

the coordination of efforts at the federal level. The experience of the Committee indicates clearly that, in many cases, needed investigatory work has already been done, by elderly Canadians themselves, and that government should now avail itself of their expertise.

A recurring theme in the comments of witnesses was that negative images of aging and the elderly abound in our culture, and are pervasively reflected in the behaviour of individuals with whom the elderly interact. Some witnesses spoke not so much of age discrimination as of "ageism", a prevailing acceptance of negative stereotypes of the aging and elderly. The pervasiveness of ageist attitudes in Canada was a constantly-invoked frame of reference for witnesses presenting evidence on the diverse forms of age discrimination. The Committee would add that the prevalence of negative stereotypes in the media and elsewhere is only one dimension of the problem, which is also apparent more covertly in our easy tolerance of requirements for the disclosure of age on a vast array of governmental and other information forms, suggesting public acceptance of a correspondingly wide reliance on the use of age criteria in decision-making.

The Committee was struck by the contrast between the underlying values of Western industrial societies, where a focus on the production and consumption of material goods and the pursuit of wealth appear to define the central human quest, and the values of traditional societies, which stress the spiritual and moral dimensions of human existence. As a supplementary submission of one group of witnesses stated: "We are as a people too materialistic; we might look to our elderly for wisdom and insight. We might consider them a financial liability and a burden on our economy. We might also see them as a source of spiritual enrichment and a link to our roots. We might also see them as a source of wisdom and insight. We might also see them as a source of spiritual enrichment and a link to our roots. We might also see them as a source of wisdom and insight. We might also see them as a source of spiritual enrichment and a link to our roots." The Committee also noted the widespread reluctance of Canadians, who so justifiably take pride in their collective human rights record, to take action to correct the inequalities and injustices that exist in our society towards the elderly. It is a source of regret that the government has not shown more leadership in this regard.

It was the view of the Committee that a fundamental challenge for this study is to identify the areas in which the government has failed to live up to its obligations towards the elderly, and to recommend ways in which the government can better fulfill its obligations. The Committee also noted the widespread reluctance of Canadians, who so justifiably take pride in their collective human rights record, to take action to correct the inequalities and injustices that exist in our society towards the elderly. It is a source of regret that the government has not shown more leadership in this regard.