

**THE SPEECH
OF
HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR,
SIR MURRAY MACLEHOSE, K.C.M.G., M.B.E.
TO
THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
ON
OCTOBER 16th 1974.
(extract on Housing)**

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Housing

The Housing Authority has been up-dating its building programme in close consultation with the New Towns Project Managers. Contracts now let throughout Hong Kong will provide housing for up to 100,000 more people in 1975-76 and 140,000 in 1976-77. It would be wrong to give precise figures thereafter because completions will depend on so many factors, including clearance and site formation, that cannot be foreseen at present. But, broadly speaking, we intend the figures gradually, and no doubt with some irregularity, to rise to the 200,000 mark. Meanwhile we may look forward confidently to progressive improvement in the housing situation over the next five years. When our objective will be achieved of a self-contained home in a decent environment for all, will depend on many things, including the rate and type of construction in the private sector and, of course, the rate of natural growth of the population and of immigration. But certainly by 1984 ten years from now, the situation will have been completely transformed.

I should emphasize that this problem can only be solved by steady planned and persistent construction over a long period of time. This your Government and the new Housing Authority are now geared to maintain. I reaffirm our determination to press ahead steadily with the work, for as long as it is necessary, until this defect in our society is removed.

It is not just a matter of quantity and I am very pleased to note the various improvements which the Authority is building into its new estates. The Oi Man Estate is a fine example of what can be done economically to improve public housing standards and also of the shape of things to come. The layout of the Authority's estates now building in the new towns should make them attractive and pleasant places to live in.

The need for temporary housing is, regrettably, still with us, and programmes are going ahead for building new licensed areas, but to much higher standards than before, and funds have been provided recently to improve conditions in the older licensed areas by installing

proper electricity and water supplies. Nevertheless, I am sure that all of us long for the day when the production of houses will be sufficient to enable the Authority systematically to set about the housing of the inmates of such areas improper permanent accommodation, and not only when the sites are required for development.

I would like to record my gratitude to members of Housing Authority for all their efforts. This is a time for sound and imaginative planning and policy formation, and I know how much demand it has made on the Housing Authority's members.

I am concerned about the number of old tenement buildings which remain undeveloped and are unlikely to be developed by private enterprise. The Housing Society has been preparing detailed proposals for the redevelopment of a number of these old properties, and has been assured of Government's administrative and financial support. Meantime, the Society continues to plan new estates in new town areas, and I would like to express my appreciation to its members under the chairmanship of Sir Douglas CLAGUE for the time and energy they devote to this very valuable work.

Private developers are very important source of new housing and we wish to encourage the maximum amount of private housing construction. While I appreciate the problems they face, particularly in financing new schemes, I hope very much that private developers will see the advantages of making new investments in housing now, when land prices have fallen and building contractors have more capacity.

It is interesting to note the confidence in Hong Kong's future displayed by overseas interests at this time; for instance negotiations are currently proceeding with a major overseas group for the development of a large new residential area at Sha Tin to house over 30, 000 people on a site of about 50 acres. It is this sort of vision that pays off, for there is an enormous requirement for housing which cannot possibly be satisfied in full for many years to come, if ever.