

to effect permanent change. Municipalities, corporations, organizations, unions and societies come together to meet the challenge of making concrete improvements in the accessibility of services. It has created a momentum which will continue to grow.

As an institution, Parliament too, shared in the accomplishments of the Decade. Disabled persons' concerns are now represented at the centre of Canadian democracy by our Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons. We have been granted a unique mandate by the House of Commons to "propose, promote, monitor and assess initiatives aimed at the integration and equality of disabled persons in all sectors of Canadian society." Our Committee is fortunate to possess a distinguished lineage which stretches back to the Special Committee which prepared the *Obstacles* report.

*Obstacles*, we still recognize, was not just a call to action but it also set out a shopping list. The final report which was tabled in the House of Commons on February 1981 made 130 recommendations. These covered the areas of human rights, employment, income, access to information, housing, independent living, access to facilities, transportation, recreation, education, technical aids, consumerism, institutional living, attitudes, prevention, research needs, and international perspectives. The Special Committee blamed the slow progress to that time on a "lack of direction and coordination on the part of government, institutional and community leaders who have the power to make changes." *Obstacles* also argued that by reassessing priorities and without increasing public spending, Canadians could meet the needs of citizens with disabilities.

We feel that these last observations are as relevant today as they were in 1981.

The investigation that resulted in *Obstacles* combined with the government's positive reception of the report to promote the popular belief that issues related to disability had found an important place on the social and political agenda. Because of its depth and comprehensiveness, *Obstacles* became the public benchmark against which expectations of progress have been measured. This approach is as true for those of us who sat on the Special Committee as it is for those organizations which submitted proposals for change in 1980.

What happened after *Obstacles*? Two years after the report was released, a gap showed up between the expectations of those committed to the findings in the report and the will of those responsible for the implementation of the recommendations. Initially, in December 1981, the government responded enthusiastically and made commitments to act on over eighty recommendations in the *Obstacles* report. In *Surmounting Obstacles*, which was released in 1983, the government indicated action or active consideration of all recommendations in the original report except those that were withdrawn or were outside federal jurisdiction. But where no direct implementation of the recommendations was undertaken, *Surmounting Obstacles* repeatedly stated that "reviews" were being undertaken or that "data" was being gathered or that "discussions" were underway. This