

National Housing Act

Rapid urban growth, converting natural landscapes into cityscapes, has led to a diminishing of the easily accessible outdoor recreation opportunities in these regions. Concurrent increases in the demand for these opportunities has led to pressures on all parks systems in Canada, with the result that each level of government is seeking to expand its parks system in order to meet present and future demands for public open space.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. The hour appointed for the consideration of private members' business having expired, I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

[English]

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

NATIONAL HOUSING ACT

**PROVISIONS RESPECTING NEIGHBOURHOOD
IMPROVEMENT, REHABILITATION, OWNERSHIP, NEW
COMMUNITIES, ETC.**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-133, to amend the National Housing Act, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before the House moved to the consideration of private members' business at five o'clock the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) had the floor.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, when I spoke before private members' hour I was dealing with the ceiling on interest rates for these programs. I pointed out that similar amendments apply to neighbourhood improvement loans, rehabilitation and conversion of existing residential buildings, and loans made directly to provinces and municipalities in reference to serviced land.

My last amendment, No. 11, deals with new communities in respect of which the corporation may make an agreement with the Government of Canada and the government of a province to advance money for new communities, for the acquisition of land and to be used for rapid transit linking the new community to a larger community. Of course, the money may be advanced in the particular spectrum of greenbelts and parks; it may also be advanced to be spent on a new community for the installation of utilities such as sewage and water systems and for servicing land in these communities so that development can take place.

In summary, then, the amendment deals with interest rates. There are four programs that I have mentioned

[Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo).]

which involve loans made directly by CMHC. This will be the first time since 1967 that we have had a ceiling on interest rates, or we will when these amendments are approved, as I believe they will be because of an arrangement between the minister and myself representing my party. Before leaving that matter I should like to say I suggested to the committee—and the record will speak for itself—that where the government borrows money and it is done through issuing long-term bonds, there should be no interest difference between what the government pays and what the provinces, municipalities and people taking out the loans pay. It was obvious in the committee that I would not be able to accomplish that feat, but I did accomplish a ceiling in that the interest rate must not exceed one half of one per cent. As I pointed out this afternoon, the long-term bond interest rate, the manner in which the government raises its money, might be 6 per cent, so that the rate on these loans could be 6½ per cent, 6¼ per cent or 6½ per cent, but no higher. That represents a ceiling on loans made directly by CMHC to the provinces, to the municipalities and to the people concerned with housing.

I should now like to deal for a few minutes with what I said earlier today. I do not want to go back to the ruling in any way, but I was trying to explain why I was endeavouring to have the amendment accepted. On thinking the matter over, I think the direction I received from the Chair was inevitable. The reason I wanted the purposes of the bill articulated in some way was to give direction to CMHC as to what the minister is trying to do in the bill. In bringing in our amendments we are trying to assist in providing reasonable housing and shelter. This is all related to the provision of the maximum number of residences in Canada at a reasonable cost so that the maximum number of people will be accommodated. This is almost impossible with present economic conditions, high interest rates, the high cost of servicing land, and the high cost of housing which includes the 11 per cent building tax. This is why I would have preferred to see something in the bill to articulate that policy.

Let me refer to a statement made by Michael Dennis, special assistant to the Mayor of Toronto, when he appeared as a witness before the committee. He said:

I am pleased to appear before you because of my continuing interest in this area. Many of the basic policy directions contained in the bill before you arose from the recommendations of the task force which I chaired for the former minister and for CMHC.

He was asked by the task force to provide a direction for CMHC. He went on to state:

There are, however, very serious problems with the mechanisms chosen for implementing those recommendations. There are problems with the structure of the programs contained in the bill; there is, perhaps most importantly, the failure to articulate clearly and expressly the policies underlying both the existing programs and the new programs—

Those are the four programs I dealt with today which are included in the bill. Mr. Dennis then said:

—and to ensure that those administering the legislation will give effect to the will of parliament rather than their own interpretation of what is best for the country.

● (2010)

I realize officials of CMHC are present tonight, and I am not suggesting for one moment that they would interpret