

*Private Members' Business*

higher cost of health care, social assistance benefits, policing and penitentiary services”.

May I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the Auditor General said yesterday that all these problems are relevant to society. But they are amplified and emphasized in these communities. It is even worse. Solving the housing problems on reserves could reduce the cost of health services and social assistance by improving social and health standards. What the Auditor General said yesterday about society in general is that the problem is worse on reserves and must be solved soon.

I would also like to extract a few facts from the 1993 report of the Department of Indian Affairs. I still remember the first presentation made by officials from the Department of Indian Affairs to the Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. They told us candidly that the native population was growing by nearly 5 per cent a year, double the Canadian growth rate. They also told us that they knew that there were housing shortages, but unfortunately, funds were lacking and, as I just said, people had to live with three or four generations under one roof in some cases.

In their presentation, they told us that the First Nations had nearly 72,000 housing units, of which 42 per cent did not meet Canadian housing standards and 16 per cent lacked plumbing and sewage facilities. In our society today, not having a sewage system is almost unacceptable. Twenty-nine per cent do not have running water. Who here in this august chamber would imagine that such things could happen? Certainly not in our homes, where we have running water. But 29 per cent of homes on reserves lack running water and 26 per cent have no sewer service. I even meet band councils who tell me: “Mr. Bachand, can you intervene with the minister and try to make him aware of our cause? We have no sewers on our reserve and no running water.” I have to do that quite regularly.

Subsidies have not increased since 1984, while the native population has increased 5 per cent a year, creating a big need for housing. So you understand that we now have to tell native people to continue to live with 10, 15 or 20 people under one roof, because the funding is not there and unfortunately their population is growing. So conditions continue to deteriorate and we can come right out and say that living conditions on the reserves are the worst in Canada; as I just said, it is Canada's Third World.

There are solutions. Native lending institutions can be set up, for example; things like that would help. But before that is done, of course, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation would finally have to decide with the Department of Indian Affairs who has jurisdiction, because CMHC comes under Public Works.

• (1805)

As I was saying earlier, this was a mess. There should be tighter management control and a single body or department should be in charge.

Mr. Speaker, I will hurry because I realize that I only have one minute left. I would have liked to say more, because these people do not often have the opportunity to make themselves heard through us and they are showing signs of distress.

We mentioned earlier, as did the leader of the First Nations, that the red book has a lot of implications and that it includes a number of commitments. However, no progress was made regarding the housing issue. In fact, the housing policy is still at the conceptual stage. There is not enough discussion with native people.

I simply ask the government to implement as quickly as possible the promises made in the red book. The time has come to take action.

[English]

**Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the House on the motion introduced by the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake.

The hon. member has expressed some genuine concern about housing conditions in many First Nations communities. I know my hon. colleague's views are heartfelt and sincere. I commend him for bringing them to the attention of the House. I believe all Canadians share his concern that no group of people in our society should live in substandard housing.

I can assure the hon. member the government is fully aware that there is a serious lack of homes designed especially for seniors on reserve; as well there is a lack of nursing homes for those requiring special care. It is our belief that elders need an integrated housing program that encourages and enables them to stay in their own homes longer.

Health Canada's building healthy communities strategy which was mentioned by the hon. member for Peterborough a few minutes ago will support such a program. By supporting on reserve home nursing care for persons discharged from hospital and those with acute illnesses the strategy will help more First Nations people to continue to live in their reserve homes. The challenge now lies in ensuring that appropriate housing is available.

While I appreciate this special concern for the elderly I think the hon. member would agree that improvements must be made in aboriginal housing for the benefit of all age groups from newborn to seniors. We must keep in mind that the aboriginal population is an overwhelmingly young population. If we do not