

## EXTENSIVE PROGRAMME OF DEVELOPMENT FOR INDIAN COMMUNITIES

The following statement was made recently in the House of Commons by Mr. Arthur Laing, Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources:

I should like to inform the House of some recent developments in Indian affairs. It is recognized that many Indian communities do not have adequate homes, either in quality or in number, and that also many reserves lack facilities and services such as electricity, running water, bathrooms, sewage-disposal systems or good roads.

I am pleased to inform the House that an extensive Indian reserve improvement programme, to cost about \$112 million in the next five years, will be undertaken. Under the programme, Indians will receive assistance to provide better housing, safe water supply, sanitation facilities, electrification of homes and improved roads in their communities.

A comprehensive study of housing conditions on reserves was completed in February 1965, indicating a need for 12,000 new homes over the next five years to meet the backlog of approximately 6,000 homes required now, and also new family formations of about 1,250 a year. In addition, community services are required on many reserves.

Many of the Indian leaders, as well as others, have been suggesting what would amount to a "crash programme" to raise living conditions in Indian communities, particularly housing.

The situation was discussed with the National Indian Advisory Board which met in Ottawa, January 10 to 12 this year. The Board called for an accelerated programme to eliminate the problem in the shortest time.

### AREAS OF NEED

Under the accelerated programme, the objective is to build 12,000 homes in five years. Apart from what may be met from band funds and personal contributions, about \$75 million in public funds will be required. The programme will be flexible to meet the wide variety of reserve conditions across Canada, but will recognize four general areas of need:

First, there are those who are widowed, aged, indigent, disabled, or otherwise unable to make more than a token contribution towards their homes. Suitable housing will be provided for them largely at public expense.

Secondly, there are those Indian families living in marginal economic areas who must be helped in some way to provide homes for their families, which are of minimum standards for decent living.

Thirdly, there are those Indian families who live on reserves where economic conditions and prospects are favourable, where through wages or self-employment, they earn sufficient income to contribute to the cost of their homes. Some assistance will be provided to enable them to acquire a higher standard of home.

Fourthly, there are Indian families who wish to take advantage of employment opportunities off the reserve and may even wish to live permanently off the reserve. In order to help these families to obtain

and hold jobs away from the reserve, financial assistance will be provided so that they will be able to take advantage of normal lending facilities available to Canadians generally for the purchase of homes.

### UTILITIES TO BE IMPROVED

The expanded housing programme, therefore, is intended to provide support to Indian families to not only obtain a reasonably satisfactory house but also to upgrade the level of Indian housing across Canada. Of great importance is the supply of safe drinking water and proper sewage disposal. Vast improvements in this field are needed if Indian people are to have the advantages enjoyed by most Canadians. Some \$10 million will be spent for this purpose.

It is quite evident that progress on many reserves has been seriously hampered by lack of power. It is necessary to bring electricity to reserves if Indian children are to obtain full advantages from the school programme and if the amenities of life are to be made available and economic opportunities are to be furthered. Power is essential to so many of the facilities we use daily and take for granted.

Therefore, a rural electrification programme will be undertaken using existing public utilities wherever possible. The cost of this programme, over the next five years, is expected to be \$7 million, and will be directed mainly to communities where Indians lack band funds necessary to extend facilities.

Transportation is of vital importance to provide access to and from reserves, for school children, employment opportunities and economic development. Improved roads on many reserves is a necessity. To this end some \$17 million will be spent in co-operation with Indian band councils and other levels of government.

In order to achieve the best results from the expenditure of public funds it is necessary to co-ordinate all aspects of the reserve-improvement programme. Community planning is essential. This has been undertaken on a number of reserves and scores of other communities will be examined as the needs and priorities are considered and established by the Indian communities.

Of particular importance — and on which, in large measure, the success of the programme will depend — is the total involvement and participation of Indian band councils and the Indian people.

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### IMMIGRATION EXPANSION ABROAD

Immigration Minister Jean Marchand recently announced that Canada would establish, for the first time, full immigration facilities in Japan, and was proceeding with plans to open an additional office in Birmingham, England; in the near future, Canada's newest immigration office in the Far East will be located in Tokyo.

Mr. Marchand also said that, following discussions with the Government of Switzerland, Geneva had been