

More than 90 per cent of houses being built have full basements. Because of the severe winters in most parts of Canada, footings and foundations have to go down four to five feet to be below the depth of earth which is frozen in winter. In such circumstances the addition of a basement does not add considerably to the cost of building and the advantages of building on concrete slabs at ground level are not very great. Moreover the trend towards bungalow-type housing has put a premium on storage space. The basement provides extensive storage space at cheap cost. It also permits home-owners to convert this area to workshops and playrooms at their leisure.

Larger Lots

Increasing floor areas coupled with the tendency to build one-storey houses has brought about an increase in the average size of lots. Serviced lots for houses built under the National Housing Act now average 6,000 to 7,000 square feet. The 60-foot frontage has become common in newer subdivisions. This compares with a 40-foot frontage which was usual before the war even for good quality suburban housing.

The increase in lot sizes, of course, has added to the cost of new houses, since almost all houses in Canada are built on freehold land and the purchaser pays for the lot as well as for the house itself. Wider spacing of houses has also made the provision of services more expensive, since it lengthens sewer and water lines. These costs have been transmitted to the home owner either in the form of higher municipal taxes, or, in those instances where the municipality requires the builder to install services at his own expense, in the form of higher house prices.

Prices of houses, of course, vary greatly, but in 1956 the average cost of houses bought by families borrowing under the National Housing Act was just over \$14,000. This includes the cost of land. The average income of NHA borrowers was \$5,300 and the bulk of NHA borrowers had incomes between \$4,000 and \$6,000 a year.

Heating

Climate plays an important role in house-building, not only because of its impact on employment in the building industry, but because of its effect on the construction of the house itself.

Canada, with the exception of its seaboard provinces, experiences extremes of cold winters and generally warm summers. In many cities below-zero temperatures in winter are not abnormal, while even in comparatively warm centres such as Victoria, B.C., lows of 15 degrees below freezing are recorded. In the summer, on the other hand, temperatures range through the 80's and 90's. Control of heat therefore is an important factor at all times of the year.

Central heating has been widely used for many years, the most common forms involving circulation of warm air from a furnace in the basement. In the older houses the air was usually circulated by gravity with the heat being provided by a coal furnace. Most houses being built today use a forced air system powered by electrically-driven fans. The furnace is normally oil-fueled, although in Western Canada natural gas is being used increasingly for heating purposes.