

health and funding (Recommendation 12). A concerted attempt, by both levels of government acting cooperatively, would contribute to the elimination of a range of practices which are in dismal contrast to the human rights standards Canada has unequivocally affirmed. It would also enable the more efficient use of existing health care resources, by substituting relatively low-cost forms of care for institutional care which, in addition to its other shortcomings, is extremely expensive.

2. Housing and Transportation Services

Housing issues brought before the Committee were chiefly raised in the context of comments affirming the need for alternatives to institutional care, and related to the availability of affordable and appropriate housing. The widespread absence of public transport adapted to meet the special requirements of significant numbers of elderly users was also seen as an instance of the age-based erosion of rights, and the deficiency of transportation suitable for the mobility-impaired was specifically criticized.

With respect to housing, the Committee was advised that almost one-half of those single senior citizens whose incomes are below the poverty line set by Statistics Canada rent housing, and 37% of low-income families headed by a person over age 65 also rent. Such renters must allocate crippling large portions of their total income merely to the paying of rent. Indeed, 77% of those over age 65 who rent devote 30% of their income or more solely to the meeting of housing costs.²⁵ It is not surprising, in view of these statistics, that the need for an adequate supply of affordable housing tops the list of concerns brought to the Committee by witnesses who addressed housing issues. The inadequacy of supplies, furthermore, was seen to be directly a product of attitudes of indifference, if not hostility, to the elderly. Builders, the Committee was told, concentrate on the building of luxury housing, while established residents protest against the construction of seniors' housing complexes on the grounds that property values may fall.

Regarding the design of housing, the Committee was told that often simple and inexpensive details can make a critical difference. The presence of a flat entrance to an apartment balcony, rather than a ledge or step, can combine with other features to make the difference between housing viable for the elderly and housing which precipitates the journey into institutional care.