

Private Members' Business

per cent additional to the maximum unit price which governs the cost of units in assisted housing is provided for adaptations in the case of non-profit and co-operative housing programs.

Since the changes were made in 1985 in the non-profit and co-operative housing programs, of the 65,400 housing units that have been built since that time, some 9,300 have been designed for the disabled. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation subscribes, of course, to the independent living concept and one of the major steps, during the International Year of the Disabled, in 1981, was to ensure that existing housing becomes more accessible to disabled persons.

During the consultation process, which took place in 1985, groups representing disabled persons criticized the inadequacy of the limited assistance of the \$1,500 that was available at that time to make barrier-free, liveability modifications, under the existing Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, or RRAP as we call it. These groups suggested that a separate program for disabled persons should be put into effect.

In response to that, the government introduced a new program to meet the needs of disabled persons who were occupying existing housing, not just for new housing projects. The RRAP for the disabled was first implemented in 1986. It provides financial assistance to the owners of housing accommodation to improve the accessibility of rental and ownership units, occupied or intended for occupancy by disabled persons. The program is geographically universal and there is no age limit on the properties involved.

For home owners, the assistance is in the form of a loan of \$10,000, of which \$5,000 may be forgiven depending on the income of the applicant. There is full forgiveness at \$23,000 of adjusted income, reducing to zero at \$33,000. For landlords, as well, there are forgivable loans that are equal to the cost of the modifications, up to a maximum of some \$5,000 for each self-contained unit and \$25,000 for each bed unit, but the landlord has to enter into a rental agreement and that limits rent increases for five years.

I see, Madam Speaker, that you are giving me the high sign. I want to close by indicating that I applaud the hon. member's motion. I think it reinforces actions that the government has been taking in the last five or six years. I want to assure the hon. member that he has my full support and the government's full support for going forward with more improvements to help disabled, handicapped, elderly or frail people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Fontaine (Lévis): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion introduced on September 27, 1989 by the hon. member for Saint-Léonard concerning easier access for the handicapped.

Ever since it came into office this government has shown outstanding leadership with respect to the integration of handicapped people. It has made concerted efforts to promote the unrestricted participation of disabled Canadians in every activity in the life of our society.

As early as 1985 the Prime Minister made a statement marking the Decade of Disabled Persons and announced a series of principles which were to be the mainstay of his government's policy.

With a view to making all federal buildings readily accessible, the government steers and supports all such initiatives taken by the Department of Public Works.

DPW officials have taken steps to make sure that federal buildings are easily accessible. Indeed all new construction must be in accordance with public works architectural standards.

In addition, specifications on unobstructed structures are updated on a regular basis. Structures specifically mentioned in these regulations include doors, access ramps, ramps generally and washroom facilities.

A visit to Canada's Museum of Fine Arts and to the Canadian Museum of Civilizations will convince you that the standards are respected. Disabled persons experience no problems at all when going through these magnificent buildings which have been adapted to their needs.

But the federal government has gone one step further, acknowledging that we have to help disabled persons to lead a more satisfactory and more productive life within our society.