

want us to support a suggestion today that would create another agency for the expenditure of money, this makes no sense at all.

As the motion suggests, the human environment encompasses a broad range of factors including elements of the natural environment such as the purity of air and water, the condition of the soil, and the level of noise, as well as elements of the constructed environment such as the quality of housing, access to open space, and the availability of social services.

● (1732)

This wide spectrum of consideration touches the lives of individual Canadians in diverse ways. Our physical health can be impaired by the high decibel levels we must endure, the high concentrations of nitrogen dioxide in the air we breathe, the contaminants in the water we drink and the harmful additives in the food we eat. In corresponding fashion, our daily activities and levels of satisfaction can be affected for better or for worse by the design of our homes; the internal layout of the dwelling, the amount of living space available, the use of appliances, amenities and private outdoor areas. Similarly, our psychological well-being can be influenced by features of the neighbourhood where we live; the presence of greenery and open space, as well as the absence of stressful situations such as crowded city streets. Finally, the lifestyle we choose can be enhanced by the provision of social services, leisure programs and recreation facilities such as daycare centres, fitness classes and community social functions.

In a larger context, Canadians as a group also have been immeasurably affected by the rapid, seemingly haphazard expansion of this nation's largest cities. A few of the consequences of unbridled metropolitan growth have been the conversion of fertile farmland from agricultural production to urban uses; the competition for, and resulting price escalation of, scarce serviced land; low-density suburbanization which fosters excessive dependence on the automobile; ill-conceived and poorly located development which squanders our natural environmental resources; and rapid increases in public expenditures for urban services. The outward sprawl of metropolitan centres has also influenced life in core areas. Inner city neighbourhoods, which are generally the homes of low income groups, are usually marked by congestion, pollution, a scarcity of recreation facilities and a deteriorating housing stock. Finally, urbanization focussed on the largest urban centres has also exacerbated regional disparities in income and opportunity.

In short, the government recognizes that the complex array of factors which comprise the human environment are of vital importance to all Canadians. In recognition of that importance, the government has had in place for some time units within a number of federal departments which conduct research, administer programs and regulate activities concerning the human environment. In many instances, federal efforts in this field are either carried out jointly or conducted in close consultation with the provinces.

Environment

Therefore, the question must be posed: is there a pressing need to create another institution—an institution of human environmental studies—to duplicate the work already conducted in this field by existing public agencies? Although it may seem attractive to create a new organization each time a new problem rears its head, the creation of a new institute would be an inappropriate and unnecessary response. A high profile and a comprehensive approach are some of the potential advantages of a new institute. However, the Department of Fisheries and the Environment, the Department of National Health and Welfare, the Department of External Affairs and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation are working already in a focussed and effective way to study, improve and protect our natural and built environment.

In support of this viewpoint, I will review briefly some aspects of the research efforts and action programs of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Department of Urban Affairs. The intent is not to provide an exhaustive list of the agencies' programs and activities, but rather to illustrate in a selective manner the wide array of environmental issues considered and the progress made toward alleviating problems and enhancing opportunities in the fields of housing, recreation, neighbourhood improvement, public participation, urban growth management and over-all quality of life concerns. First I will describe the agencies' research activities; then I will discuss the program currently in place.

The research activities of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Department of Urban Affairs may be considered as comprehensive yet focussed. A broad array of human environmental concerns are under investigation, but each research project zeroes in on a particular problem, whether it be to determine the most effective means for public participation or to assess the consequences of urban sprawl. Also it is important to recognize that the research is not conducted simply to expand our knowledge of the urban environment, although this undoubtedly occurs, but rather is directed specifically toward the development, assessment and further improvement of public policy.

The list of research efforts is quite impressive. Basic up-to-date information on the adequacy, suitability and affordability of housing in Canada's largest urban areas has been gathered and analysed by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation through the 1974 survey of housing units. The study revealed that Canadians in the urban part of the country are well housed by almost any measure. The majority of the stock is less than 25 years old, is of good quality, has most of the facilities generally thought necessary, and provides a relatively high average amount of space per person.

However, housing involves more than bricks, mortar and mortgages. Even as an increasing proportion of the Canadian population has come to live in apartments, there continues to be a perception of high-rise as a spawning ground for alienation, isolation, crime and other forms of social pathology. In response, the Department of Urban Affairs has sponsored several investigations into the social and psychological consequences of living in high density conditions. The evidence thus