

*Towards Equality*, the government's response, contains measures to address the issue of accountability for policies and programs for disabled persons. The response cited the designation of the Secretary of State as Minister Responsible for the Status of Disabled Persons and promised an annual report to Parliament. It also pointed to the establishment of a Secretariat for the Status of Disabled Persons in late 1985. The Secretariat had a mandate to develop, monitor and coordinate federal policies affecting persons with disabilities; to analyze intergovernmental initiatives; to promote integration through education, information and legislation.

In spite of these actions, there was no significant alteration in the direction of policy-making in the area of disability. The action plan which was coordinated by the Secretariat appears designed more to give the illusion of progress than to force the pace. The Secretariat could do little more. As established and maintained since late 1985, it is a small section which falls under the jurisdiction of the Assistant Under-Secretary of State (Citizenship). In spite of its broad mandate, the Secretariat has never been given statutory authority and its small staff and budget limit its activities and its clout. The annual report to Parliament consists of a short section in the annual report of the Department of the Secretary of State. Neither this Standing Committee nor its predecessors had, or have, an order of reference from the House of Commons to report on the estimates or to study the annual report of the Minister Responsible for the Status of Disabled Persons. Public servants who are responsible for disabled persons issues throughout other government departments are marginalized and have little access to the upper levels of the bureaucratic structure. In terms of assuring coordination between the federal and provincial governments, there has not been any high level federal-provincial conference to work out the mechanisms needed to ensure that co-operation leads to action.

The Sub-Committee on the Disabled and Handicapped of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, established in 1985, tried another means of increasing the accountability of those who were charged with responsibility programs and policies for persons with disabilities. The Sub-Committee attempted to build on the spirit and recommendations of earlier parliamentary reports in dealing with the concerns of persons with disabilities as producers and consumers.

Reasonably, the Sub-Committee presumed that the federal government should first get its own house in order. Certain major government departments and agencies concerned with disabilities were asked to provide information about their policies, services, special programs, and future plans. These could then be measured to assess the 'fit' between government activities and the needs of persons with disabilities. The first recommendation of the Sub-Committee in its report, *Challenge*, was that all departments and agencies prepare action plans, with realistic target dates to address accessibility, employment