

inflates incidental human differences into a basis for the inequitable treatment of victim groups.

Discrimination is deeply unjust to individuals, who suffer it irrespective of their personal qualities and abilities. It also has a corrosive effect on the community as whole, denying it the benefits of the full and effective participation of all groups. We have therefore decided to adopt a definition of discrimination which highlights its distinctiveness — its dependence on the mentality of intolerance. We recognize, however, that the issue of defining discrimination is a complex one which will warrant continuing attention as the committee proceeds with future work.

### **C) Findings: An Overview**

As the results set out on the following pages show, older Canadians perceive age discrimination, and other human rights inadequacies, across a disturbingly extensive range of current practices.

Older worker unemployment (particularly that of the growing minority who experience protracted unemployment) may reflect discriminatory treatment by employment counsellors and potential employers, and may be a product of inadequate access to suitable training and skills development.

Early retirement is, too often, precipitated by workplace pressures based on age. Mandatory retirement, although now prohibited in some jurisdictions and subject to legal challenge where it persists, remains a form of institutionalized age discrimination in which age, rather than competence, dictates the fate of employees.

The Committee heard, from representatives of the elderly, stories of appalling treatment in nursing homes, inadequate services in hospitals not designed to meet the needs of elderly chronic care patients, and the premature loss of independence because of the insufficiency of home care and other social support services.

Representatives of Canada's elderly also provided the Committee with accounts of lost mobility resulting from public transport systems not adapted to the special needs of the infirm; and of premature institutionalization resulting from the unavailability of affordable and appropriately designed housing. They informed the Committee, as well, of the financial privation