

was a polite way of saying that many of the recommendations in *Obstacles* were quietly being shelved. Outside the government, however, knowledge and understanding of much of the *Obstacles* report was just filtering down to the grass roots where the expectations of government action had continued to grow.

Over the years, this gap between expectations and actions has widened. The proclamation of Section 15 of the *Charter* led disabled persons to anticipate greater progress. Organizations of disabled persons still saw the implementation of the *Obstacles* recommendations as their objective, but government departments prepared to dispute the wording and intent of specific recommendations. They argued that they had fulfilled their obligations or were proceeding "as practicable." In part, the departments' actions can be explained by the diminished level of concern for disability-related issues at the ministerial level and by the absence of an effective enforcement mechanism within the government. Without prodding from above, public servants found the task of addressing the complex issues related to disability easier to put off than to confront.

This treatment of the recommendations from *Obstacles* highlighted the fact that a true measure of accountability was absent. Was there any system to oversee the treatment of the remaining recommendations? It appears not. In the case of *Obstacles*, as with other situations, parliamentary committees appear to be the only ongoing bodies to try to establish an element of accountability in order to ensure fundamental and consistent progress for disabled persons.

Another episode began in October 1985, when *Equality for All*, the report of the Sub-Committee on Equality Rights, made another attempt to promote changes. The Sub-Committee noted the bureaucratic delays in implementing the *Obstacles*' recommendations, as well as the absence of effective co-operation among disabled persons, private organizations and governments. Further, *Equality for All* argued that the cost of meeting the objectives set out in *Obstacles* had been overemphasized and used as an excuse for inaction. In addition to recommending that the government take all necessary measures without delay to implement the *Obstacles*' recommendations that concerned access to facilities and services, *Equality for All*, proposed measures that would increase the accountability of those responsible for policies. Specifically, the report recommended that a federal coordinating agency should be responsible for supervising programs and for promoting the rights of disabled persons and that this agency should report annually to Parliament. *Equality for All* also recommended that a House of Commons sub-committee on the disabled and handicapped be given a permanent order of reference to study the annual report of the Minister. The Equality Rights Committee recognized that progress in the area related to disability would be difficult to achieve and urged the federal government to develop its priorities and timetables in collaboration with the provincial governments.