

Oral Questions

HOUSING

COMMENT OF PRESIDENT OF CMHC ON DECLINE IN HOUSING STARTS—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. In view of the comment by the president of CMHC that even though housing starts should decline to 170,000 there would still be no one sleeping in the streets, is it now the goal of the minister, in housing policy, to see that there will be no one sleeping in the streets in this country, particularly since the president of CMHC went on to say that in these circumstances we are still the best housed nation in the world?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the president of CMHC was not suggesting that it is government policy or his own wish that our housing policy reflect only that people do not live in the streets. I think he was reflecting the reality that we are a well housed nation. We have problems which we consider serious, to which we give high priority and to which we are responding.

Miss MacDonald: Economists at CMHC estimate that 230,000 housing starts in the third quarter, and 260,000 in the fourth quarter are necessary if the minister's previous commitment of 210,000 starts is to be met. Does the minister believe that the 260,000 figure is realistic for the last quarter of 1975, considering the seasonality of that particular time and that such a goal has never been achieved in any previous fourth quarter?

Mr. Danson: I think the figures speak for themselves. The difficulty in reaching the target of 210,000 remains a very serious problem in view of current economic conditions and the shortage of mortgage money in private lending markets. I still do not want to lose that figure as a target, but achieving that goal will be difficult this year.

Miss MacDonald: The briefing paper prepared by CMHC for the meeting of housing ministers states that private lending under AHOP is not expected to result in a significant net addition as it will be largely funded from money already earmarked for housing, which is a flat contradiction of the minister's previous statements that the indirect AHOP program will attract \$1 billion additional funds from private lending institutions. Would the minister indicate to the House how many mortgages have been approved to date under this particular program, to show that it has indeed been a failure to date?

Mr. Danson: With regard to the first point raised by the hon. member, that this would replace other housing in the housing market, certainly that is a factor, but it is directed to low-income Canadians for low-cost housing, about which this government is especially concerned. With regard to the relationship to the other figure, I do not have the precise figures. It has not been encouraging because of the shortage in the mortgage markets generally and the high interest rates today.

[Mr. Basford.]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

SLAVE LAKE, ALBERTA—DIFFICULTIES OF INDUSTRIES RECEIVING DREE ASSISTANCE

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. Is he aware of particular problems regarding industries assisted by funds offered by his department in the Slave Lake area of Alberta? These problems have apparently resulted in the closure of these companies, temporarily at least, with the resulting loss of many jobs as well as financial difficulties for the town and surrounding businesses at Slave Lake.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I would need to have more specific information as to the companies concerned. I am, in a general way, aware that there have been some problems, as there frequently are in special areas particularly those where we are seeking to bring up the standards of the local residents and native people, but I am not specifically aware of any one instance which might have prompted the hon. member's question. Perhaps he could be more specific.

Mr. MacKay: These circumstances involve several companies in the Slave Lake area and several hundred jobs. I would ask the minister to give an undertaking that he will investigate the matter and in due course table in the House all relevant information secured by his officials with regard to these companies and their operations. I ask him particularly to reassure us that proper supervision and monitoring took place.

Mr. Jamieson: I will be glad to consult with the hon. member and, to the extent possible, do as he asks. I will certainly be glad to look into all these cases. But as I said, perhaps he would be good enough, either privately or otherwise, to indicate which specific industries he is concerned about. As to the monitoring used, I shall certainly look into that. I am aware that within the last six months or so we have taken a couple of initiatives there in consultation and with the support of the provincial government.

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HEALTH SERVICES

EMERGENCY AND AMBULANCE SERVICES—GOVERNMENT POLICY RESPECTING PROVISION UNDER MEDICARE

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Is it now official government policy to work with the provinces as quickly as possible to bring emergency and ambulance services under the jurisdiction of medicare; and when can we expect action in this regard?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, discussions with the provinces have been under way for several weeks already, in fact for months, to see whether it would be possible under the Hospital Insurance and the Medical Care Acts to provide