

are amply supported by the evidence. Statistics Canada reports that, in 1985, about one quarter of all disabled men (including one third of those unable to work) and fully one half of all disabled women (including more than 60% of those unable to work) reported annual incomes of less than \$5,000. Official unemployment rates remain far higher among people with disabilities than among other groups. Rates of real unemployment and underemployment, reflecting the larger number of persons with disabilities who have given up even trying to find work or who remain trapped in low level jobs, have been estimated to approach 80%. These figures clearly suggest that the economic integration of people with disabilities is something which Canada has not achieved.

More generally, the theme of integration can remind us of some important principles. The category of "disabled persons" is ultimately an arbitrary classification, which can lead us to ignore the universal truth that we are all unique in terms of our capabilities while being equal in terms of our fundamental status as human beings. The theme of integration reminds us that, as one of our witnesses put it, this is not a problem of "us" versus "them", but a problem of recognizing our common human condition, in practices which reflect the existence of a community, equal in citizenship and equal in rights. This recognition was persuasively expressed by one of our witnesses, Ms. Marcia Rioux of the G. Allan Roeher Institute, who said:

The needs of persons with disabilities should...not be thought of as special needs, any more than the needs of those without disabilities might have been seen as special had those with disabilities designed the world initially. If the needs of one group are seen as special, then they become pitted against the needs and rights of the rest of the population.... But if the assumption is instead that these needs and rights are not in fact special, then the discussion is about the best and most expedient way to change the systems so that they take disability, a rather unexceptional human occurrence, into account. (Issue 24, p. 23)

In addition to responding to the priority concerns of persons with disabilities, and reminding us of basic truths about disability issues, the theme of economic integration helps us to see the big picture. In the course of our hearings and other activities during recent months, we have been repeatedly struck by the interconnectedness of disability issues. Employment levels, for example, are directly affected by the structure of income support, taxation and social assistance programs which, in some cases, create powerful disincentives to employment. They are also affected by the accessibility of education and training which, like employment levels, are affected in turn by the accessibility of transportation and the availability of adequate sources of income, particularly when the costs of assistive devices are borne by the user.

The theme of economic integration, we believe, will enable us to take the comprehensive approach to these issues which is needed, if inconsistent and incompatible policies are to be brought to light. As well, it directs attention away from individual program costs and towards net costs, which is where attention should be focussed if scarce