

Request for Housing Statement

way compelled him to resign, to side with the Cr ditistes to settle first the financial problem and then the problem of housing.

Mr. Speaker, our families are lacking accommodation. Our young people who want to marry have to crowd in unhealthy dwellings—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. B chard): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Does the House agree to allow the hon. member to carry on?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. B chard): The hon. member for Shefford.

Mr. Rondeau: I shall try to be brief, Mr. Speaker.

Our young people need homes. Hon. members have similar problems. People need homes while lumber piles up, rotting. The unemployed are living on unemployment insurance benefits instead of being put to work building homes. The people are tired of all the wishful thinking in which this House has been indulging for the past ten years.

[English]

Mr. Tom H. Goode (Burnaby-Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I should like to begin my remarks by saying I appreciate the job which the Minister without Portfolio responsible for housing (Mr. Andras) has done. His approach has been one of genuine concern for the people who make up urban Canada.

All too often we forget that our cities are made up of people, the people who work in them and the people who live in them. There is a tendency to think of our urban areas as consisting of so many houses, apartment buildings, offices, industries and freeways. The minister has avoided this pitfall and has attended admirably to the needs of those who, because their incomes are low, have despaired in the past of ever getting suitable accommodation at reasonable cost. Under the minister's guidance, the housing stock available to low-income families and to our senior citizens has grown significantly and will continue to grow.

However, the fact remains that overall the number of housing starts is down to an unfor-givable amount. This should really come as no surprise to some of us. It was painfully obvious months ago that this would be a bad year in terms of the number of housing units

[Mr. Rondeau.]

begun. The reasons for this are simple, even if the solutions are not: inflation, the tight financial situation and labour disputes. Yet even when it was clear that massive assistance would be required if we were to do our part this year to arrive at the goal of 1.1 million units which the Economic Council has set for the period 1970-1975, the government did not respond. I could understand this if money were not available. But when I see millions of dollars going into the Lift program, when I see the government making available to the provincial governments \$300 million more than originally provided for in the current fiscal year, when I see vast amounts being spent on regional development projects, I know that money can be made available if the government deems it desirable.

We have here a question of priorities. The government must surely count housing and urban affairs as being deserving of very high priority. Yet it has not given this impression. Why? I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the finger of blame points in a number of directions. First, I have to admit that part of the blame must rest with those, such as myself, in the backbenches of this party who have not spoken out often enough or loudly enough on urban affairs and who have stood idly by while the frontbench has made housing the whipping-boy for inflation. There have been exceptions among the backbenchers, such as the hon. member for York West (Mr. Givens) and the hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Mahoney), but by and large the backbenchers of this party have not put the case for the cities strongly enough.

● (3:30 p.m.)

Secondly, I blame the opposition parties. Every government needs to be prodded, and this government is no exception. But it seems the opposition contains more plodders than prodders. Certainly some members, such as the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) and the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave), have presented constructive suggestions to the government and tried to alert their colleagues to the importance of the housing crisis. But clearly these members have not been successful in converting their colleagues, because every day this chamber echoes to the cries of rape-seed and the ghost of the Newfie Bullet.

If the government is to be convinced of the importance of the housing problem, all interested parties must maximize their input