speaker, in the time allowed I have endeavoured to set out the thrust of the federal housing policy and the thrust of federal urban policy. I suggest with deference that it is a thrust worthy of the confidence of all members of this House regardless of party.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the hon. member rising for the purpose of asking a question?

**Mr. Marshall:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that there will be isolated parts of Canada which will get the advantage of the thrust of national housing policies, particularly in respect of the rehabilitation program to which

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\$4 million was allocated and which the Council of Social Development said was not enough. What is the minister's recommendation in that regard?

• (1440)

**Mr. Basford:** There are several provisions in the amendment which relate to rural Canada and several policy initiatives. With regard to the other matter the hon. member raised, I accept the suggestion of the development council that \$4 million was inadequate, in the sense they put it forward, but it was solely an estimate of the amount we considered that municipalities and provinces could absorb in a year under the program. If they can absorb more, I can assure the hon. member there will be more money available.

**Mr. Gilbert:** A further question—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order. I am, of course, at the service of the House, but I might point out that the minister has already received an extension of the time allotted to him and that we must be fair to other hon. members who wish to take part in the debate.

**Mr. Gilbert:** It is only a short question. Can I ask the minister why he did not touch on one of the most important factors relating to the cost of housing, that is, high interest rates? Am I to believe he does not intend to do anything about the high interest rates which constitute one of the main factors in the cost of housing?

**Mr. Basford:** I would refer the hon. member to my remarks a few moments ago about the residential mortgage bank in the proposed legislation.

**Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is for me, as for other new members, a great privilege to speak in this House. It is well known, though it bears repeating, that election to the House of Commons is the highest honour our fellow citizens can bestow. Progress within the House is gratifying, I suppose, but it is not bestowed by one's own neighbours.

I take this opportunity to add my felicitations to Mr. Speaker upon his reappointment to the high office he holds, as well as to the Deputy Speaker. I support all that has been said about the eloquence and grace with which the affairs of this House are handled. In this connection, I am rather reminded of the cavalry general who had not participated to any extent in a battle and was asked to describe the role of cavalry in the battle. His answer was that it lent dignity and distinction to what would otherwise be merely a vulgar brawl.

This has been, for me, a surprising week, beginning with the unfortunate speech of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau)—I shall say no more about that—followed by the New Democratic Party voting against consideration of old age pensions at this time, followed by the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey) launching what was, I suggest, the most scathing attack on the government yet heard, particularly as it came from a former member of the cabinet. The hon. member for Verdun said he might leave this House tomorrow, next week, or next month. I would regret to see him go. I believe him to be a man of high principle and one with the courage of his convictions,