

Frustration in the Aboriginal community will also likely result from the activities of the Department of National Health and Welfare. Apart from gathering information, that Department is also devoting \$2 million under the National Strategy to improving access on reserves by retro-fitting existing health facilities. All new facilities will meet the standards of the Canadian Standards Association. The Department indicates that 267 facilities require retro-fitting at a total cost of \$7.5 million. But Treasury Board has only provided \$1.2 million (\$280,000 per year for the next four years) and the Department's Medical Services Branch has committed \$888,000 from its capital budget (\$222,000 each year for the next four years). Given this small budget, only 20 per cent of the facilities that require renovation will be retro-fitted under the Strategy. In order to meet existing needs, the Department has requested an additional \$6 million from Treasury Board.

This Committee is troubled that the Medical Services Branch of Health and Welfare Canada is equating physical accessibility with the elimination of barriers for Aboriginal people with disabilities. Indeed, departmental officials admitted that they are placing too much attention on ramps and retro-fitting and not giving enough consideration to other disability concerns that the Department could easily address. Neil Faulkner, Assistant Deputy Minister, Medical Services Branch, told us that "clearly, as a medical branch, we're going to have to dialogue more with people in that community to understand their needs"³

3. *Minutes*, Issue 9, p. 23, 13 February 1992.