

*National Housing Act*

this debate today. One thing did seem clear, namely that almost everybody, if not everybody, thought the legislation had merit. The only difference was in the degree of merit they associated with this measure. I think even those who did not see much in it at least conceded it was a step in the right direction and asserted that if we kept going in that direction long enough and far enough we would achieve the goal which I said was the Liberal aim, namely to provide adequate housing for every Canadian.

**Mr. Ellis:** If we live long enough.

**Mr. Winters:** The hon. member for Eglinton as usual gave a speech for which he had done his homework very well. He raised some very good points. I do not propose to deal with them at length, but they were points that deserve an answer and I shall endeavour to say a few words on them.

He remarked about the fact that the average income of qualifiers under the National Housing Act has gone up. He quoted from Canadian Housing Statistics, fourth quarter, 1955, published by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which states on page 5 that whereas in 1954 the average income per family was \$5,065, in 1955 it had gone up to \$5,207. In explanation of that I will say that, as the hon. member will recall, in 1954 the statute was changed and, among other things, it provided for a lower down payment. That, too, is reflected in the same paragraph which shows that the average down payment was \$2,821 in 1955 as compared with \$2,993 in 1954, while on the other hand it refers to the fact that the gross debt went up in those two years from \$918 to \$934.

But by way of explaining the higher family income required I should say that at the same time the down payment was decreased the total amount of the loan was increased from \$10,000 to \$12,800 a unit, which pretty automatically means that the incomes of families qualifying for the higher loans are at higher levels. A reference to pages 21 and 22 of the same publication will clearly demonstrate what I mean.

Table No. 30 on page 21 shows that prior to 1954 there were no loans at all over \$10,000, whereas in 1955 there were 26,245 loans over \$10,000 which brings up, of course, the average level of loans and the average income required to qualify for those loans. If the hon. member will refer to page 22, table 32, he will see that the loans have increased all across the board. More people on low incomes qualified for loans, and, of course, more people in high income brackets qualified for loans. While in 1954 only one person with an income under \$2,000 qualified,

[Mr. Winters.]

in 1955 the corresponding figure was 15; between \$2,000 and \$2,999 the figures for 1954 and 1955 are 252 and 475, respectively. All throughout those income groups the number of loans has increased in those two years. In the group \$10,000 and over, in 1954 the total number was 633, and in 1955, 1,249. So I think mathematically it is quite easy to demonstrate that while the average family income required to qualify for a loan went up, both at the higher end and at the lower end, there was a much broader band of Canadians qualified. That in itself is one of the reasons we were able to achieve a record number of houses built in 1955.

My hon. friend again raised the question as to why the interest rate had to be increased recently from 5¼ to 5½ per cent. I think there was doubt in the hon. member's mind as to whether this was done as a deterrent to a high level of house building. Again may I assure him that that was not the case. This was simply an effort to attract to the market sufficient mortgage money to achieve a high level of house building. We could have kept the rate of interest at 5¼ per cent, but we would not have built a sufficient number of houses. I suppose you could carry that to the extreme and say that 100,000 houses with interest at 5½ per cent is better than no houses with interest at 5 per cent. We set the rate at a level which would attract money to the market.

The hon. member thought that we were relying too heavily on municipal initiative in the development of housing projects. There again I think perhaps I have more confidence in the municipal level of government than he and some other hon. members reflected this afternoon. I shall attempt to give more background on that a little later.

The hon. member questioned the administration of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and I think he had in mind again the Regent Park South development. I am bolstered in that supposition by an editorial which appeared in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* this morning which rather asserts the same position. Perhaps I could give briefly a few dates and developments in connection with the project to support my argument that there was no undue delay.

On December 15, 1953, the Toronto board of control passed a resolution requesting federal-provincial partnership participation in Regent Park South. Preliminary investigations by the province, the city welfare and treasury departments and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation local officials were completed by August 19, 1954. There were no administrative delays, but considerable