



Bulletin

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BETTER AND CHEAPER PUBLIC HOUSING

In a statement to the House of Commons on April 21 Mr. Robert Andras, the Minister responsible for housing, announced plans to improve the quality and increase the quantity of public housing, and a new rent scale tied to income that will reduce rents for most public housing residents, while guaranteeing no increase for two-year periods.

The revised rent-to-income scale, which the Government had proposed to the provinces, reflected, he said, "more closely the realities of the cost of living and the housing market".

Part of the Minister's statement follows:

- Family size should be taken into account in arriving at rents. Taking a family with two children as the base, we are proposing to make a reduction in the rent for each child over that number – for instance, a reduction of \$2 a month for each child after the second.
- Working wives should be allowed to make substantially more than \$250 a year before it is considered as income for the purpose of calculating rent.

We are proposing a level of \$900 a year.

- Similarly, incomes of one-parent families, for the purpose of calculating rents, would be reduced by up to \$900.
- The portion of income required as rents from families in the higher income ranges would be reduced from 30 per cent to 25 per cent, to avoid imposing undue hardships on tenants, particularly large families, who cannot find alternative accommodation in the present market.

The final revision which we are proposing in the matter of rents is the method of adjusting rents as income changes. At the present time, public housing tenants must notify the housing authority as soon as their income increases and the rent is then raised. We feel all tenants should be entitled to enjoy the security of a fixed rent over a reasonable period of time. For this reason we are prepared to have tenants report their incomes at intervals of two years, at which time any increase in rent would be put into effect as a result of any increase in income. On the other hand, a reduction from the income at which the two-year lease rent was negotiated can be reported at any time and the rent reduced an appropriate amount.

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CONSULTATION WITH PROVINCES

Before I leave the subject of rents, Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize that any revisions will be undertaken after consultation with the provincial governments and with their co-operation. We recognize the need to build the widest possible latitude into these arrangements so that they will be flexible enough to meet particular local conditions. Some provinces may, for various reasons, wish to charge rents that are not precisely in accord with the federal scale. In this event it is proposed that the federal subsidy would be either half of the project losses, or half what the losses would have been if the federal scale had been adopted, whichever is less.