

*Oral Questions***HOUSING**

METROPOLITAN TORONTO—USE OF FEDERAL LANDS

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for housing. While the crisis of affordable housing in Metropolitan Toronto is reaching alarming proportions, the federal Government has refused to offer any leadership or action with a view toward easing the housing burden facing average and middle-class Canadians in Metro.

I would therefore like to ask the Minister this question. Given that the federal Government is an extensive owner of real estate property in Metro—some 25,000 acres in all—why does the Government continue to refuse to utilize its surplus federal properties for the construction of affordable housing units on a first priority basis so that we can attempt collectively to put on the brakes to a city that is speeding toward becoming an exclusive backyard for only the well-to-do?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, we know that the McLaughlin report identified certain federal lands that might be made surplus for certain purposes in the Toronto area. We have been examining that report in some detail. I am happy to advise the Hon. Member that I think in the next reasonable period of time we will be able to indicate what position we might take.

I know that there is pressure on housing in Toronto. We are aware of it. Many representations have been made by members of the Conservative caucus to the Government. We are taking them very seriously.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, not only has the federal Government failed to use its real estate arm to try to ease the pressures but, in addition, it has also failed to introduce any new or innovative programs in the housing area that might help Canadians.

Given that the dream of young Canadian couples to own their own home is quickly evaporating and, indeed, becoming a nightmare, why has the Government not re-established a RHOSP-like program, which it cut several years ago, or a mortgage deductibility program or initiative so that first-time home buyers can have an opportunity of making Toronto their home rather than Toronto only becoming their place of work and forcing them to become commuters from longer and longer distances away? Will the Government at least initiate programs, financially speaking, so that young Canadian couples can stay in Toronto to live rather than forcing them to leave the city of their choice?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I am able to advise the Hon. Member that one-fifth of the social housing units in Canada, that is, 100,000, are situated in Toronto. Last year, Toronto received 18 per cent of

the housing portfolio. Pursuant to a very substantial consultative process undertaken by the Government three years ago, the decision, on the advice of all concerned, was to dedicate all our funds to those most in need. That is what is being done in co-operation with the provinces so that more people than ever before are receiving assistance in Canada.

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CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

DEFINITION OF ELECTION EXPENSES

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Earlier in Question Period he said that if the Government tried to move now to provide a definition of election expenses that it cannot do it because it would take three or months before it could come into force. My question is this. Since it was over six months ago that the all-Party Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure, after investigating the affairs of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, said that that loophole with regard to election expenses must be closed, why has the Government not acted?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, we have always been prepared to deal with this particular issue. Just because the NDP does not get its way all the time does not mean to say that there are other people in this Chamber who do not have some ideas that are legitimate and workable. The NDP considers itself to be dead right on every issue.

Mr. Angus: Let's see your ideas.

Mr. Mazankowski: We are prepared to put forward—

Mr. Broadbent: You haven't put forward anything.

Mr. Mazankowski: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have. The legislation has been introduced in the House. I have written about three or four letters to Members opposite indicating the changes that we are prepared to make. We have indicated our willingness to deal with the election expenses issue. I do not know what more we can do.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows full well, and I am asking him to confirm this, that he has not made one proposal, given one definition or one procedure with which to resolve the issue of election expenses. He has not made one proposal. We have. We have asked him any number of times for a definite definition of election expenses. It is not a matter of wanting our way. We want him to make at least one offer.