

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

Canadian provinces and the municipalities to include this provision in all their building codes. I point out that we have a National Building Code of Canada. It does not contain those provisions which would provide the needed access and facilities so urgently required by our handicapped citizens.

There is Supplement No. 7 to the National Building Code called "Building Standards for the Handicapped". However, to date I understand that the federal government has not made these building standards mandatory even in the construction of federal public buildings. In my opinion, this is something that the minister and the government should look into without delay. Our federal government should give leadership in this field by prohibiting the construction of its own public buildings unless there is provision for easy access by disabled people. I am certain that if the provisions were strictly adhered to on a federal basis, it would not be long before other jurisdictions accepted similar changes to their legislation.

The lack of proper facilities in all parts of the country has caused great frustration to the handicapped people in their efforts to lead useful and active lives. As a result, several years ago representations were made to government authorities by the various handicapped groups across Canada. It resulted in the development of Supplement No. 7, "Building Standards for the Handicapped." But again I must stress that it was not made mandatory. It is merely a written guide for those interested in the design and construction of buildings, with provisions for making them usable by the physically handicapped.

● (10:20 p.m.)

Society and government should be concerned about this problem. The changes required in substance could easily be incorporated into any architectural plans. These special provisions would in no way detract from the normal use of the building or facilities by those who are not handicapped. In fact, it has been pointed out that many buildings would be more accessible and would be safer for all who use them, particularly for the handicapped and the aged. In addition, such freedom of access would allow a fuller and more productive life for this particular group of citizens.

It would be a simple task to incorporate the changes required in almost any public building. At least one primary entrance to each building should be usable by persons in

[Mr. Harding.]

wheelchairs. Walks should have non-slip surfaces. Doors and doorways should be wide enough for easy passage and should be simple to operate with a minimum of effort. A slow-closing gadget would allow uninterrupted passage of a wheelchair. Even a slight change in some of the lavatories would make them easily available to occupants of wheelchairs. There are many small changes that would make a world of difference to our handicapped citizens, but time does not permit me to list them.

There is no doubt that governments generally have overlooked this grave social problem. I trust that we will do much more to try and solve the many problems faced by our handicapped citizens. It is my intention to do what I can to keep this problem before the government and to work toward a solution. It is the duty of every member to speak on these problems and to help bring about a solution. I trust that some changes in our federal building program will be the start of a new era for our many handicapped citizens.

**Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Public Works):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that hon. members will be gratified by the action of the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding) in bringing to the attention of the House the need for providing for handicapped persons proper facilities in our public buildings, particularly those in wheelchairs. However, I am going to come into some conflict with the hon. member. I have here a copy of Supplement No. 7 of the National Building Code of Canada. It states:

The following mandatory requirements constitute the minimum standards for projects for the Department of Public Works:—

The hon. member is saying that this is not mandatory. The information I have received is that it is mandatory. The provisions with respect to entrances are:

Provide one primary entrance to each building usable by persons in wheelchairs. Where elevators are provided, locate this entrance on a level served by the elevator.

Another provision is as follows:

Doors and Doorways: Provide doorways with a clear opening of at least 2'6" (including hardware) when open.

There are also provisions for vestibules, ramps, handrails, elevators, floors and washrooms. I have attended a number of openings of public buildings in the last several months. In all instances there are provisions along the