

released late last week. Let me go back even further to one which I made available to farmers and to himself in 1977 where we offered 100 per cent income assurance to producers. Farm organizations and provincial governments turned down that program. If they had accepted the program which the Government of Canada offered them at that time, there would be no problem at the present time with the vast majority of producers in Canada.

Mr. La Salle: Yes or no, Gene!

Mr. Whelan: It offered to take care of those things. I suggest he ask his leader right next to him who advocated higher interest rates in the fall of 1979. He advocated higher interest rates. He said that we could look toward them and that he would support the Governor of the Bank of Canada at that time.

Mr. La Salle: You said, "No", Gene; that is all.

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HOUSING

FIRST-TIME PURCHASERS OF HOMES

Mr. Bill Wright (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Public Works. Bill C-89 which was recently passed in the House provided some help for people who are renewing their mortgages, renovating their homes or needing rental accommodations, but no help was provided for first-time purchasers of homes. My question is simply this: why not?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, with respect, the question as posed by the hon. member is inaccurate. Indeed, questions were raised in the House over the last couple of days, for example dealing with new mortgage instruments such as a variable rate mortgage, a shared equity mortgage, or who knows what other new types of instruments might be promoted in the present changing economic climate, and all those instruments heretofore were not possible and could not be insured by the corporation. It was the initiative of the government in Bill C-89 to give the corporation additional flexibility to provide mortgage insurance to encourage additional flexibility for people who are first-time home purchasers.

QUERY RESPECTING NUMBER OF FIRST-TIME HOME PURCHASERS

Mr. Bill Wright (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, the annual report of CMHC on March 12 indicated that first-time home purchasers had a much reduced ability to participate in the current market. Also it indicated that in 1980, 61 per cent of people buying homes were first-time purchasers and that in 1981 the figure was 44 per cent. What is the minister's estimate for this year?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, it is almost a truism to reflect that one leader in

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terms of inflation in the last two years has been the cost of land and of housing. We know that the rapid increase in the price of housing in British Columbia was repeated right across Canada, from west to east. However, in the last six months or so, it appears as if the price is moderating and that that movement as an indicator of inflation is moderating. I dare say that the budget, which introduced the position taken by the government to restrain expenditures, to reduce the deficit, to monitor the economy at the same time and to provide impetus and support to those who need help the most, is responsible for that moderation in inflation.

COST OF LAND

Mr. Bill Wright (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, the minister said that the cost of land rose tremendously last year, but Statistics Canada showed that the cost of land remained stable. Who is correct, the minister or Statistics Canada?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I have not had the opportunity of looking at the statistics to which the hon. member referred. I think I would need to have an opportunity of comparing the two figures to which he referred. It may be, for example, that land and buildings are referred to; sometimes statistics refer to real estate. Without having the particulars of the schedules about which the hon. member is speaking, I do not think I could answer the question.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

FUTURE OF CANADIAN FORCES BASE CHATHAM, N.B.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. The minister will recall that last November he announced in Chatham, New Brunswick, that 416 Fighter Squadron would be withdrawn from the base there. He also made a commitment to the people of the region that the full resources of the Government of Canada would be brought to bear to find solutions to the problem created by that withdrawal. Also the minister knows that a great deal of anxiety and concern was caused by the announcement. Could he give us an update on what has occurred since then to resolve this serious problem?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi knows the problem in this region very well. I understand his concern. I can assure him that our first objective is to try to ensure that equivalent for employment and economic activity is found for the Northumberland-Miramichi region. To that end, we have just established a new committee of very respected, high-ranking officials to look specifically at the current problem in Chatham. I would also like to assure