

resources are to be used efficiently. Costs of employment programs or accommodation initiatives, for example, need to be set against the substantial savings of public money achieved when the dependence of people with disabilities on social assistance is reduced.

We do not believe that economic integration is an unrealistic objective because of costs, especially when cost-benefit considerations are viewed in the context of labour market trends and anticipated labour shortages. Nor do we believe that disabled persons will demand specific changes whose net costs, on examination, prove to be extreme. We are convinced, however, that the collective failure of Canadians to give critical attention to myths about the costs of change, to recognize the rising economic and human costs of the failure to change, and to reflect these considerations in legislation, policy and practice, has become inexcusable.

B. Our Work To Date

Our work thus far has involved a series of hearings which began with briefings by advocacy and service organizations in June of 1989, and proceeded with formal hearings on the theme of economic integration commencing in February of this year. While most of the hearings have been held in Ottawa, the initial briefings were held in Toronto. Meetings were held, as well, in Washington, where we travelled to investigate comprehensive disability rights legislation which has since been passed by the Congress of the United States. A major purpose of this trip was to find out how disability issues have come to be recognized as a priority in that country.

Our hearings have apprised us of the major issues which must be addressed in a comprehensive study of economic integration. They are, by and large, the same issues that have been identified in reports dating back to the landmark overview, *Obstacles*, that the Special Committee on the Disabled and Handicapped released almost a decade ago, and that representatives of people with disabilities have repeatedly raised since that time. Sadly, the range of issues remains substantially undiminished.

In many cases where initiatives have been undertaken, we are concerned not only about their effectiveness but about inequitable levels of attention to the major types of disability: physical, developmental, psychiatric, visual, hearing, learning and invisible. Canada must seek to integrate all people with disabilities, not merely those with the highest media profile or those whose disabilities can be most conveniently accommodated.

This report provides our overview of the major issues and areas of concern, and points out relationships which need to guide the development of future proposals. It also sets out the basic findings which we have obtained thus far. Above all, it shows Canadians that we are still a long way from living up to our commitments to those among us who have disabilities. We must now ask ourselves, with renewed urgency, why this is so and what can be done about it.