

Routine Proceedings

Integration happens on the local level. It happens in towns and communities and in our neighbourhoods. Access and participation are not abstracts, they concern the services, the localities of every-day life: transport, housing, recreation facilities, commerce, and the work-place.

It is the responsibility of all levels of government to work together within their jurisdictions to make integration happen. We cannot proceed to make changes and amendments in one area or at one level if we ignore the need for changes at others.

Again, this is precisely the approach the federal government has pursued in the past and will continue to pursue in the future.

As our response to the committee points out, federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for social services are at this time conducting a co-ordinated review of those services as they affect Canadians with disabilities. The ministers responsible for human rights have commissioned a report on employment equity initiatives for persons with disabilities. Our government has established the same co-operative partnership at the municipal level through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in the promotion of national Access Awareness Week.

These are all solid initiatives. They are forging new awareness to the needs of Canadians with disabilities. They are also making progress in breaking down the barriers of ignorance and discrimination which have so often in the past prevented persons with disabilities from participating and proving their contribution to our society.

In 1986, the government undertook the first in-depth, post-censal survey to better understand the reality of life for those with disabilities. We learned much from that survey. But with that knowledge, we realize how many questions and issues remain unanswered. It is for this reason the government has responded immediately to the call in the standing committee's report for a 1991 post-censal survey as well. This second post-censal survey is very vital indeed. It is an expensive initiative in itself, \$8.2 million, but it will be truly money well spent. It will be an invaluable tool in developing the policies to make integration for the disabled community a reality.

I believe that the government has responded to the recommendations of the standing committee in a forthright and positive manner. I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish, on behalf of Canadians with disabilities, over the last six years.

• (1600)

I have mentioned many of those initiatives, but there are others such as the disability tax credit, which provided Canadian with disabilities over \$100 million worth of tax credits last year alone; funding of independent living centres; research into transport systems and to promote accessible transportation under federal jurisdiction; the establishment of the status of disabled persons secretariat; the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program; the endowment of a prototype national fellow program at the University of British Columbia; the Discover Together Program developed in partnership with Rick Hansen and the Man in Motion Society to change attitudes about the disabled among children and teachers in our school system; the job accommodation network which provides over 24,000 ideas to help employers make their places of employment accessible to persons with disabilities; and DISC, the Disability Information System of Canada which links disabled persons from coast to coast with a computerized network of information and services as well as with other Canadians concerned with disability issues. And there is much more.

We know that these initiatives are not by themselves going to achieve the integration, the access, and the participation of our society which is the right of all of our citizens, each of us, those with disabilities no less than those without. It is our determination to work together until these objectives are indeed attained. They are solid achievements on the road to that attainment.

The standing committee was determined to set the government an agenda it could not ignore. The government is determined to meet that agenda at every step.

In my closing remarks I would like to applaud the view expressed in the unanimity of the standing committee that the rights of the disabled and the need to integrate these Canadians into the economic and social mainstream of our country are too important to trivialize by making them the subject of partisan debate.