

Honourable C. D. Howe.

November 1, 1943.

Halifax which are condemned but the occupants cannot be evicted for the simple reason that there is no other place to house them. Since the war, Wartime Housing have built or have in the process of building, 1472 houses in the Halifax Area, of which 972 are in the City of Halifax, 314 in Dartmouth and 172 in Eastern Passage. Of these 1472 houses, 1252 are administered by Wartime Housing Committee of Halifax and are rented to war workers only. The remaining 220 are administered by the City of Halifax and rented to the public in general. The City houses are somewhat larger and have a back porch and my information is, rent for about 20% more than the houses administered by Wartime Housing Ltd.

As you know none of the houses built by Wartime Housing have basements and practically without exception are erected on posts, and some 855 of those first constructed were built of plywood and are inferior in many respects to the later models now being constructed. The remaining 617 houses are of sturdier construction, good for twenty to twenty-five years without very much maintenance and may be termed semi-permanent.

My information is that the City of Halifax was assured that some four hundred houses would be provided. Due to the fact that the City's appropriation for this work became depleted, there were some 180 houses not completed and on which work was never commenced. This difficulty has been largely accounted for by lack of finances, in conjunction with differences of opinion locally as to where these houses should be located. Halifax now has 180 houses less than it could have had with Government approval and assistance if they had contributed their share of the undertaking. Further, I understand that they were assured that when the 400 houses are completed, they could make application to Ottawa and receive approval for an additional two hundred houses. The fact of the matter is that the City of Halifax was unable to proceed with this undertaking mainly for the reason they did not have the funds. I am firmly convinced that if the funds had been available, the differences of opinion as to the matter of location for these temporary units, could have been agreeably settled.

Wartime Housing now has funds allocated for two hundred and fifty houses but I understand they do not intend to start construction for the reason that they cannot get the labour to build them in time to make them of really servicable use.

Whether or not these houses should be proceeded with now is a matter of opinion their construction would certainly be helpful, but solution of the present problem confronting Halifax and its environs is not to be found wholly through more housing. Assuming these two hundred and fifty houses were completed quickly they would at best only accommodate some one thousand people, further, we are now coming into the winter period when speedy construction, is almost impossible.

GENERAL LABOUR SHORTAGE. You are thoroughly familiar with the present labour shortage situation in Halifax, particularly in the matter of skilled artisans and mechanics and in connection therewith I thought it advisable to contact the general contractors in and around these parts as to their views with regard to work on hand, probable date of completion and probable labour supply for the Spring of 1944.

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