

research, building standards, building methods, urban transportation, the gathering, interpretation and publication of statistics, transport, railways, pipelines, telephone lines, canals, navigable waterways, aerial navigation, radio, television, interprovincial and international trucks and buses, health and welfare, income maintenance programs, health grants and physical fitness grants.

Indeed, one could say that since 80 per cent of the population will be living in major urban centres by 1980, to quote the hon. member opposite when he reminded us of an often-used Economic Council forecast, it can be argued that the whole of government will be largely devoted to the urban environment. Indeed, one might say that since 70 per cent of the population is already living in urban centres the government is even now devoting most of its activities to urban affairs. Certainly, virtually every government program has direct implications for the urban environment, and many international programs carry indirect implications.

● (4:20 p.m.)

It is not very long since I spoke in the house on the amendments recently made to the National Housing Act. I have no intention of repeating what I said in detail at that time but most of it is strictly relevant to the present debate. Because of all the urban problems that beset us today, none is more important than the shortage of housing. We cannot have good cities without adequate housing. I grant you, Mr. Speaker, housing is not the only important urban problem, but it is a vital one, the correction of which has been enormously aided by the federal government over the years.

To come back to the hon. member's point about time frames during the 1960's to date about 1.1 million new dwellings have been started in Canadian cities that have a population of over 5,000 people. I think this is significant because it represents over 20 per cent of the entire occupied stock of dwellings in Canada today. During the same period over half a million new dwellings, the great bulk of them in the same urban areas, were aided in one way or another under the terms of the National Housing Act.

This represents a major indicator of the scale of the federal presence in the growth and development of urban Canada. It is in no small part due to the role of federal housing legislation that Canada has been able to sustain rates of house building over the post-war

Alleged Failure to Cope With Urban Growth period that were well in excess of the demands created by population growth. As a result there has been continued progress in the reduction of housing shortages, and nowhere have these improvements been more dramatic than in our cities.

Despite the rapid growth of urban population the number of doubled-up families in Canada has declined from about 450,000 in 1961 to under 300,000 today. And the number of substandard dwellings in occupation has declined even more rapidly.

Mr. Gilbert: Give us the figures.

Mr. Andras: Nevertheless, while there is some satisfaction in the consideration that things are better than they were, I will be the first to agree that we need still more houses in our cities and elsewhere. We need to replace the obsolete ones and to rehabilitate the substandard ones that are salvageable. As I said in the house during the debate on the housing act amendments, the remaining shortage is still too large. The government is particularly concerned about the special plight of the poor, the old and the dependent who endure the main brunt of the suffering that this kind of burden entails.

On the subject of housing for low income people in this country, it is fair to say that the federal government has represented the principal source of funds for virtually all such housing. While we do not deny to the provinces their prerogative of initiating many of these projects, and while they do not deny to themselves a large share of the kudos for this kind of activity, I would remind hon. members that the lion's share of capital costs and operating subsidies is borne by the federal government.

We hope this year in the field of housing for low income people to undertake a program larger than ever before. The scale of this acceleration will be appreciated better if it is put in an historical perspective. To the end of 1968, under the housing act funds had been committed for the provision of 82,000 housing units specifically intended for low income and elderly people. Of these, 34,000 have been sponsored by limited dividend companies and 6,000 by non-profit companies. Federal-provincial partnerships have been responsible for the initiation of 17,000 units. Federal loans to provincial and local housing authorities account for 25,000 units. It has taken 20 years to achieve this total of 82,000 units in the field of low income housing. This year alone we hope to make commitments for