

*Private Members' Business*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues who will speak on this subject today and give me their support so that this motion is passed.

[English]

**Ms. Barbara Greene (Don Valley North):** Madam Speaker, I wish to respond to the hon. member's motion that the government persuade provincial and municipal governments to encourage reception hall owners to provide more accessible washroom facilities for persons with disabilities.

I can heartily support this motion because I believe it is something that fits in with government policy. This government is constantly striving to improve access for disabled persons to all facilities. I quote the Prime Minister:

Individuals with disabilities shall be assured access to fundamental elements of daily life that are generally available in the community.

This principle, taken from the Prime Minister's *Declaration on the Decade of Disabled Persons*, is the principle that guides the Department of Public Works in its continued effort to make barrier-free design a reality in all buildings under its custody.

Madam Speaker, allow me to tell my hon. colleague and other members of the House some of the things Public Works is already doing in this regard. It is the department's policy to ensure that all its facilities are accessible to people who have disabilities. All new buildings are designed so as to be accessible to disabled people. Information and standards on barrier-free design are regularly updated.

This government is committed to improving accessibility. The aim is to make facilities usable by a wide range of people, and we most certainly welcome input from the disabled community to guide us in this endeavour.

In accordance with Treasury Board's revised accessibility policy, Public Works is currently undertaking a five-year plan for making improvements to accessibility. Treasury Board policy on accessibility is unequivocal. Its policy objective clearly states that it will ensure that people with disabilities can gain access to facilities throughout the federal government.

All new government buildings are designed to be accessible to people in wheelchairs. Public Works' barrier-free design standard sets out requirements for door widths, ramp slopes, handrails, and washrooms, among other things.

Of course I realize the hon. member's motion addressed the question of access outside federal responsibility. Nonetheless, this government is not reluctant to confront the matter just because it does not have direct control over access standards outside federal jurisdiction. We are working with other organizations in their efforts to improve accessibility for the disabled.

• (1710)

For example, the government has helped the Canadian Standards Association produce a 13-volume catalogue of building products useful in making buildings accessible. It has supported the CSA in developing a national standard that was published only two months ago in a document entitled *Barrier-Free Design*. My hon. friend will be pleased to know that *Barrier-Free Design* is an excellent resource for governments at all levels. It will assist them in creating environments that will meet the needs of all individuals, including persons of disabilities. Yes, in reference to the hon. member's motion, the *Barrier-Free Design* document includes a section on washrooms. In fact the publication contains 13 pages on these facilities.

Governments at all levels, as well as the private sector, are strongly encouraged to adopt the national standard found in the CSA publication. With that in mind, the National Building Code has been revised to reflect the new CSA standards. Just think, Madam Speaker, how much better it will be if across the country one standard is used by architects, engineers, and others involved in building design.

It would give all of us, and especially persons with disabilities, increased access to a wide range of facilities. This government is determined to see that happen. It is really what National Access Awareness Week is all about.

Madam Speaker, 1990 marked the third year for this grassroots project. It is a most successful partnership. National Access Awareness Week brings together governments at all levels, as well as educators, business, labour, volunteer groups, and organizations of people with disabilities.