

Part IV of this report, can be an effective means for the resolution of instances of age discrimination experienced by individuals.

The second theme apparent to the committee in the comments of witnesses is that overtly discriminatory behaviour is only one dimension of a broader predicament experienced by elderly Canadians. Witnesses widely expressed concerns about the general inadequacy of services provided to those among the elderly having special needs, and in some cases to the elderly in general, by public sector and private sector institutions. Allegations of inadequacy were made with respect to the areas of health care, social services, habitation (particularly nursing homes), public transport and financial services.

Allegations about the inadequacy of services, and the frequently disturbing accounts of individual situations which supported these allegations, are of immediate concern to the committee, given its mandate in the area of human rights. Human necessities, such as the opportunity to engage in freely chosen and reasonably remunerated work, an adequate standard of living, freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment, and adequate health care and housing are not bounded by age. They are felt by all of us, as we have recognized in our national and international human rights commitments. There is no valid reason why a country as affluent as Canada should fall short of minimally acceptable standards in the provision of these necessities to any person. Still less can there be any valid reason for an age-based erosion of these rights which relegates many elderly Canadians to the status of second class citizens.

It is the view of the committee that the employment concerns which provide a focus for specific recommendations in this report should be seen as one item on the broad agenda of human rights issues related to age and aging. Demographic trends are steadily increasing the salience of this agenda, and the social and human costs of ignoring it.

We therefore recommend that the federal government seek provincial cooperation, on the basis of an explicit recognition that the elderly are entitled to adequate social services as a matter of human right, in a comprehensive review of the adequacy of such services, followed by systematic reform (Recommendation 14).

The committee suggests that the recently created Ministry of State for Senior Citizens, whose creation we applaud, might appropriately undertake