

*Private Members' Business*

This is why the government has spared no efforts to make Canadians more aware of the physical obstacles standing in the way of the handicapped. It has been seeking the active co-operation of others—provinces and municipalities especially—to promote similar initiatives from coast to coast.

The Secretary of State was among the many organizations which responded favourably to the call to action. In 1988, the department launched the National Access Awareness Week, a golden opportunity to make Canadians appreciate the kind of obstacles a disabled person faces every day and to urge them to do something to facilitate the active participation of their less fortunate fellow citizens.

• (1740)

The result of co-operation by federal-provincial governments, municipalities, unions, agencies that support the disabled and the private sector, this initiative has also helped spotlight the needs and expectations of these Canadians in the five main areas that are the focus of the week: transportation, housing, the workplace, recreation and education.

This week also initiated the Five-Star Community Award Program, whose purpose is to give Canadian communities an opportunity to show their commitment to integration of the disabled. The program also pays tribute to achievements by municipalities in this area.

The quality of facilities and services made available to persons with a disability in Canada depends largely on municipalities and communities, and the Five-Star Community Award, sponsored by the National Access Awareness Week Committee, the Canadian Federation of Municipalities and the Department of the Secretary of State, offers an incentive to consider how they can improve the quality of life of disabled members of their communities and take the necessary action to achieve that objective.

From year to year, this program has become increasingly popular. In 1990, about 15 municipalities across the country received Star Awards, and for the first time since the program started in 1988, a Five-Star Community Award, the highest award for access awareness, was given to the municipality of Redvers in Saskatchewan, and to Ottawa and Kitchener in Ontario.

In Quebec, a Star Award went to the municipality of Saint-Louis-de-France, which organized a special transportation service covering ten neighbouring municipalities.

Calgary, Alberta, has also received a Star Award. The city has taken a number of steps to guarantee access to its buildings and facilities. In fact, the city has had a parallel transportation system for 19 years.

Actually, the Five-Star Community Award Program is only one of many initiatives taken by this government, in conjunction with its partners, to make this country more accessible to all citizens.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the government's response to the report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons which was tabled not long ago.

In line with its commitment to promoting full and complete integration of disabled persons, the present government intends to act on the committee's recommendations to a very considerable extent.

It will undertake a detailed analysis of federal legislation as it relates to disabled persons; it will conduct a post-censal survey in 1991, to update the national data bank on the disabled; and it will establish a committee of deputy ministers that will be asked to improve co-ordination of federal activities in this area.

Every citizen has a contribution to make to its community and the right to participate in its life. So, whenever we remove obstacles for the handicapped, we increase their potential to make such a contribution and we build up a pool of skills for the benefit of our communities and the general wealth of the nation.

We have recognized that reality, Madam Speaker and that is why this government is determined to pursue its goals with the co-operation of his partners, the provinces and municipalities, in every area under its jurisdiction so as to allow the handicapped the opportunity to become full-fledged citizens.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for Saint-Léonard who raised this issue which will continue to be a priority for Canadians as a whole and particularly for this government.