

Private Members' Business

learning how to live out of the penitentiary environment, learning how to live within the whole of society.

We are also talking about restoration of self-respect. Without that restoration of self-respect there can be little gain made in this area. There can be little hope to reintegrate successfully in society. We have to remember as well that literacy for people who are incarcerated is a toe-hold for further education and training. It is absolutely critical to have a certain degree of literacy in order to be able to profit fully from it.

Some will know that the correctional service is organized into seven major categories. I want to quote one section because I think it is particularly relevant. It is the section entitled "Education, Training and Employment of Inmates". It reads as follows:

To maximize employment, training and educational opportunities for all offenders in preparation for their reintegration into society as productive citizens. This is achieved by increasing the Correctional Service's capacity to provide meaningful work and training opportunities; by increasing, where appropriate, the emphasis on work programs that will generate revenue to help offset the operating cost of their Service; and by effectively supporting the efforts of released inmates to find gainful employment.

We have here one particular sector devoted almost entirely to ensuring that our inmates are given those kinds of opportunities educationally and in related fields to ensuring that they can integrate fully into Canadian society. The emphasis placed on literacy is one of critical importance.

[*Translation*]

I will give a brief summary in French. As I said earlier, there are roughly 12,000 inmates in our federal penitentiaries. A few years ago, only 500 inmates were involved and perhaps 150 actually completed literacy programs. Those figures are much higher today, but we still have a long way to go. We have to realize that literacy is not only reading, writing, and arithmetic. We are also talking about developing self-respect and learning how to live outside the penitentiary.

[*English*]

I believe that we need to do everything as a society to ensure that inmates do not return to prison. Thousands of dollars—there are large figures which indicate in excess of \$50,000 per year to keep someone incarcerated—are in fact being spent with increasing frequency. I

would suggest that we need to invest in literacy and other related programs.

My colleague has documented rather well some of the inadequacies of the program. Let me briefly repeat those that I support. It is compulsory, and this is causing certain difficulty. Surely there are ways to bring about greater participation rates without mandating it. We need to have programs that are brought forward in consultation with particular individuals involved in a significant kind of way. We need to ensure that the learning materials are the most appropriate. We need to make certain that the test programs are the most adequate possible.

• (1350)

The targets may in fact be inappropriate. We need to review that as well. It is important to recognize that one of the effective ways is through tutoring. We recognize as well that tutoring has not always been as successful as it might have been. Perhaps the greatest inadequacy has been in the follow-up, what happens after the individual leaves the penitentiary.

We must first respond to the criticisms that have been made. We just cannot take them lightly. They are valid criticisms and there are ways of counteracting them.

There are incentives that could be brought forward, monetary and other. We need to explore that and see what might be done in order to get larger participation rates. We need to improve our methods of instruction, and we need to look very closely at tutoring and how it can be improved to make a greater contribution. As I indicated before we definitely need to ensure that the follow-ups are adequate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, in concluding, I want to ask the government to ensure that the necessary funding is provided so that our inmates can take full advantage of these literacy and education programs and be intergrated into Canadian society.

[*English*]

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion of the hon. member for Victoria. The Secretary of State has stated that the Government of Canada has two goals for this year, which is International Literacy Year. The first is to prevent