

Disability Allowance

There are many handicapped people attending a conference in this city this week. I suggest that members invite these people to our dining room at the expense of the taxpayers, just as we have dinner at the expense of the taxpayers. Many would not even be able to get into this building. They certainly would have great difficulty getting into our dining room. That is a shocking situation. The federal government should be setting an example.

Much greater attention should be given to affirmative action programs that will include fair opportunities for handicapped people. I understand the federal government is now encouraging this in the private sector. I am in favour of that. However, we should be leading the way in our federal services. I understand that approximately 1 per cent of federal employees are handicapped, whereas in the general population 8 per cent are employable handicapped people. We very definitely must do something about opening up job opportunities and facilities that are accessible to these people.

During the election campaign the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) and the Conservative party made a strong promise that there would be a major change to the Canadian Human Rights Act which would provide that handicapped Canadians would have the same protection from discrimination as other protected groups. I have been told by a number of handicapped people and organizations that they are quickly losing faith in this government and in the Prime Minister because nothing is being done about this. There was a very strong promise to do something without delay; however, it was not mentioned in the throne speech. It has now been referred to a select committee which is really a delaying mechanism. The Prime Minister indicated that enough studies had been done and this was something he would implement. I challenge the government and the hon. member who presented this motion to do something about this.

In summary, we would like to see more income tax deductions for all working people. We would like to see this one applied in the form of a tax credit for those who do not earn enough to pay income tax and who will be discriminated against if this motion goes through. We would also like it to apply to unemployed handicapped people whose needs are even greater, as they receive something like \$300 a month from their handicapped person's allowance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the hon. member for that motion which I consider very important and timely because, as he knows, I also have had cases in my riding which caused me certain frustrations and which I believe should receive the particular attention of parliamentarians with respect to the deductibility of certain expenses incurred as a result of the fact that they are handicapped.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to speak at length, maybe three or four minutes, simply to make the point that we in the opposition are in complete agreement with the hon. member. The motion in question would allow an individual to claim an

[Mrs. Mitchell.]

allowance of \$1,000 which would be indexed to the cost of living if that individual were handicapped for a period of 12 months ending in the current year.

Mr. Speaker, sad situations occur sometimes. I have cases in my riding where people are in receipt of Canada Pension Plan benefits for example. That plan pays them a pension because they are totally unable to work. They are in wheelchairs, but for very particular reasons, they cannot yet attend to their daily needs and perhaps even feed themselves and do certain household chores. For all practical purposes, those people simply cannot work. They are totally handicapped in the full sense of the word. They have a medical certificate issued by a doctor attesting that they are unable to work. They have met the requirements of the law, and in spite of that they are sometimes refused to include in their tax returns deductions which would have the effect of reducing taxes payable.

Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to join my colleagues of the Liberal party in congratulating the hon. member, who is very progressive in his motion. I hope the government will take this motion really to heart and see to it that it is passed rapidly and wholeheartedly.

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. John McDermid (Brampton-Georgetown): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the motion presented by my hon. friend from Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen). In the past week I have had the privilege of attending two openings in my constituency of Brampton-Georgetown, one of a senior citizens' drop-in centre, the other of a public swimming pool, both designed with the handicapped in mind and heavily supported not only by the government but by the private sector. The swimming pool facilities allow wheelchair access to the pool and also to the whirlpool bath, a new idea which is a very worth-while thing. I congratulate the people, the politicians and the staff of the Region of Peel and the city of Brampton on both those worth-while projects.

There is one area I should like to talk about for just a moment, the issue of transportation of the handicapped. There have been numerous representations in the past seeking an extension of the general exemption for the disabled. One reason which is often given is that it would provide for special transportation costs faced by many of the handicapped in getting to and from work. One feels sympathy and admiration for handicapped persons who have the energy and ambition to get out and work. I agree with the hon. member on the other side that we should increasingly encourage these endeavours. I also believe various areas of the House of Commons should be more accessible to the handicapped.

To get back to the subject of transportation, the answer which has been given in the past is that there should not be a general widening of the exemption since this would benefit others who don't have the same transportation expenses. The general question of employment related expenses has long been a difficult issue. Under tax law, transportation expenses can be