

level access places. If we proceed on that basis in this or in any other direction in public life, we will always be able to find excuses. Therefore, we have to press on. The times require it. The Charter guarantees it. There will be solutions if we have the will to see that they are found.

However, finding those solutions is yet another reason I would suggest to the House this afternoon that it may be inappropriate to adopt immediately this resolution, because there are other possibilities which should perhaps be part of a total package deal. Of course, another one of them is the question of the mobile ballot box. This has been used with some imagination at certain times in Canadian history, certainly when elections were conducted during times of war. In one instance the ballot box was actually carried to the troops in the trenches and the ballots were cast in that fashion. There have also been closer to home and more recent examples. There was one in my riding in the last election. It was the case of Mrs. Irene Cole of Etobicoke who went to her polling station and found that she was unable to get to the ballot box because of stairs. It was a question of accessibility. After a call was made to one of the Party's headquarters, people came to assist. It was arranged that the DRO bring the ballot box out and down the steps, and she cast her ballot in that fashion. There are common sense solutions. If it is impossible to find for every polling station in the country a level access building, let us at least ensure that the law provides a kind of mechanism which is common sense and can do the job. It is another solution which I think should be part of a package deal.

A third one which could be added to this in any amendments that come forward—and I would only pick up the idea to which the Hon. Member for Beaches already referred—is the example of the Province of Manitoba. Manitoba has developed the concept of a mailed ballot. If disabled and if certain qualifications are established and rules set forth that are followed within a certain time period, a citizen can cast his or her ballot by mail. That experience has proved very workable. In the last Manitoba election, approximately .2 per cent of the electorate of that province cast their ballots in that fashion. In the sense that that can also be a solution to the problem I think suggests that we should take that idea and make it part of the total package we can put together to ensure that the rights of handicapped Canadians are best assured in voting. In fact, the number of such votes cast in that Manitoba provincial election, just for the record, was 900 out of a total of 488,821 votes cast. The procedure there has already been described for the House by the Hon. Member for Beaches, so I will not repeat it at this time.

● (1740)

There is clearly a general mood for change in this area. The question that I asked in this House of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) last week about the implementation of the Ratushny report indicated that we are on the brink of a major announcement in that area. As Hon. Members know, the Ratushny report contains recommendations for changes in transportation facilities in Canada to ensure that handicapped

The Disabled and the Handicapped

Canadians can move about the country with freedom and dignity.

Another incident that some Members of the House may know about and others may not indicates something of the mood of the times and the willingness to try something new to accommodate those who suffer from handicaps. I refer to the recent expansion of facilities here for deaf people. We now have live simultaneous sign language interpretation of Question Period that is broadcast in both languages. I want to mention that a few weeks ago the Speaker of the House provided three deaf students who were attending Question Period with a TV monitor in the Ladies' Gallery so that they could follow the sign language interpreter and hear the words spoken on the floor. That was an important development, not too big a thing in the broad scheme of things but, as the old song states "Little things mean a lot".

What we are looking at here is a chance to do something that will mean a lot to a great many Canadians. There are precedents as well for us to look at in the Province of Ontario. Reference was made moments ago to the recently re-enacted Elections Act of the Province of Ontario. That provides access for the handicapped to polling stations. We would do well at the federal level to benefit from the experience at other levels.

In conclusion, I want to say as well what we did in developing special ballots for blind voters. In my book on political rights I discuss the recent history of the development of two forms of ballots, the one involving the template and the other the notched ballot to assist blind voters. We are on the right track. The debate this afternoon is serving a very valuable purpose in bringing good suggestions forward that can be incorporated in the amendments that the Government will introduce this session. I look forward during the remainder of the debate to hearing other Members express their views as to how we can make great progress on this important question of achieving equality for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, I feel very honoured to be taking part in this debate on the motion of my hon. friend from Toronto. I listened to the speeches. After all, that is why we are here. Yes, Mr. Speaker, there are still Members who believe they can learn something by listening to their colleagues, and even after 20 years in the House, I am still very interested to hear what new Members, especially, have to say in the House.

I am proud to say that the comments made by our distinguished colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore (Mr. Boyer) will give all the Members of this House something to think about. And if I may have his attention, I would like to congratulate him publicly, because his comments, with those of my hon. colleague from Davenport (Mr. Caccia) and our hon. colleague from the New Democratic Party, deserve our attention. I want to start my comments—I can assure Hon. Members they will be brief enough to give another colleague on the Government side, who asked whether we could share the time