

*Private Members' Business*

ences for a number of them. They are now able to live more fully complete lives as members of society.

Another facility, the Ottawa-Carleton Independent Learning Centre, is devoted to assisting people with fully independent living, as determined by themselves. I think that is the important thing. For far too long society, families, friends, people who care for persons with disabilities have assumed that we know best and have not allowed them the independence to choose and have not allowed them to have that independence to choose by ensuring that the services are there to give them the fullest possible range of choices.

Also in Ottawa West we have the Disabled Persons Community Resources which again brings together all the resources of this region and ensures that people have access to services. It is not enough that the services are there, that the people know about them, that there are not barriers based on mobility, knowledge, economic ability, language; if the services are there they have to be accessible to people in all the many ways we can think of accessibility.

Perhaps the most important service in that comprehensive package of services that the motion mentions and in the ability to function in society that the motion mentions is the ability to be employed. It is interesting that this motion comes forward for debate tonight, sandwiched between two bills, both of which are relevant to the motion, the bill we were dealing with before this hour on pensions for Public Service employees and the bill we will be dealing with later this evening on reform of the Public Service. It is not enough to bring forward issues in isolation.

What we have to learn to do in this House is to look at every piece of legislation, every government program and say among the other things we say in analysing a bill, does this bill assist or further hinder the ability of persons with disabilities to function fully in society? Both of these bills we are dealing with this evening are relevant, both of them continue or in fact increase impediments to persons with disabilities functioning in society.

I say that because the federal government is the largest employer in this country. As the largest employer in the country it has the obligation and it has the capacity to demonstrate that persons with disabilities can be fully

integrated in employment by proper accommodation in recognition of the disability and, more importantly, in recognition of the inherent abilities of that person.

The federal government does not do that very well as an employer, and it is certainly something we in this House have an obligation to pay attention to.

For instance, we just dealt with Bill C-55, which allows some limited access, not full access, to pension plans for part-time employees. Many disabled people cannot work full time, or in order to remain as fully employed as they can with their disability they may be able to work full time for a while and then shift to part-time work for a while if their condition worsens, and then they may return to full-time work when they are able to.

Up until now, and even now, with the very limited provisions for part-timers to contribute to a pension plan, part-time employees in the Public Service have not had full access to a pension plan. Therefore their ability to work and have financial stability, not only during their working years but after they are no longer able to work, is limited by a bill that we are dealing with right now.

We will be dealing later this evening with Bill C-26, which deals with employment practices in the Public Service. That bill again continues some barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.

There is great concern among groups in society who are traditionally disadvantaged in employment—women, aboriginal peoples, people of colour, and people with a range of disabilities. There is great concern with regard to this bill that the Public Service is shifting away from the concept of hiring somebody on the basis of what they can do and giving managers more discretion so that they do not have to meet that standard of “who has the ability to do this job”.

Right now there are programs within the Public Service Commission that allow the Commission to place a disabled person in a job in a department by providing funding for that job for a period of time. The intention is that they will get trained and the employer, the department, will have the experience of having a disabled person working in their department or in their branch, and will discover what this person can do rather than seeing only the disability. Hopefully that will lead to a full-time permanent job for them.