

*Private Members' Business*

As we approach the final decade of the 20th century, a person's disability is becoming the least important factor in preventing them from becoming fully integrated into the labour market. Instead, the real factors denying persons with disabilities full access to employment are elements that are external to the individual. Specifically, some of these key issues are education structures, hiring practices and employment disincentives.

We have the knowledge base and the skills to put the vast majority of people with a mental handicap to work. We lack the commitment to employment initiatives to put them in practice.

On the third initiative, enriched/innovative housing, there is a serious lack of residential services both in spaces and options available in most, if not all, provinces. There has been very little attention to innovative options and/or enriched housing that would address the needs of people with disabilities. There have been some, admittedly, but we believe there is much more. Ghettoizing and/or living on the street is the present reality for far too many of these adults.

As a service to communities, support to adults with disabilities and boost to economies, CMHC should become more responsive to the housing needs of this vulnerable population.

• (1910 )

The fourth area is the issue of poverty. The effect of long-term, severe poverty on an individual is more than just economic. There are physical and psychological consequences that are far more difficult to fix than to prevent.

We are talking about people with little or no disposable income, somewhere in the order of about \$60 per month. Their basic needs do not include adequate clothing, food or social recreational allowances. Transportation, if available, is extremely limited, the RDACL continues.

The loss of parental support through death or a fight to gain more independence results in a dramatic and drastic lifestyle change for most disabled adults. One of the first visible signs is frequently the use of second-hand clothing in place of the newer more stylish clothing they grew up with and are used to.

Apathy and depression quickly follow with corresponding loss of ability at work or at home. This is in part due

to the grieving of this loss, but the ongoing long-term impact has more to do with the change of diet.

Another indicator is the loss of opportunity. Without a strong personal support network and with a lack of purchasing power, most individuals are unable to challenge the service system to do more than basic maintenance support. They actually end up relying on few services with less potential to access and utilize the more generic service system.

Helplessness and hopelessness are the characteristics to best describe the individuals who experience significant and long-term poverty and are unable to challenge service systems or society to understand or address their needs.

There certainly is the willingness of groups to work with government agencies, as can be expressed in the following motion which was adopted by the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living. It reads as follows:

Be it resolved that the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living meet with other groups of advocates for disabling conditions to discuss suggestions for the Saskatchewan government to establish a non-means disability pension plan which can then be augmented by either work or family help so that our people may lead lives of dignity without the need to go without the basic comforts.

All of this is not to say that nothing is being done, for there are some efforts being undertaken to address this issue. However, my concern is that this matter remain uppermost in the minds of those preparing the agenda for the various health ministers across Canada.

From the *Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act Annual Report of 1989-90*, one can see the level to which some effort is being made. As an example, during the 1989-90 fiscal year, the federal government contributed \$106.5 million to the various provinces for expenditures for the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons.

Since the federal government pays half the provincial costs for vocational rehabilitation staff services and special equipment for disabled persons, the total annual expenditure on vocational rehabilitation in goods and services averages between \$200 to \$250 million per year.

If I just may quote some local figures, the province of Saskatchewan received a total of \$5,884,407 or nearly \$6 million for a figure that made up the total payments for the year 1989-90. Another way of putting it is it amounts to about \$6 for every man, woman and child living in the province of Saskatchewan. This was a contribution toward the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons.