

*Routine Proceedings*

Now we come to 1988. If one recalls, it was a very short speech because the government had only one item on its agenda at that time. Again, in only two lines it said:

My government is determined to secure the benefits of economic opportunity for this and future generations of Canadians.

That was in 1988. I would assume that that also included disabled Canadians.

Again, on April 3, 1989, it was mentioned. Mind you, Mr. Speaker, it was reduced to one-and-three-quarters lines by this time. It stated:

It must make full participants of disabled persons and visible minorities. It is imperative that literacy initiatives, education, training and retraining of Canada's work force, especially our youth, reflect the requirements of a modern economy.

The Liberals before them made the same kind of statements that they wanted to do the same kind of good work for disabled Canadians. Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting. The problem is not just words.

If we wanted words, there are all kinds of nice words floating around. Everybody says nice things about the disabled community. What is absent is action. The words are very nice and they are very welcome, but it would be a hell of a lot better if we had some action tied to these words.

I want to give some examples about what happened and has happened successively since the tabling of the *Obstacles* report, and the government of the day's response to that report. Here is what the committee report says in reference to that.

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 80 recommendations of the *Obstacles* report. In *Surmounting Obstacles*—that was the government's response—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indicated action or active consideration of all recommendations in the original report, except those that were withdrawn or were outside federal jurisdiction. Where no direct implementation of the recommendations was undertaken, *Surmounting Obstacles* repeatedly stated that reviews

were being undertaken, that data was being gathered, or that discussions were under way.

That is exactly what the minister's response was a week and a half ago. Exactly the same.

What the committee said in respect to the previous government's response was that this was a polite way of saying that many of the recommendations in *Obstacles* were quietly being shelved.

The gap between these expectations and the actions has widened ever since. It does not have to be that way.

I want to give a perfect example about what we are talking about here. In the government's response of a week and a half ago, an awful lot of emphasis was placed on how government agencies and departments, et cetera, were working together and what a really great job they were doing.

I want to read a letter that I received from the British Columbia Coalition of the Disabled, dated September 6, 1990. This letter was originally sent to Max Yalden, the Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. It states:

Dear Mr. Yalden:

Re: Access to Crab Park for persons with disabilities—

We are extremely displeased with the Vancouver Port Authority's proposed plan to address the lack of access for persons with disabilities to Crab Park.

The Vancouver Port Authority is a federal agency. The letter continues:

The access design they are recommending is totally inappropriate and has been rejected by the community and professional engineers for some considerable time.

You may not be aware of the thousands of volunteer hours that have gone into seeking an appropriate solution to this problem. Since December, 1986, community groups have organized public meetings, written briefs, lobbied all levels of government, canvassed the surrounding district and held demonstration picnics—

Three years ago, when Ms Joan Meister filed her complaint under the Canadian Human Rights Act we endorsed her position and have remained active in the ongoing community and municipal meetings.

According to the professional advice we have received and the consultations we have conducted, the Columbia Street overpass is the only viable solution to the access