

## Rent controls a hazard UI claims

Property owners will be forced into bankruptcy and building will be discouraged because of Ontario's new rent-control legislation, the

select committee studying the bill has been told.

The Urban Development Institute, which represents the largest single group of apartment owners, said in its brief that the eight-percent ceiling on rent increases should be raised to 10 percent because it is "clearly unnecessary and is exceedingly oppressive."

P.M. Farlinger, director of

the Institute, said "unenforceable and even unmonitorable" services might be cut back if the bill, as it stands, becomes law.

He said the timing of the bill should coincide with federal selective wage and price controls announced on Oct. 15.

The legislation should end when the federal controls cease, he added.

The services outlined by Farlinger include landscaping, decorating and replacement of carpets and

appliances.

The legislation says "discontinuance of a service, privilege, accommodation or thing" by a landlord that reduces a tenant's "use and enjoyment" can be considered an increase in rent.

No allowance for an appeal from the eight percent ceiling until Jan. 1 has been made in Bill 20.

After the new year, both tenants and landlords will have access to rent review officers and a rent review board.

## November a building month

Parliament Publications Real Estate Association

has again arrived and glance to see anything — has published during While all the lies are not in excellent in be obtained which are of Canada has fact, it is falling

the figures for in urban areas 11 months of a gain of 2,000 the same period in big leap came in when starts 8 ahead of the in 1974. words, the urban November alone for the foot- all previous the year and, in duced that 2,000 — and it's a big if

— this is indicative of a sustained spurt in housing construction, then the future may indeed be bright.

Another happy note was struck in the multiple dwelling field, which by and large is apartments. Here starts in November at 10,793 were almost double those of the same month a year earlier. Again, if this is indicative of turning the corner, maybe there is some relief in the rental accommodation field, which has been a disaster area where apartment hunting has become an exhaustive nightmare.

However, starts are one thing; completions are another. Unlike the construction time required for single-detached houses, two years is not an unusual length of time to complete an apartment tower from the time the first sod is turned until it is ready for occupancy. So the apartment shortage will linger a while no matter how many new

apartment buildings are undertaken in the immediate future.

Moreover there is considerable catching up to do. Apartment construction during the first nine months of the year across the nation totalled only 38,477 units — a 31 per cent decline compared with the same period a year earlier.

The inevitable result was the worsening of an ominous trend which began to appear back in 1972. At that time the national average for apartment vacancies was 5.5 per cent. It has now skidded to 1.6 per cent and will require all the imagination which can be mustered on the part of the government and the development industry through increased production to return the rental field to the level of 1972. Then landlords were vying for tenants and there was a wide choice of accommodation and prices.

But acting as a counterweight to increased production of rental accommodation will be rent controls. They are slowly becoming law across the country as part of the wage and price controls package, the brainchild of the federal government. Historically, they have not contributed to stepped-up apartment production. In fact, they had just the opposite effect, coupled with other undesirable side effects such as reduced maintenance, deterioration and new tenants even being forced to pay a fee to obtain an apartment.

Representative of the attitude of private industry, which in the past has been responsible for large-scale apartment development, is that of the Canadian Institute of Public Real Estate Companies. Commenting on the proposed Ontario rent control legislation, an institute spokesman said such controls (an 8 per cent in-

crease retroactive to July 30) "will completely preclude future investment in rental housing and will create the worst housing crisis in the history of the province."

Even without rent controls the vacancy rates in Regina and Saskatoon have been virtually zero. Other cities where there has been no rent control in the past, but where vacancy rates are below 1 per cent, include Edmonton, Calgary, Thunder Bay, and Saint John, N.B. There is some concern that when rent controls become law the situation could be further aggravated.

On the other hand, there is a possibility that this shortfall in apartment construction will be at least partly offset by gains in purchasable housing if the enthusiasm of Urban Affairs Minister Barnett Danson for his new housing incentives is translated into actual housing starts.

