

The Address—Mr. Redway

The Minister may or may not be aware that the Government over its last mandate reduced the amount of federal dollars going into housing. That has placed considerable pressure on the ability of non-profit organizations, co-ops and municipal corporations to provide housing for their communities.

Something he did not mention is that job generation is one of the prime benefits of investment in housing programs and that housing construction is the highest generator of jobs per dollar invested. If we want to reduce the deficit it would be extremely interesting to see what would be accomplished by having 1 per cent more employment and 1 per cent less unemployment with that 1 per cent paying taxes, not drawing on social benefits, and creating jobs for other Canadians by the purchase of required goods and services.

• (1240)

The land disposal question is the one that interests me most. I wonder if the Minister of State for Housing (Mr. Redway) is aware that in the last Parliament 150 acres of public land, formerly belonging to the Experimental Farm in Ottawa West, were sold on the private market. I am sure the Minister is aware that no conditions were attached to that sale, either that it be housing construction, or that it be affordable housing.

Is the Minister aware that an additional 10 acres in the immediate vicinity is currently on the market, and does he know whether conditions have been attached to that sale with respect to the affordability of housing, or indeed for the provision of housing at all?

Is the policy of the Government now to direct DPW that, in all land or property sales, housing should be a condition of the sale, where appropriate? I doubt very much that that is the case. I wonder why not and when the Minister plans to change that. In relation to that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry that I must interrupt the Hon. Member. There is only five minutes and the Hon. Member has already taken more than three minutes, and I would like to give some time to the Minister to reply.

Mrs. Catterall: The background is so important to the question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I apologize. For the two days remaining in the Throne Speech there is only five minutes allowed.

Mr. Redway: Within her comments and questions the Hon. Member has asked a variety of questions. Obviously, I would like to address as many as I can. On the subject of whether or not funds in the budget for housing have been reduced, if the Hon. Member would carefully examine the Budgets of the federal Government over the period of time in which the present Government has been in office, she will find that that budget has increased each and every year.

It may be that it has become more difficult, even with those increases, to produce as many housing units as the City of Ottawa Housing Corporation, or other similar corporations would like to do, and I certainly sympathize with that concern. If the Hon. Member examines the Budget carefully, I am sure she will find that funds have been increasing and have certainly not been reduced in any way.

With respect to the question of housing construction being a job generator, there is no question that the Hon. Member is 100 per cent correct that it is one of the largest generators of jobs in the country, perhaps together with the restaurant industry. In any event, it certainly is a big generator of jobs. Over the last four and a half years, the Government has been trying very hard to bring down unemployment, put people back to work and get them paying taxes to help bring down the deficit. In fact, the Government has been extremely successful at that.

As the Hon. Member is aware, over the last four years Canada has led the western world in job creation, and in increasing its Gross National Product in each and every one of those years. We have been very successful, and I am sure the Hon. Member will applaud the efforts of the Government in that respect.

The question of land disposal does present a true problem. As the Hon. Member is aware, at the present time the policy of the Government, which was brought into effect in 1985, was that surplus government lands would be disposed of at market value.

The reason for that was that there were concerns about the manner in which former Liberal Governments had been disposing of lands, or hanging on to lands that were surplus. As a result, the Government introduced that policy at that time.

The whole question of disposal of lands and whether housing is an appropriate use is one of the areas in which I see myself playing a role. If the Hon. Member is aware of lands from the federal inventory that seem to be on the market or are about to approach the market that we do not have some handle on, I hope she will bring them