

Private Members' Business

In fact, what happens is that people continually get hired on term because they are disabled and they are never quite good enough to be hired permanently. Rather than facilitating the employment of persons with a disability, we are exploiting them.

What happens is that under the access program they get referred to a position and as soon as the special money that is provided runs out the department finds for some reason that it cannot keep this person on. So they get shuffled around. Now they are working and now they are not working.

It is not enough, and later this evening members will hear amendments to the act that we will be dealing with that would place additional responsibilities on the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Edwards: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I have been listening with care to what my hon. friend has been injecting into this debate. I understand that she has an interest in bills that will be before us later this evening. However I would ask you, sir, to invoke the rules of relevancy and ask her to stay on the subject of this private members' hour.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order, please! I would remind all hon. members that the rule of relevancy is one of the most difficult that the Chair has to enforce. Therefore, I would call upon the co-operation of both sides of this House. I think it is always useful to keep this in mind.

I recognize the hon. member for Ottawa West again, for 30 seconds.

[*English*]

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I really do resent the interruption.

The employment of persons with disabilities is one of the most crucial issues that persons with disabilities face.

• (1950)

I simply call upon the government, and all of us as parliamentarians, every time we are dealing with legislation, but particularly as an employer, to put into practice those principles that the hon. member's motion tonight talks about.

It is not enough to talk about these things in principle. We must put them into practice at every opportunity. As an employer we, the federal government, can do more for the disabled and their equality of access than anyone else in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations and Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity today to respond to the motion by the hon. member for Regina—Wascana dated May 15, 1991, in which the hon. member suggests convening a conference of provincial ministers. The purpose of the conference would be to promote the adoption of programs that will ensure that disabled persons across Canada receive the comprehensive services they need to function in society.

I want to thank the hon. member for his concern for the integration of disabled persons into society. This concern is indeed more than legitimate since, as we know, disabled persons represent 13 per cent of the Canadian population and, in too many cases, remain an untapped resource, both socially and economically.

I would first like to give a brief overview of the past twelve years which I believe will justify the position taken by our government.

In 1991 the United Nations proclaimed the International Year of the Disabled. This was the kick start for a world awareness campaign.

In 1982 the government enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms a clause on disabled persons which gave them the right to the same protection and benefits of the law, irrespective of any discrimination including discrimination on the basis of mental or physical disabilities.

This first step toward equality was to open the door to a whole series of measures and projects which, over the past decade have helped the disabled community to start taking its place in Canadian society.

In 1983 the United Nations proclaimed the decade of the disabled, an opportunity to insist on their rights as citizens. In 1985 our Prime Minister published a statement on the decade of the disabled, stressing the need to encourage the disabled to become fully involved in society and to be part of social change, in order to develop their potential and accept their duties as citi-