

Supply

between some hon. members that the Chair should recognize the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Cosgrove), followed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) and then by the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington). Does any hon. member wish to comment, or may I proceed in that fashion?

Mr. Nielsen: *D'accord.*

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I was reminded today in an editorial in the *Toronto Sun* headed "Paul's Plan" of the maxim that it pays to advertise. It is somewhat ironic to get that reminder from a newspaper which has not always been supportive of government advertising in the past, but the statement is made that this government has not sufficiently advertised the Canada mortgage renewal plan. As I begin my comments I must take issue with that statement. The article says: "There hasn't been much about the mortgage assistance plan." I recall very well, as I am sure do other hon. members, the complaint right after the budget that newspaper advertisements were taken out and that empty space was held so that the government could advertise the plan the day following the budget announcement. I find it somewhat ironic that the accusation is made that that program has not been advertised sufficiently. I recall very well hon. members opposite flashing a newspaper advertisement entitled "Attention Home Owners". There was criticism of that advertising at the time.

What is more important is that the plan has been advertised since the majority of the members of this House supported it. There have been further widespread advertisements in newspapers across the country. We have repeated that newspaper ad and attempted to draw the plan to the attention of Canadians renewing their mortgages. I have distributed information, documents and kits on the plan to all hon. members on both sides of the House so that they could bring the plan to the attention of constituents who call their offices inquiring about it.

I take issue with the Toronto newspaper which says the plan has not been advertised enough. I know there has been some free publicity. It has not been tremendously positive all the time but, nonetheless, there have been newspaper comments—free publicity I suppose—in newspapers such as *The Financial Post*.

Obviously, I must accept the admonition that it pays to advertise, and we should talk more about government programs, but I do not accept the admonition in *The Toronto Sun*. The reason I say that is the article itself. The introduction to that criticism about lack of advertising contains the contention that only 400 people have responded to the plan. We know that some 1,400 people have responded to the plan. We know that about 1,000 people have been approved under the plan. We know that in response to the last advertisement, which was national, 7,766 people clipped brochures, wrote in and asked for further information on the plan, which has gone out. I know I have to publicize and advertise when, for example, the plan has been described—inadvertently—by the official critic in the Conservative opposition as being a plan providing a grant of some \$300 when it provides \$3,000. This afternoon the

housing critic of the New Democratic Party again alleged that only about 300 people have made application under the plan when, as I have indicated, over 1,000 people have already been approved under the plan.

What is the background of the plan? I think it is worth reviewing and publicizing. In April, 1980, the Speech from the Throne of this government in starting its mandate said that the government would:

—act to assist those unable to bear the burden of renegotiating their home mortgages in the present abnormal situation so that the spectre of foreclosure will be avoided.

Those were the words. That is the way the program started. That was the commitment given by the government. The plan was to carry out that commitment.

Then there was the further assertion that this program could be introduced without the government's embarking upon a major subsidy program. I underline that because the thrust of my remarks will be that even though we are pressed to advertise and even though we are pressed to increase funding under this plan and other plans, the government must of course be practical and provide plans in a way that is efficient and takes into account all the demands upon the government for more funding for housing in these days.

Recently the critic for housing in the official opposition moved a motion under Standing Order 43 which I do not accept. That motion was:

That this House directs the Minister of Finance to reinstitute the MURB provision and to designate those funds allocated for the Canada rental supply plan to non-profit and co-operative housing as part of his financial and economic statement to this House.

The minister has promised to make a statement to this House. A need has been demonstrated. I recall giving a reminder to hon. members on both sides of the House this afternoon about a response to constituents in very difficult circumstances. Last fall interest rates were over 20 per cent. Constituents wrote inquiring what could be done by me at the time of the budget and subsequently. I am very pleased that we have this program and that \$350 million has been set aside by the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen). We have been able to respond to a number of Canadian families. Our response has been more than the individual requests of members in the House who have taken the time to write to me and to bring to my attention individual cases of constituents who have been hard pressed and who have asked for help. As I say, over 1,000 families have been assisted under this plan. It is a plan which addresses the difficulties of families. On renewal of a mortgage, when a family has paid up to 30 per cent of their income toward meeting principal, interest and taxes, they are then assisted by the government, either by way of deferral of interest or by way of an outright grant of up to \$3,000. The plan had to be funded. The commitment was made in the Speech from the Throne. The finances were provided; \$350 million were allocated by the Minister of Finance. We appreciate that that funding provided for that specific need might be in competition with requests of hon. members for funding for