

Oral Questions

government is impacted by policies of the provincial housing ministries in the area of rental control, but it remains a matter under provincial jurisdiction.

Notwithstanding the fact that when the Constitution is returned to Canada and we proceed with review of jurisdictions and the appropriateness of same, as well as the role of the various governments, I think that a strong case will be for provinces to continue to exercise jurisdiction in this matter.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Prime Minister, are you sure he is sure?

CUT IN BUDGET OF HOUSING MINISTRY

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister. Over 40 per cent of the total expenditures for 1981-1982 are spent in the social affairs envelope. This is said to reflect the high priority which the government addresses to social affairs. I am sure the minister is aware of the concerns of Canadians these days over housing.

Therefore, why is it that out of 11 ministers who have budgets in the social affairs envelope, the housing ministry is the only one which has had its budget cut?

Mr. Paproski: It was because of the minister.

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I have indicated, for example, that the government's responsibility to this tight market is to attempt to work within available resources. The community services project, which was a program designed to assist municipalities with recreation facilities, was probably not the best way of spending existing moneys and funds that we direct toward housing. For that reason the government did not renew the program.

We are hopeful that with the assistance and the advice of hon. members opposite, together with the provinces, municipalities, and the public generally, those moneys which are freed will be better directed toward addressing the very difficult problems we have with housing today.

● (1420)

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL MINISTERIAL MEETING

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, I believe the minister said his budget was cut. On March 14 the minister of housing was quoted in *The Financial Post* as saying that policy decisions had been delayed until the National Housing Conference had been held, and that he planned a meeting with the provincial housing ministers within two months. Yesterday in this House the minister indicated that meeting would take place some time later this year. Does the minister not feel that the situation in housing is important enough to have a meeting right away?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Yes, Madam Speaker. The question of a meeting with the provincial ministers is a top priority with me as minister responsible

for the corporation. To that end we have today invited the provincial ministers responsible for housing to meet with me and the officials of the ministry in Ottawa on June 1. It is my hope that the work we have done in terms of preparation for the National Housing Conference, the all-sector conference, together with our exchange of correspondence since that time as to what we will have on that agenda, will enable the other ministers and myself to have a fruitful meeting on this subject in the first week of June.

CONSIDERATION OF ACTION TO ALLEVIATE SITUATION IN METROPOLITAN TORONTO

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, my question is also to the minister responsible for housing. The minister will know that in the metropolitan Toronto area there are over a million people who live in rental housing accommodation. Yesterday the minister indicated in an interview that, in his view, only a small minority of Torontonians can look forward to buying their own homes. He will also know that in the *Toronto Star* of last week, in a series of articles the *Star* pinpointed panic buying in the city and metropolitan area. What consideration has the minister given, if any, to a proposal to alleviate the situation with respect to housing in metropolitan Toronto?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, in my responsibility as Minister of Public Works I have had an opportunity of discussing this problem with the mayor of the city of Toronto. I have addressed the potential of the Harbourfront lands which are owned and administered by the federal government through Public Works as one of the areas where, for example, social housing could be started. It would be of assistance to those people at the lower income levels. With regard to social programs, section 56(1) of the act could be used to augment the present allocation of social units in metropolitan Toronto.

Mr. Crombie: Madam Speaker, the minister surely knows by now that housing in this country has become a national disaster. At the housing conference, he indicated that in his view it is reaching such a crisis in the city of Vancouver that he has proposed a tri-level program to see if he can deal with the matter. Is it not time the minister broadened that concept so that Canadians can again look to the opportunity of being able to own their own homes?

Mr. Cosgrove: Madam Speaker, implicit in the hon. member's question is the principle that all Canadians should own homes, that that should be the style of life of all Canadians. Of course that does not fit with the facts. We know that a large percentage of Canadians do not prefer home ownership as a style of living.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McGrath: What a statement for a housing minister.