

*Routine Proceedings*

Welfare, Employment and Immigration, and Finance, would be partners in that work as well.

The obligation is given in the same sense of partnership through which the government supported the establishment of the standing committee itself.

One might also remember that it was this government which established National Access Awareness Week. That week is yet another model of the partnership called for in the standing committee report and has already, since its inception, led to new initiatives across our society to create better access for Canadians with disabilities.

Let us turn to recommendation two of the committee report. The recommendation calls for an effective cross-government mechanism to ensure constant monitoring, advocacy and co-ordination of policy, legislation and regulations on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the only way to deliver such a mechanism and ensure its effectiveness is to engage the permanent members of the Public Service in the process. That is why we have already responded to this recommendation by establishing a committee of deputy ministers charged with this responsibility.

This committee will review regulations and policy and legislation before they become cast in iron. They will catch errors and discriminatory practices before they are put into effect. The idea is to create a mechanism which is proactive, not reactive. I believe this committee of deputy ministers will forge ahead in this regard.

Recommendation two and the government's response is to reflect the concerns of government, this House and the disabled community to establish a proactive mechanism as the heart of government, in particular for the future.

But what about existing legislation which may not reflect the needs of persons with disabilities; which may even support and sustain barriers between Canadians with disabilities and further integration?

This is the concern of recommendation three of the committee's report, which is addressed by calling for a comprehensive review of legislation and regulations and changes where necessary.

This is a truly mammoth undertaking, and I am sure that the committee, the chairman and former chairman of the committee realize how big a job this really is. It cannot be reasonably accomplished overnight, but it will be accomplished because if it is not, the whole process and purpose of monitoring and co-ordinating policy and regulations on behalf of persons with disabilities is indeed meaningless.

Our objective is to change, and it will happen. The government has already indicated in its response to recommendation three the scope of this review and its objectives. It has also stated that areas of legislation identified by the disabled community itself will receive priority consideration.

Recommendation four of the standing committee report concerns employment equity. I can well understand the frustration of some at what they may see as the slow pace of change within the federal government under employment equity.

I think it is important for all of us not to lose sight of the fact that even though the Employment Equity Act was passed in 1985, it is still only now coming into effect. But after the three-year waiting period and the first annual returns, we are beginning to come to a full evaluation and assessment of the policy and how it is working.

I believe it is working. Two years ago when the first annual report was tabled, only one employer within the jurisdiction of employment equity failed to report. Today, that company faces a \$50,000 fine.

On the other side of the coin, however, more than 1,200 government suppliers have now signed certificates of commitment to employment equity.

In the federal Public Service itself, there are also advances. Between December 1988 and December 1989, the representation of people with disabilities in the management category rose some 1.8 per cent and 3.4 per cent in the administrative support category. In the same period full and part-time public servants with disabilities in indeterminate positions rose by 2.8 per cent and 2.7 per cent respectively.

On the committee's fifth recommendation, this government is the first to recognize that if we are to be serious in the objective of achieving economic integration or any integration for persons with disabilities, we cannot afford to ignore the role other levels of government can and must play in this work.