

easy to understand why social housing needs are so huge and why offloading will have enormous long term consequences. Women, who represent an important clientele, or 57 per cent of social housing, will be the hardest hit by these cuts.

The 1995-96 budget also means that the 40,000 people on the co-op housing waiting list of the CMHC—The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation—will have to wait months, even years, before a unit is available. There is no longer any hope of building new ones.

CMHC will close 20 branches across Canada. In Quebec, the Longueuil office will close while in Sept-Îles, Rimouski, Val-d'Or and Trois-Rivières, only one person will remain on duty, working at home. Successive decommitments by Ottawa clearly demonstrate the limitations of administrative agreements between Quebec and Ottawa in cases of unilateral withdrawal.

Today, Quebec is caught off guard by the extent of Ottawa's financial pull out in the social housing sector, because it counted on the federal government as the major source of funds in the agreement. Unable to compensate for this unilateral withdrawal, Quebec must review its plans and cancel the construction of new low rent housing units that had been promised to municipalities.

Because of the community help readily available there and the low cost of housing, the co-op formula was an interesting option for single parent families, which are headed mainly by women.

• (1305)

Community help such as child care is a very influential factor and explains why a much greater number of single parents living in co-operatives are in the workforce. If we do not respond—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Unfortunately, the member's time is up. If there is unanimous consent, the member may continue. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Leroux (Shefford):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be careful in my closing remarks.

Access to affordable, quality housing is recognized as a pre-requisite to the fulfilment of other needs, such as education, health, labour force productivity and social security.

In this period of budgetary restraint, Quebec and Canadian society are giving priority to the housing needs of less fortunate Quebecers and Canadians. These are the people who interest us, the less fortunate. Social housing has a particular role to play in meeting these needs. The federal government must continue to give top priority to funding social housing. By maintaining this program as a priority today, we will avoid higher costs in other areas down the road.

### *Supply*

The government has no right to sacrifice so many families, so many women and so many years of hard work in an attempt to maintain harmony in a society that prides itself on being just and fair.

**Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, how can we ever please our Bloc Québécois colleagues? One day, they want certain federal responsibilities to be delegated to the provinces and, the next thing you know, they say these responsibilities should remain with the federal government.

Housing is obviously an area of provincial responsibility. But if my hon. colleague is suggesting that the federal government should assume more responsibilities than the provinces, I am prepared to join him in making representations because I agree with him that the federal government often does a better job than the provinces in certain areas.

The hon. member mentioned day care. I want to point out to him that, last spring, the federal government announced the establishment of a task force on the tax treatment of child support. As my hon. colleague knows, this task force was presided by the secretary of State responsible for women's issues. The task force held public hearings and travelled across the country to seek the opinion of the provincial and territorial governments.

I am sure that, if my hon. colleague gives this government just a little more time, he will see that we can put in place legislation that will meet this need. Just bear with us.

**Mr. Leroux (Shefford):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I will say to my colleague that our top priority in coming to Ottawa was to defend Quebecers' interests. That is what we are doing. Second, we hope to set up our own country. Unfortunately, the hon. member did not understand this.

In response to his question, I remember last year's debate on child poverty. However, it must be understood that if there are poor children, it is because there are also poor parents. Children are not living in poverty by themselves. The poorest members of our society are women, and that is what I am saying today.

They are often single parents with sole responsibility for raising their children. As you know, poor children cannot do well in school. If they do not have what they need at home, they cannot succeed and hope to find a way out. It is important to keep this in mind.

• (1310)

As you know, Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were on this side of the House, they delivered some great speeches. Now that they have crossed the floor—normally, a party, once elected to govern, has a tendency to sit pat—they have not been sitting pat, they have been lying down on the job. What they should do first