

force, the stage was set for development of early community mental health initiatives in several states of the US and the Province of Saskatchewan. Though disabled people and/or family members were involved in all of the foregoing developments, leadership often came from concerned professionals. That was less the case for intellectual impairment which had largely been ignored. Emboldened by a conviction of injustice, and that their rights as citizens were not recognized, the first large grassroots disability advocacy organization emerged led by parents of children with intellectual impairments. These began in the late 1940s in both Canada and the US and were well established a decade later.

Canadian public policy, too, began to evolve. In particular, innovations in the Province of Saskatchewan from 1948 to the early 1960s such as universal access to hospitalization and medical care, and community based approaches to rehabilitation and mental health services gradually became adopted as part of the Canadian framework. As well, there was a growing acceptance and support at the federal government level of legislative provisions that were framed within a human justice and rights perspective, culminating in adoption of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982 as part of Canada's Constitution. Particularly notable is that the *Charter* represents the first time in any country where disability is explicitly recognized as prohibited from discrimination within the highest law of the land.

These and other developments set the stage for significant international initiatives in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. By the late 1960s Canadians concerned with disability no longer looked reflexively to the US or Europe for answers to Canadian issues. Whether in mental health, the developmental disabilities or health care and medical rehabilitation, there was a strong sense of a "Canadian way" of doing things based on innovations developed in this country. These developments emerged in a context where, during the same time, Canada had established itself on a much broader basis as an effective middle power on the world stage by championing UN Peace Keeping Forces and in other ways.

Perhaps the most notable development during the 1970s was the strong emergence of consumer advocacy organizations generally, and of disability self-advocacy organizations in particular. Already in 1973 Canada's government of the day as represented by Marc Lalonde, Minister of National Health and Welfare, advised the CRCD that support for future disability policy would only evolve if disabled people themselves were at the table along with representatives of professionally based organizations and government. Though the story is too complex to be told here, this general view was transformed into concrete action in 1980 when the Parliamentary Committee on the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) gave greatest priority to the views of disabled people themselves in preparing its *Obstacles Report*. This Committee adopted as a given that the best source of information about the state of supports and services would be disabled people themselves, and that these should be presented in pictorial and story form along with statistical information and recommendations - a significant break from earlier patterns where professionals had been the primary sources, and reports were long on analysis and short on personal interest.

The reasons for setting up the IYDP Parliamentary Committee in the first place were rather pedestrian, having more to do with domestic political considerations than any broader aspiration. But, when events unfolded as they did at the 1980 Winnipeg Rehabilitation International (RI) Congress, and given the experience of the Committee, there was a readiness to take the story of a Canadian approach to the world. Following on the RI Congress in 1980, and for more than a decade thereafter, Canada played a proactive role in promoting the rights and inclusion of disabled people in a variety of arenas not the least of these being the creation of a disability rights movement