

The Address—Mr. Cafik

there is so much land available? I will tell you why. Our provinces and municipalities have failed to approve building lots in sufficient quantities to allow all who wish to build a home the opportunity to do so. Land is being held back from the market.

Let me illustrate my point with an analogy. If 100,000 people want building lots and the province and municipality only allow 5,000 to come onto the market—and they control how many lots are put on the market—it is obvious that costs will go sky high. Exactly this has happened. We must bring more land onto the building market more quickly. If you consider the enormous amount of red tape builders face and the enormous amount of bureaucracy which is involved in house building, you will realize the magnitude of the problem. If you want to build a house on a lot, it can take you from six months to six years to get approval. That is ridiculous. That, really, is the primary problem with which we must deal, so that everyone who wants to build a home may have the opportunity of so doing.

● (1240)

We are so caught up in planners, the OMB and all kinds of municipal and provincial boards that it takes years to get through, if you get through it at all. I believe we must have a tri-level conference to work our way through the strangling red tape which saps the life out of the potential home-owners in this country, particularly those who want to buy new homes.

A few months ago I set up a housing committee in my constituency. It included a number of experts and people who are concerned. We looked at this problem. When we started, everyone had the ordinary kinds of solutions. However, when I put it to them that the real question is this excessive delay, the need to open up the land, they unanimously agreed that if we could get a handle on that, solve that question and open up land in sufficient quantity, the price of a house would drop dramatically.

There is another problem in terms of land supply. That is the monopolies. Around our major cities, and Toronto is no exception, the vast majority of available land is held by a small number of speculators or builders. The percentage of land in this area is very high. I have heard that the figures are as high as 70 or 80 per cent. We need some teeth in our laws to allow us to bring that kind of monopolistic situation to an end so that the people are properly served rather than those trying to gouge the public.

There is another question in this regard which is important. Last May the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) introduced a budget. In that budget he proposed doing away with the tax reductions for carrying costs on undeveloped land such as municipal taxes, carrying charges and interest rates. That sounded very good. However, what is the effect of that? Providing that kind of legislation is directed toward the speculator and not the legitimate builder, it is good. However, if it is directed toward the legitimate builder, particularly the small builder, it will drive him out of the building business. We will have less competition in the housing sector a month from today than we have now. I know that is a fact. I strongly urge the Minister of Finance to carefully review that provision before introducing the next budget. What

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we must do is get to the speculator who is driving up the price of land. However, let us not at the same time throw the baby out with the bath water by driving the legitimate small builder out of business.

We must change our attitude toward development. We in this country are inundated with planners. One would think that when driving down our streets, we would see the most beautifully planned and organized municipalities on God's green earth. However, you do not see much evidence of the great planning that is causing so much delay to everything everyone wants to do. Therefore, we must change our attitude to some extent. We must be less concerned with all the bureaucratic red tape. We must look at this situation as it relates to human beings who want to build a few homes at reasonable prices. That should be the paramount consideration. In terms of planning, we are hooked on the idea that everyone wants to live on serviced land. We think everyone needs sewers, piped-in water, streets, curbs and so on. However, all people want is a roof over their heads, a home of their own which they can afford.

We ought to carefully consider the possibility of opening up strip development. There are rural areas where farmers can hardly afford to farm because they do not have enough capital for all the equipment they need. There are parts of their property along ravines and so on that do not lend themselves to agricultural use. I cannot for the life of me understand why we will not allow these people to build on this non-agricultural land if it is on agricultural property. It could have a septic tank and a well. People lived under those conditions for years; I suppose for thousands of years. I do not see any reason why we can not have that kind of development in this country. It will give people a better quality of life. They can have a home at a better price. If you opened up that kind of land for development, it would drive down the price of land dramatically. It would also be of help to the farmer. We should look at this proposal as well as all the expensive services. I agree they are needed in certain areas, but not all. If we opened up this kind of land for strip development, did away with the red tape and so on, the situation would be very much improved.

With regard to rural homes that are not on serviced land, we should take another look at the National Housing Act. Moneys are not available in the same quantities, with the same rules and regulations or as easily for people who want to build with septic tanks and wells. It is easier for those who want to build in a subdivision. The National Housing Act should be adjusted or the regulations changed to allow that kind of development.

To solve these problems in terms of land use and getting through the bureaucracy and because of the urgent nature of this matter, I suggest there should be a tri-level conference. The municipal, provincial and federal governments should get together and establish as a top priority the desire to provide homes at reasonable prices. The \$30,000 to \$40,000 range is high enough. This could be done if we were to cut the bottom out of the price of land and reduce the price of a lot from \$35,000 to \$4,000 or \$5,000. With the right kind of approach by the three levels of government, I believe this could be done overnight.