

V. ELDERLY CANADIANS: RETIREMENT, POST-RETIREMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ISSUES

As the hearings of the Committee progressed, it became apparent that many elderly Canadians perceive negative assumptions about the aged as a pervasive feature of contemporary culture, capable of hampering virtually all of their interactions with other Canadians. Concerns about discrimination in the area of employment do not disappear merely because a person has turned 65 and may have retired from full-time employment. In the case of the elderly, however, such concerns do not provide the intensive focus for testimony that was apparent in submissions relating to those aged 45-64. Elderly Canadians, rather, told the Committee of experiencing an erosion of rights in a whole range of areas, extending from employment and retirement to health services and institutional care, housing and transportation, pensions and financial services, and even relating (as was seen in Chapter 2) to anti-discrimination legislation itself, in some provinces.

In view of the breadth of the concerns raised by and on behalf of the elderly, and time constraints faced by the Committee in its investigation of these, this chapter will be devoted primarily to a review of concerns raised, and the development of some global observations and recommendations. Elderly Canadians coming before the Committee have shown themselves impressively able to supply both specific information on and analysis of problems, and to make perceptive recommendations. In many cases, the Committee can do no better than to draw attention to these, noting that the quality of submissions received from a variety of organizations of the elderly is, by itself, a striking refutation of negative stereotypes of members of this group.

A) Retirement and Employment Issues

1. Mandatory Retirement

Concerns about mandatory retirement were repeatedly expressed before the Committee during its hearings. Mandatory retirement was widely condemned as an obvious instance of age discrimination, as wasteful of potentially productive labour and, more pointedly, as wasteful of capacities for judgement developed during long experience in the workforce. As well, it was condemned as psychologically destructive, and in some cases financially destructive, of those still capable of and needful of work.