

According to her submission, four major conclusions emerge from recent research on aging and work performance: "(a) age-related declines in productivity, intelligence and reaction time are small; (b) there is considerable individual variation in age-related losses; (c) of the small losses that do occur, many can be, and are, compensated by experience; and (d) older workers are more satisfied [than younger workers] with their jobs, less likely to quit an organization for another job, and have lower rates of absenteeism and accidents on the job."<sup>30</sup>

The overview provided by Dr. Gee was supplemented by more specific comments on the part of numerous witnesses. Representatives of the Canadian Mental Health Association, for example, informed the Committee that gerontological research has demonstrated that individuals in their late seventies can be physically, emotionally and intellectually comparable to other individuals in their early forties, and that studies have shown that, although it may sometimes require more time to train an elderly person, the appropriately trained elderly employee is more dependable, just as efficient and just as productive as younger employees in the workforce.<sup>31</sup>

While older Canadians possess the abilities needed for success in retraining, and further education generally, their involvement in these activities remains low. Their community college enrolment illustrates this point. In 1985-1986 people aged 45 to 59 made up only 0.58% of community college full-time career-technical program enrolment, and 0.67% of university transfer program enrolment. Those aged 60 and above represented a miniscule 0.03% of full-time career-technical program enrolment, and 0.58% of university transfer program enrolment.<sup>32</sup> While these figures reflect growing involvement, when compared with enrolment levels of the early 1980's, there is plainly much room for improvement.

We believe that there is now a particular need for changed attitudes towards the participation of older Canadians in education and training programs. The retraining of the aging can no longer be viewed as merely an adjunct to the basic role of educational institutions in training the young. As demographic trends reduce the numbers of newly skilled labour market entrants available to meet changing needs in the workplace, the competitiveness of Canada's economy is going to rely increasingly on our success in fostering adaptation by older workers. Economic imperatives, as well as the needs of older Canadians and their demonstrated capacities, thus favour enhanced attention to education and training for older Canadians.