

Trans-Canada Highway Act

Mr. Benidickson: Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the minister one question. When I intervened a few moments ago he was referring to subsidized housing and low rental housing. I recall some years ago—and in fact I believe the minister was present too—a parliamentary group visited the Regent Park south development in Toronto in its early stages. I think it was one of the first developments of its kind in Canada. In listening to the minister this afternoon I received the impression that he was casting a chill on that type of development and I wonder if I misinterpreted him. Is this type of development not something that would have the minister's warm approval?

Mr. Green: The Regent Park south development is a very good one and there are more recent programs of this type proceeding in Toronto, Kingston, Halifax, Windsor, Vancouver and in other centres. There is also the Jeanne Mance project in Montreal. We are very glad to share in these redevelopment projects.

Perhaps I can best illustrate my point by saying that some months ago I found we were being asked to approve of projects under which people could stay in an apartment although they had an income of practically \$6,000 a year. When it comes to subsidizing people with that much income you ask yourself a few questions. This is what I had in mind. I am not casting any reflection whatever on the merits of the Regent Park south project or other projects of that kind which are in effect slum clearance projects.

Mr. Benidickson: I was thinking in terms of slum clearance but these projects have their values aside from the question of subsidization upon which the minister seemed to frown. They necessarily involve a transfer affecting those in the country who are most poorly off in the matter of housing which is an essential social development. I did not think the minister intended to convey the impression to which I referred.

Mr. Green: No.

Resolution reported and concurred in.

Mr. Green thereupon moved for leave to introduce Bill C-28, to amend the National Housing Act.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY ACT

AMENDMENT TO INCREASE MAXIMUM
EXPENDITURES TO THREE HUNDRED
AND FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS

Hon. Howard C. Green (Minister of Public Works) moved that the house go into

[Mr. Green.]

committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Trans-Canada Highway Act to provide that the aggregate of all expenditures under sections 4, 5 and 6 of the act may be increased to a maximum of three hundred and fifty million dollars.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. MacEwan in the chair.

Mr. Green: Mr. Chairman, this resolution is in very simple terms reading as it does:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Trans-Canada Highway Act to provide that the aggregate of all expenditures under sections 4, 5 and 6 of the act may be increased to a maximum of three hundred and fifty million dollars.

That maximum at present is \$250 million so if this measure receives approval there will be an addition of \$100 million. Today I should like to review briefly the legislation and agreements pursuant to the trans-Canada highway from 1949 up to the present time.

The Trans-Canada Highway Act, which became law on December 10, 1949, was enacted to encourage and to assist in the construction of a trans-Canada highway. It provided that the federal government may make contributions to a provincial government of 50 per cent of the construction costs of the highway over a seven-year period—this was the original act—which in effect, contemplated the completion date by December 9, 1956. It further provided that the federal government's share would not exceed \$150 million. I repeat, \$150 million. If the amendment we now bring forward is passed the figure would be \$350 million. Subsequent to this enactment nine of the 10 provinces entered into agreements for participating in this project. Quebec has not signed an agreement to participate under this particular statute. That famous old province did not make any agreement under the original act and it has not participated either under the amendments of 1956.

During the first few years a fairly substantial trans-Canada highway construction program was put under way in most provinces. However, concurrent with this project, every province was faced with demands for reconstruction and new construction on all parts of their highway systems, which prevented them from pushing construction on the trans-Canada at a rate necessary to ensure completion by December, 1956. Further the project turned out to be much larger and more expensive than was originally estimated.

As it was apparent by 1955 that no province would complete its section by the specified date a federal-provincial highway