

*Housing*

● (1412)

—its direct operational role is non-existent. The ministry's role will be co-ordinative as between federal policies and their departments . . . It will be consultative with the provinces and their municipalities in achieving, hopefully, with the co-operation of the provinces and the municipalities an integrated approach to solving urban problems that one of the three areas of jurisdiction can solve on its own.

I urge the government to return to its mandate and renew the co-ordinating and consultative role that was outlined in 1971. This ministry could be so supportive with research and development concepts, working with the trade associations and financial institutions to find answers to these problems.

I want to talk about one specific area, the cost of mortgage funds. In Canada today, a \$40,000 mortgage amortized over 25 years at 12 per cent carries a monthly rate of \$413. In order to repay this mortgage and stay within the guidelines of 25 per cent of a family's income, it is necessary to earn \$19,800 a year. The same mortgage with an interest rate of only 6 per cent will cost \$256 a month on an annual salary of \$12,300. Has the government considered alternative forms of mortgage financing? Has the government explored the possibility of measures to encourage small investors to enter the private mortgage market? Has the government considered measures to reflect the wide variety of needs found in our country and to respond in a flexible way to regional housing problems?

**Mr. Blais:** Yes, we have.

**Mrs. Pigott:** No, Mr. Speaker, they have not. I am being heckled by the other side. The hon. member knows perfectly well that he is not being accurate. May I mention one other area where cost has an effect on housing construction. Has the government investigated abolishing the federal sales tax on building materials? I realize that this is an old one, but it is a very important one. Would the minister also put pressure on the finance department to review the double taxation which has plagued municipalities in regard to sales tax on electrical supplies for subdivisions? Do the priorities include aid to the provinces to deal with the needs of urban transit?

Housing is not merely a matter of shelter, Mr. Speaker. Urban affairs is not just a question of logistics in crowded cities. Part of the current unrest in Canada can be traced to the effects of the urban environment on Canadians. Decent, reasonably priced housing, just like food, clothing and warmth during our long winter, helps raise morale. Good housing raises hopes and aspirations. The children of today's houses will be the adults of Canada's future.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of State for Urban Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to remind the hon. member who just sat down, the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton (Mrs. Pigott), that it is rather surprising that she be the one to introduce such a motion to deplore the Canadian government's achievements in housing, especially since she lives in one of the ridings that has very likely benefitted more than any other in that regard. Of course that riding is home to thousands of Canadians who live in very decent and in many

cases luxury units, or again in accommodations which meet the needs of low income families or, in an infinite number of cases which would be too long to list here, in homes for the aged which have been built in the Ottawa-Carleton riding. I merely want to say, Mr. Speaker, that obviously all these things have not been achieved by the present member of this riding, but rather by her two Liberal predecessors, Messrs. Tardif and Turner, who greatly contributed to the development of this electoral district.

On the other hand, it seems to me that the hon. member has shown good disposition toward the housing and urban affairs problems, and I want to congratulate her for the seriousness of most of her remarks. Furthermore, I do appreciate the number of very appropriate suggestions she has made; I shall be happy to consider them and I hope to follow them up. Nevertheless it remains that her speech was so far removed from the motion introduced today that I am wondering if she really wrote it. I find her much too charitable and too just to draft such a motion. Perhaps her colleague in front of her wrote it, it is more his style than that of the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton.

● (1422)

**Mr. Speaker,** the previous speaker referred to certain problems in the housing field, and, of course, to certain difficulties concerning the role played by the Ministry of Urban Affairs in Canada.

I do not have to remind the House of the basic role that the Ministry of Urban Affairs must play in this country. The ministry was established following requests from all parts of the country and the wishes expressed by members on both sides of the House, and it is quite natural for the Canadian government to be interested in urban affairs, even though this interest is unfortunately often misunderstood and badly misconceived by certain provincial authorities and I was disappointed to see that the hon. member, who is the urban affairs critic for the official opposition, has failed to understand the importance of the Ministry of Urban Affairs to serve the best interests of all Canadian citizens. We must realize that the majority of Canadian citizens now live in urban centres. This situation involves many problems and it is obvious that the Canadian government cannot ignore the welfare of the increasing number of urban residents who need government help.

There is a second reason that justifies the existence of the Ministry of Urban Affairs within the Canadian government: In addition to the natural interest of the Canadian government in the welfare of all Canadians, most federal government projects, policies, programs and activities influence the lives of urban Canadians and the quality of the cities where they live. For instance, our immigration, transportation and economic expansion policies as well as the activities of the Department of Public Works certainly have considerable influence on the urban environment. We must therefore play a coordinating role to ensure that the activities of the Canadian government, through its many departments and agencies, does not hinder