

Request for Housing Statement

more public housing projects. My city is the creature of that government. The housing crisis in my city is grave. People are being forced to live in temporary shelters that were put up over 70 years ago as a consequence of the fire that destroyed a great part of the city. They still live in those shelters and often do not enjoy adequate facilities. I therefore plead with the government and the minister, Mr. Speaker, to come up with some sort of special arrangement in order to cope with the special areas of the country where the need is greatest. There is ample precedent for the government to take such initiatives in areas where the need is greatest.

In conclusion, I wish to say that I support the recommendations of those who preceded me and who urged the government to act on this problem. It could begin by eliminating the 11 per cent sales tax on building materials and by lifting the freeze on urban renewal, so that certain areas could receive attention. It could also announce a policy whereby it would be prepared to enter into special agreements with those provinces where the need is greatest. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has more success with his cabinet colleagues than he has had to date in bringing this problem to the successful conclusion that is necessary if this serious crisis in Canada is to be dealt with expeditiously.

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the motion that has been moved by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander). I am happy to support this motion because, as my colleague for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) said a moment ago, the city we have the honour to represent faces many problems in housing and urban renewal. Certainly, neither the agencies coming under the minister responsible for housing nor the government are paying to this problem the necessary attention. Little hope is therefore held out to those people who are suffering as a result of inadequate housing conditions that their problems will be solved in the foreseeable future.

As my colleague said a few moments ago, we sympathize with the minister responsible for housing. He realizes that he is filling the office once occupied by the man who had to resign because the government was unwilling to go along with his recommendations based on the report of the task force on housing. One of the recommendations of the former minister, now the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer), was that the government

should remove the 11 per cent sales tax on building materials, a worth-while recommendation which would have brought tremendous benefits to people in the middle and low income groups who might wish to buy or build a home. That 11 per cent sales tax probably represents \$600 or \$700 in the price of a house, an amount which often makes the difference in a person's ability to buy or build a home.

The minister is in an awkward position, because he must try to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds. On the one hand, he must support the anti-inflation policies of the government which are having a ruinous affect on housing and urban renewal in Canada as well as on the economy generally; on the other hand, he must put on a brave front of showing concern for the many thousands of Canadians who are forced to live in substandard conditions and for those with families who are on the waiting lists for public housing. In one breath the minister supports the government's anti-inflation policies, which are probably the greatest enemy of housing and urban renewal in this country, and in the next breath he must address various associations interested in housing, associations such as the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities and the Canadian Homeowners Association, and go through the motions of showing he is interested in the affairs of the average Canadian who is trying to acquire a decent home.

Before my time expires, may I refer to something that is very, very serious in my riding of St. John's West. I am referring to the Mundy Pond urban renewal scheme. The present scheme was probably presented to the people in the early 1960's and a grandiose plan was prepared by the planners on instructions from the federal government, the province and the municipality of St. John's. A great deal of fuss was made. The people of Mundy Pond were to be given a new lease on life; their neighbourhood was to look like the Eutopia of St. John's, and their hopes were built up to the skies. Unfortunately, they have been kept dangling for at least ten years. At least three municipal elections have been fought on the issue and several federal elections, not to mention a number of provincial elections. But the people of Mundy Pond are still suffering. No more has been done up to now than was done ten years ago. The plan to redevelop that area is still on the drawing board. From what I understand there is very little likelihood of any start being