The seven-point program has as its cornerstone the

revised Assisted Home Ownership Program (AHOP). Danson will make AHOP housing available to any Canadian who wants to buy moderately priced housing. The government will provide interest-reducing grants of up to \$750 a year, among other things, to make home ownership available.

The program was designed to produce a million new housing units within four years and simultaneously alleviate unemployment by providing a millionman-years of work. Judging by the jammed Central Mortgage and Housing Corp. switchboards for a considerable time after the package was announced, the public is prepared to climb aboard the AHOP bandwagon.

## What to put in a balanced toybox

With the toy-buying season once more upon us, it's helpful to have some practical advice on toy selection which, all too often, becomes a haphazard exercise in compromise, substitution and guess work. An excellent idea that Mattel Canada, a leading toy manufacturer, dispenses to consumers writing in for advice on choosing toys is that of the balanced toybox.

The concept is based on the four basic kinds of play defined by psychologists: active physical, manipulative or constructive, imaginative, and social. A balanced toybox would, thus, contain toys that involve children in each of these kinds of play.

Apart from the obvious attraction of being able to plan your toy-shopping list and budget around categories of playthings, there are several other advantages.

For one, balanced play activities help develop a well-rounded child. For another, a variety of carefully selected toys is likely to sustain a child's interest for longer than toys that are basically similar.

Some toys lend themselves to several kinds of play. These not only expand children's

play experiences but also help develop their mental and physical capabilities. Toys of this type are, of course, the best value for your toy-buying dollars.

If you buy a toybox, incidentally, be sure the lid is counter-balanced and does not have a lock or catch.

A balanced toybox should, according to Mattel Canada, include:

**A ball:** for toddlers, a rubber ball suitable for indoor use; for older children, a baseball and bat, a tetherball with standard.

**A bath toy:** for babies, a floating duck; for older children, a diving whale, floating soapdish or scrub mitt.

**Books:** for toddlers, books with large type and simple colourful illustrations.

**A musical toy:** for toddlers and preschoolers, a jack-in-the-box or toy guitar; for older children xylophones, marimbas or bongos.

**A cuddly companion:** for toddlers and preschoolers.

**A life-like doll:** for preschoolers and older children male and female multiple-activity dolls.

**A building toy:** for preschoolers, take-apart

trucks or animals, for older children wooden logs or sophisticated building sets.

**Puzzles:** for preschoolers, simple wooden ones with four to ten pieces; for older children, progressively difficult designs.

**A wheeled toy:** for preschoolers, push-around cars and trucks, for older children, racing sets or electric trains.

**A wheeled ride-on toy:** for toddlers (space and safety permitting), a tricycle, for older children, a bicycle.

**Games:** for younger children, easy to play, quick-winner games, after age eight, competitive word or strategy games.

**Art supplies:** for smaller children, crayons, finger paints, coloured paper; for older ones, sculpting clay, watercolours, embroidery and stichery.

Mary Wiseman, co-ordinator of a developmental learning programme at the children's mental health unit, North York General Hospital, has conducted extensive research into play assessment and the relationships between various kinds of toys and activities.

She points out that before adding toys to a playbox,

parents should take into account the child's present level of competence and the toys it already has.

"It's important for children to have some toys they've already mastered and can feel happy with when they're tired," says Mrs. Wiseman.

"They also need toys that challenge their current capabilities as well as some that are a little advanced.

"The need to experiment with more complex toys can emerge without the mother being aware of it. If these toys are in the playbox, the child simply picks them up and tackles them."

Children sometimes become frustrated with new toys simply because they don't know what to do with them.

It's a good idea for parents to demonstrate what can be done with a toy by actually playing with it and involving the child in the activity.

Some manufacturers do, incidentally, guarantee their toys against breakage. Mattel Canada, for one, guarantees its products for three months from the time the child actually receives the toy. Toys broken within this period will be repaired by the company for the cost of labour only.