

Popular Frustration

During the hearings that this Committee held at Akwesasne, Aboriginal people from across Canada told us repeatedly about the general lack of funds to meet the needs of people with disabilities in their communities. Witnesses described difficulties in providing appropriate education to Aboriginal children with disabilities. They also alerted us to problems with current rehabilitation and training programs to ensure the entry or re-entry of persons with disabilities into the workplace.

Grand Chief Mitchell of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne outlined his own difficulties in obtaining funding for broader-based programs such as adult education and nurses' training. He explained that, all too often, the Mohawk Council must 'make do' because of the lack of comprehensive government funding and co-ordination. For example, on a visit to the Canada Manpower district office in Cornwall, Ontario, officials told him that, although his most recent project proposals were approved, priorities had shifted to other needs and the projects were delayed. Chief Mitchell stressed that he was continually finding himself last on the federal funding list. He said:

This upsets me; what more can you do to try to get retraining or get people trained for a specific occupation? You try to find the funds, try to cut through all the red tape and the proposals and the plans that you have to put together, and you finally get them close to the reservation, only to have people tell you that because there was a [public service] strike in Canada, because there are other people who have far more influence, they would have to take precedence over your people.

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