

present proposals for a renewed Canada, one that is proud of its diversity and stronger in its unity.

No idea or suggestion will be dismissed out of hand if it serves the public interest and improves our political system, but we will reject any formula that aims to dismantle Canada.”

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HOUSING

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, once upon a time, as a backbencher, the now Minister of State for Housing was a great advocate for the homeless and those seeking affordable housing, but he has become nothing more than an apologist for this government. Budget after budget, year after year, program after program he has delivered less and less for people who need housing more and more.

I want to ask the minister, where has he left his housing conscience, at the cabinet table or in the trunk of his limousine?

Hon. Alan Redway (Minister of State (Housing)): Mr. Speaker, last week in the House I outlined the government's housing program for the coming year. At that time I indicated that, notwithstanding the fact that budgets were tight and money had been restrained, the housing department federally had been able to accommodate and, through efficiencies and cost-effective measures, would be able to produce at least as much assistance this year and help as many households this year as we were last year.

So this year, once again, we will be able to assist some 40,000 more households in Canada, which is over and above the 640,000 we already assist.

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, cutting the housing budget by \$411 million in five years will hurt not help people waiting for affordable housing in every province and territory in this country. Provinces must now fight each other year after year for the meagre morsels that this minister wants to give them.

I want to ask the Minister of State for Housing why he will not bring this country together, build this country by building good housing policy, by affording Canadians decent and affordable housing today and tomorrow.

Oral Questions

Hon. Alan Redway (Minister of State (Housing)): In fact, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this government is doing. We are not only spending and will be spending this year close to \$2 billion with respect to assisted housing in this country, but in addition to that, we have initiatives under way for dealing with surplus federal lands in order to increase the amount of housing that is available to Canadians.

Shortly, I am going to be announcing the creation of a centre for public-private housing partnerships which will also be of great assistance to Canadians in their housing needs.

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CANADA POST

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for Canada Post.

The people of Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia, are the latest to bear the brunt of Canada Post's rural policy. They join the customers of over 700 post offices across Canada whose post offices have closed since the 1986 policy was first announced.

Lawrencetown is a crossroads in Annapolis County. It is the hub for farmers, students, and government offices. With that level of service demand, I wonder if the minister can say whether there are any circumstances in which a rural post office will now be allowed to remain open.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, without having prior notice from the hon. member, I cannot comment on the specific example she raised, but the question of the policy of modernizing, bringing up to date with today's living styles and so on the postal delivery systems has occurred across the country in many, many locations.

The post office has gone back with post-change surveys to find out how the people affected reacted to it. Over 85 per cent found the changes favourable, an improvement. When 85 per cent approve of a policy, we do not change it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the same minister. In