



# Statements and Speeches

---

No. 80/1

## 1981: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DISABLED PERSONS

A Statement by the Honourable Walter Dinsdale, M.P., to the Third Committee of the Thirty-fourth Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 27, 1979

The Canadian Government strongly supported the motions which proclaimed 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons and established the Secretariat and Advisory Committee to prepare for 1981. Today, we reiterate that support and congratulate the Advisory Committee on the Report that is before us. It is an excellent blueprint for the Year of the Disabled, and I am pleased to see that a number of countries have begun preparatory work for 1981.

Celebrations during the International Year will have to be focused on individual member states, for it is axiomatic that the disabled can best be served within the context of the needs and experience of each country.

But Canada also supports the suggestion that regional or sub-regional intergovernmental organizations prepare regional plans for the year. We feel that it is important that these regional commissions, or regional intergovernmental organizations, report back to the Advisory Committee for purposes of co-ordination and consultation. Prevention and rehabilitation are vital concerns of all countries, and only by co-operation and co-ordination on a technical level can these needs be met.

The needs in rural and underserved areas present a special problem. The technical meetings of officials responsible for national programs of disability prevention and rehabilitation will result in the development of new and innovative methods of dealing effectively with these needs. The regional initiatives already taken within the European Social Development Program and the Organization of African Unity demonstrate this point.

I would suggest that the specialized agencies and bodies of the UN could co-ordinate these regional efforts through continuing inter-agency consultations. Non-governmental organizations, such as Rehabilitation International, should also be involved.

In Canada, preparations for the Year are well under way. A Bureau of Rehabilitation has been established in the Department of National Health and Welfare. The Canadian Government is proposing the appointment of a Select Committee of the House of Commons. This Select Committee will examine the nature and scope of current federal policies, programs and services directed to the general public and those designed to assist disabled persons. It will review the relationship between existing federal programs and those programs and services carried out by the voluntary sector and the provinces, and will report and make recommendations on the measures

---