



INFORMATION DIVISION

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CANADIAN HOUSING AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Canada is involved in the process of bringing the average man's housing into step with the highly industrialized, mechanized economy in which he lives. To realize this goal, homes must be built as speedily and efficiently as cars or radios; towns and cities must be planned so that working space, living space and recreation space are laid out in convenient relation to one another.

In the first concerted drive to improve housing conditions in this country and encourage community planning, Canadian builders and planners, scientists, labour leaders and government departments have linked hands. Canadian builders are involved in the biggest boom in history; in 1945 they built more homes than in any year since 1929; in 1946 they overshot the target of 60,000 - an all-time record for Canadian construction.

THE PROBLEM

Canada's twelve million people occupy some two and three quarter million dwellings - about half a million less than they require. The housing shortage has been accumulating since the early years of the century when immigration added nearly two million persons to the population of Canada and construction of adequate shelter for them did not keep pace. The same period saw Canada become an industrial nation and the consequent shift of the population from the countryside into the urban centres to man the industrial machines. Fifty years ago there were twice as many Canadians living outside the towns as in them; now there are more living in towns than outside. The building industry has never completely coped with this rapid urbanization.

Throughout the depression of the 1930's the marriage and birth rate declined with the decrease in employment; the effective demand for housing fell off; and the building industry operated far below capacity.

Canada entered World War II with a large backlog of necessary housing still unbuilt. The war brought high employment, a mass migration to the cities to take part in war industry and a concomitant demand for housing. Marriage and birth statistics rose; thousands of new families and others who had been previously forced to double up sought new living quarters. At the war's end came the war veterans with gratuities and war credits at their disposal, eager to establish their own households. Because the war effort consumed the lion's share of the country's productive capacity in men and machines and raw materials, the construction of dwellings for civilian use had slowed practically to a standstill. On top of this, add Canada's normal population increase (50 per cent since the last war) and the normal mortality rate of old houses which year by year drop below the level of usefulness.

THE CURTIS REPORT

In March 1944, the Sub-Committee on Housing and Community Planning, with C.A. Curtis as chairman, completed the first comprehensive study of Canada's housing situation. They found that even in normal