

capped people and frail, elderly people, for that matter, fully participating in Canadian society.

The motion that was put forward by the hon. member outlines another way in which this can occur, to ensure that the handicapped and elderly people are able to fully participate in social events, family events, community events and all kinds of events and activities.

[*Translation*]

In the 1990s there is no reason why people should be denied access to these events or feel ill at ease because such facilities are lacking.

[*English*]

I am very pleased to be able to advise the hon. member that the National Building Code for 1990 has provided significant improvements to ensure that future construction of buildings designed for public events meet the basic needs of those who have mobility problems.

Approximately 300 people, including representatives from the disabled, industry, governments, and of course, users devote their time, free of charge, to this kind of a consultation exercise involving updating the National Building Code.

• (1730)

My own department, the federal housing agency, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, is a part of this process. This year this group, devoting its time free of charge, has seen to it that the National Building Code has been revised so that all regular washrooms in a building to which a barrier-free path of travel is required will be barrier-free to all persons with disabilities. Buildings equipped with elevators must be barrier-free and all washroom facilities in these buildings will be barrier-free. Where several washrooms are provided on a large floor area, not all washrooms need to be barrier-free, provided that a barrier-free washroom is available within 45 meters and the location of that barrier-free washroom is clearly indicated.

A barrier-free washroom is required on the entrance level in buildings less than four storeys which are not equipped with elevators. This requirement will avoid situations where washrooms are located in the basement or on the second floor of a small building which is otherwise accessible.

Private Members' Business

It is my hope that the provinces and the municipalities will readily adopt these sections of the National Building Code. They are well aware of the changing mix of the population and that governments at all levels must move to meet the increasing demand of a rapidly aging population.

As a society, we have to be very sensitive to the fact that at the moment 10 per cent of the population is 65 years of age or older. By the end of the century, the percentage will have climbed to 13 per cent and, by the year 2031, seniors will account for an estimated 25 per cent, a full one-quarter of the Canadian population. This is a phenomenon that we never faced before and we have got to begin to deal with it now.

Almost one-half, or in fact 46 per cent, of Canadians over the age of 65, 1.2 million people, have some form of either mental or physical disability. That compares with about 13 per cent in the general population. More than 80 per cent of disabled seniors have a mobility or agility disability and a great many of these Canadians are on fixed or low incomes.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member is right, Madam Speaker. We have to find every possible means to open the doors of community living to seniors and handicapped persons. But it is just as important to redesign their living accommodations.

[*English*]

You are aware, Madam Speaker, that in 1985 the federal government undertook some consultations with respect to housing policy. At that time the government announced its new directions in housing. There was a complete review of the housing policies and programs. They involved extensive consultations with the provinces with a full range of groups that were active in housing. Among the groups that were consulted at that time included the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled and the Coalition of Provincial Organizations of the Handicapped. Their input at that time was very valuable in the development of the government's new directions in housing. As a result, at least 5 per cent of the units in non-profit and urban native housing programs must be accessible and designed as mobility units.

A mobility unit is one in which space is provided for manoeuvring wheelchairs. The actual number of mobility units in each project is determined by demand. Further adaptations of mobility units can be included in the project costs that are eligible for assistance. Up to 12