

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS'
BUSINESS — MOTIONS**[*Translation*]**THE ELDERLY AND THE HANDICAPPED**

ACCESS TO PUBLIC FACILITIES

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take steps to convince the provinces and municipalities to encourage owners of reception halls to provide washrooms on the same floor as the reception facility for the use of the handicapped and the elderly.

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to a motion that was suggested by my constituents. Because of our system, it took several months before we could discuss the motion this evening. Although my riding covers a residential area, I believe it has the largest number of reception halls of any riding in the Montreal area.

On various occasions, when I attended certain events, a number of senior citizens and disabled persons drew my attention to the inconvenience they were exposed to in certain establishments. Some of these have a banquet or reception hall on the second floor, while the washrooms are on the first floor, with no elevator or escalator between the two floors. This creates a serious problem for the elderly and disabled persons who have to go down to the first floor during the event. That is why they asked me to make representations to persuade provincial or municipal governments to adopt regulations that would require these establishments, when construction permits are issued, to provide washrooms and bathrooms on the same floor as the reception hall, or else have an elevator or escalator accessible for the disabled.

Madam Speaker, at the federal level we have the National Building Code, published by the National Research Council, and I have a copy here of certain sections of the latest version, printed in 1990. I noticed that they mention designing barrier-free access, to enable disabled persons to enter a building. They refer to entrances and routes, floors serviced by escalators, equipment controls, areas where a barrier-free route is required, and parking areas for the disabled. There are special provisions for washrooms, for instance. The number of toilets depends on the number of people. The code also specifies the size of rooms, windows, ventilation and plumbing. There are various sections in the

National Building Code, but to my knowledge there is nothing in the Code or in our provincial and municipal regulations that could be used to deal with a situation I find unacceptable.

I realize that the owners of these establishments, because of relatively high costs and limited space, have to make the best possible use of the space available, but I feel this is an absolute necessity.

Imagine elderly people who during a banquet or reception have to go downstairs for quite some distance to go to the washroom, and imagine the kind of situation this creates for people in wheelchairs!

I think our National Building Code should be amended accordingly and that the provinces and municipalities should follow suit. Madam Speaker, I hope hon. members will be able to support the motion this evening so that the government can take the necessary action.

I know that my colleague from Winnipeg-North, who is very familiar with this issue, intends to stand up and speak on this motion. If there are others who wish to take part in the debate, they are all welcome to do so. I hope that once the time comes to vote, this motion we will be adopted.

Before concluding and giving the chance to others to speak, I want to add that a recent report—it was tabled in June 1990; as a matter of fact this second report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons was one of the last ones to be tabled—makes six recommendations to make life easier for disabled people. One of them, goes along the same line as my motion. It is recommendation number 5 at page 35 of the report, which reads:

5. That the Government of Canada undertake, in cooperation with provincial, territorial and municipal governments, to develop a federal-provincial-municipal plan of action for disabled persons that will ensure ongoing consultations, cooperation and coordinated action. This plan of action should be initiated at the forthcoming meeting of federal and provincial first ministers on the economy.

In closing, Madam Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, my constituents in Saint-Léonard, especially the elderly and the disabled, have requested on a number of occasions that this issue be resolved. I raise it in this House on their behalf and as the member of Parliament for Saint-Léonard, so that we can take the necessary steps.