

● (1720)

The rounding out of that mandate has been well launched in the 24 months the ministry has been operating. The ministry is developing urban policy, it is conducting research into urban problems and it is developing co-operative and productive relationships with the provinces and their municipalities.

The ministry has three main functions. They are: Policy development, to initiate proposals for new policies and to evaluate existing policies; research, to provide substantive data and knowledge for policy development; and coordination, to implement urban policies by coordinating with federal departments, between the federal government and the provinces, and through them with their municipalities and with the private sector.

The establishment of the ministry is a response to a number of hard facts about Canadian life. First, the change and the rate of change from an agrarian to an industrial economy affects every person in Canada. The transformation from a rural to an urban society and the flight to the city affects the country from coast to coast and, explicitly or implicitly, involves all levels of government in urban problems.

Governments have tried to meet this challenge. The federal government has taken many useful initiatives, and has tried a number of imaginative programs. But, programs which are developed unilaterally or in isolation are never as effective as projects undertaken with collaboration and consultation. If we are to take hold of urban growth, consultation and coordination are imperative. The fault lies with our past inability to attack urban problems in concert and to see them as part of a nation-wide phenomenon. Urban affairs initiatives are changing this situation.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that all government programs inter-react. There is no such entity as a policy or program which does not influence or affect in some way other policies and programs. Better housing may or may not provide access to better jobs. Transportation networks affect the form of cities and the pattern of urban development. Housing, sewage disposal, water supply and transportation among other factors are almost completely inter-dependent and inter-related. Although cities and municipal institutions belong in the constitutional framework of the provinces, the federal government has a major impact on urban life through many programs. The federal government is also a major urban landowner and a major national urban employer. It is also a major property manager in our cities. It has obligations and responsibilities to every community in which it has an installation, a building or a facility.

The ministry was created to deal with these facts of life. It was established to bring a coordinated federal perspective to the meeting and guiding of urban change. It was established to seek out information and knowledge on urban issues and to discover how the urban system works and how it can be influenced beneficially. The ministry was established to initiate and to develop mechanisms to enable the three levels of government to work together rather than at odds or in disharmony.

Urban Affairs—Budget Forecast

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the parliamentary secretary, as I realize that perhaps some outline of the responsibilities of the department would be helpful in considering the motion presented by the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Grier). It does seem to me, however, that we are receiving a continuous report on the reasons for which the ministry was set up rather than a specific response to the request in the hon. member's motion. It is difficult motion for the Chair to understand, as I have not the slightest idea what budgets, A, B and X of the program forecast or program review by the minister are all about. Perhaps I could be enlightened on that point by the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Watson: Mr. Speaker, it is precisely in explaining the purposes of the budgets of the ministry that I am, in fact, detailing how the expenditures of moneys in Budgets A, B and X are to be directed. They are to be directed into these areas, and I feel that from the point of view of hon. members on both sides of the House it would be helpful to put on the record some of the precise objectives of the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs. I feel there is a general lack of knowledge among all members of parliament about these objectives and exactly what function is to be carried out.

Mr. McGrath: There is some lack of knowledge among government members as well.

Mr. Peters: If you would table the document, we could all read it and understand the situation.

Mr. Watson: As I indicated earlier, there is a need for the coordination of function in respect of the expenditures covered in these budgets and the details referred to in the request in this motion.

There are some 110 federal programs which have a direct impact on Canadian citizens and on the lives and well being of the people living in them. Federal transportation and communication systems, for example, have a major influence on the pattern of development in urban communities, and because of that as much as for any other reason the federal government must have the capability to understand and control the urban implications of its programs. Because federal policies interact with those of the provinces and local governments, the federal government must be prepared to work with and coordinate its policies and programs with those of the provinces and their municipalities in completely new and innovative ways.

Federal jurisdictional responsibilities are being taken into the cities to share with the provinces the task of devising and reformulating urban policies for Canada's emerging urban society. It is out of this situation that the commitment has emerged to build consultation between the three levels of government in order to face up to the problems of urbanization and urban growth. There are few urban problems that do not affect all three levels of government, and there are even fewer that do not interact with and react to others.

The mandate of the ministry charges it with building the coordinating and consulting mechanisms to deal with these inter-dependent factors of urban change and growth so that the decision-making processes of all three levels of government work in harmony and not at cross purposes.