

urbanization. In addition, as Canada grows and matures, the national role of our cities, as carriers of cultural and social progress as well as centres of economic and political strength, ought to be reflected in appropriate institutional structures.

● (8:20 p.m.)

Historically, the city has been mankind's focus of lasting accomplishments. It was in cities that man had sufficient leisure and incentive to devise democratic institutions. The very word "democracy" recalls its Greek origin and Athens as the place where Plato, Aristotle and Socrates invented the concepts of personal freedom and social public responsibility. In recent years, perhaps, we have equated cities too much with problems and human conflict and we have not spoken positively enough about their opportunities and potential. Over the centuries, people of every nation and of every origin have congregated in communities. This has been their choice and it is the choice being exercised today by increasing numbers of Canadians.

The conclusion must be that it is in an urban environment and in urban centres that most Canadians find or expect to find greater opportunity across their wide spectrum of desires and ambitions. Perhaps the ground rules that influenced that choice are wrong, distorted or should be changed. As we examine this whole process of urbanization this kind of question must be looked at as well.

The fact is that cities are excellent social systems with still more benefits than costs, at least in Canada. We know that costs are rising rapidly—and I am not talking about straight economic costs but, even more important, social costs. We think there is still time in this country to maintain the opportunity gain over those costs provided we join with other levels of government and the Canadian people in a concentrated effort to do so.

The draft Order in Council before members of the House this evening is a charter for a new kind of institution, hopefully for exactly that purpose. It defines the authority of the new ministry in the broadest possible terms. But I think, as most experts of constitutions, or charters, would agree, it is less the language of the basic or founding document but, rather, the commitment of those who lead this which will determine the effectiveness of an organization.

In that light, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and this government are committed to seek that the language of this draft Order in Council is translated into the development of new directions toward a rational policy framework for examining and acting upon urban problems so that the many things that we as a federal government do which affect the lives of Canada's urban residents will be more meaningful and will reflect their wishes.

I close simply by asking for the support of the House to the terms of reference before us in order that we can get on with the task.

Mr. S. Perry Ryan (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to welcome, in the name of the official opposition, the establishment of the long-awaited department of urban affairs. Along with the creation a few days ago of the

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department of science and technology, the new department of urban affairs marks for the Canadian urban society a new phase in its pattern of development. We sincerely hope this department will show the determination of the government to put an end to its irresponsible attitude toward urban problems and that we will see the beginning of a new, innovative era toward the building of a livable and better urban society.

The problems to be tackled are numerous and large. The urgency of the situation requires that all the scientific and technological expertise of this country be put to work in order to hasten the solution of the new and complex problems which are facing all our metropolitan centres. Great are the social and political implications of our urban growth. The source of our problems is the rapid and uncontrolled rate of urbanization which our country has known since after the Second World War.

The excessive concentration of populations in the cities has had serious social and political repercussions on the structure of our society. The demands for living space to accommodate the ever-increasing number of families has led to the hyperinflation of land and shelter costs. Very few citizens can now really afford a single family home. The majority of the people who choose to live in cities have to resign themselves to living in huge apartment complexes where too often little or no space has been spared for recreational facilities or for the freedom of movement we all need and love. The poor, isolated and alienated, have no other choice than to live in the grey areas of the city and in the sad, poor homes their limited means can afford.

In order to alleviate the scarcity of land and homes in the downtown areas, cities have had to extend their boundaries. As a result, municipalities, singly or together, have had to provide for more efficient transportation facilities. For the thousands of commuters who wish to drive to work every day, the city has to build new access roads and bigger expressways. For the rest, who choose to use public transit, the city has to develop an extensive network of commuter rail services, extended subway lines and multiply its bus services. Linked with the problem of transportation are the problems of pollution of our air, our water and our tranquility. Sophisticated and expensive equipment and technology are required by municipalities and private industries to deal with pollution.

There is a definite need for this department of urban affairs to co-ordinate the use of all the resources of the nation, especially at times like these when it is increasingly difficult for the cities to manage their own affairs. To better serve the needs of the city and the country as a whole, we believe there is an urgent necessity to readjust some of the responsibilities and financial arrangements of our local administrations.

Representatives of the three levels of government should meet as soon as possible to decide on the specific terms of reference of this new department so they will not overlap and be working at cross-purposes. The year 2,000 is only 30 years away. Experts have forecast a total Canadian population of 34 million in that year. Out of this total it is also estimated that about 44 per cent of all