

*Supply*

other needs identified by their constituents. Such needs are identified and requests are made by Canadians facing other difficulties in these difficult times. In difficult times and when resources are scarce, the government has been pressed for a plan and a way by which to respond which will provide some practical relief and some sensitivity to the needs of Canadians. However, at the same time the government must take into account that the funds allocated come from only one place, and that is the taxpayer. We all know that. We have indeed picked our priorities. We have set funds aside and attempted to publicize as best we can, within limits, the allocation of those funds and how they will be used. To those Canadians who do not benefit from specific plans I say I sincerely hope there is an understanding that Canadians who have sacrificed and worked to pay off their mortgages will support the government by being willing to support those in need. The government responds first to those who need help most. Roughly half the Canadian population rents and is not building up equity in shelter needs. We hope that those people will also find comfort in the fact that they are supporting Canadians who otherwise would face the prospect not only of losing their homes, but also of being in the position of looking for rental accommodation, which is difficult to find.

Finally, for those Canadians who are not paying up to 30 per cent of their income for accommodation, we hope that support under the Canada mortgage renewal plan will assist the people who would otherwise face losing their homes. This involves the government putting its priorities on the line, and stating what it feels is important in response to difficult times.

• (2050)

My critic in the Conservative Party said that the Minister of Finance should reintroduce the MURB program. As minister reporting to Parliament for Canada Mortgage and Housing, I do not promote that proposal. I do not think that it addresses those Canadians who are facing the most critical need. Amongst those, of course, are renters who are having difficulty finding accommodation. Is any Member of Parliament unaware of the publicity about people trying to find affordable accommodation? Rather than support the MURB program, which was primarily a tax incentive program for Canadians looking for means to shelter income, we chose to allocate the \$350 million to people seeking rental accommodation.

The Canada rental supply plan was designed to produce 30,000 moderate rental units in Canada, one third of which would be designated to serve Canadians whose means are very limited and who are therefore supported by this government and many provincial governments, on a rent geared to income basis. We feel that this plan responds to those people who would have to rent, to people who need support to meet their rental payments and to the handicapped. Five per cent of all those units are designed for handicapped persons. We believe that program is a much more effective way of serving people who have actual and pressing needs.

I cannot support the motion of the housing critic of the Conservative Party that we return to the MURB program. We do not see that as a good course of action at this time when resources are scarce. By definition it means that we would

have to decide where the assistance should go first. We believe that the government's initiatives through the Canada renewal plan and the Canada rental supply plan serves another objective which is to provide jobs quickly—although not as quickly as we would wish—in the construction industry. I wish the House had responded to my request last December that the legislation be passed right away. In that case, the plans could have been in place sooner. The rental supply plan will generate 30,000 units of housing accommodation. In turn, that will generate at least 60,000 person years, directly and indirectly, in construction.

In this way the government is addressing priority social needs as well as addressing the problem of employment in the trades. Employment has been severely undermined by the fact that the public is not buying property at current interest rates and by the fact that in the United States, which is our biggest market for lumber products, housing is perking along at about 50 per cent of the rate in Canada.

These plans not only serve the needy, they serve to stimulate the economy, and they serve to provide jobs in an area which all of us know requires attention.

The government has taken other initiatives in the housing field since the budget. I can argue, and I will demonstrate, that our concern is for people in need. In our response to people in need, we have supported employment. As a matter of fact, the thrust of the opposition's motion is that we should be addressing that very problem. And we are, Mr. Speaker. The Canada home renovation plan is an example. It is designed to provide up to a \$3,000 grant for home improvements to households who earn less than \$30,000 per year. There is a graduated reduction from the amount of grant available as the income goes up to \$48,000.

The effect of this plan is to help home owners who had difficulty financing renovations at current interest rates. It will accomplish two other things as well. First of all, it will create an additional 10,000 person years in the construction industry, which is so hard pressed. As well, the \$3,000 grant is conditional upon individuals spending at least \$6,000. That has the benefit of leveraging funds from the private sector to support the trades that need employment at this time. That is an effective program and it has been well received. Many communities across the country have responded, and at this point the plan is almost totally subscribed.

The improvement in the Canada home insulation plan was designed with the same thoughts in mind, to support people in need of assistance, with a \$500 grant. The plan is now available to people whose homes were constructed up to 1971, which is a move from the 1961 deadline. In addition to serving the conservation of energy, that plan will employ 20,000 people across the country.

I began my comments with reference to the criticism which appeared today in *The Toronto Sun* that reminds us that it pays to advertise. I am taking this opportunity to respond to the criticism and comments made by hon. members opposite