

Supply—Solicitor General

House were hoping at that time that the minister would pay them a visit. My purpose tonight is to refresh the minister's memory a little bit and add some new facts to the story. I have been speaking with some of the people out there—in fact I just returned about an hour or so ago—and they are most anxious to have the minister look into this matter without delay.

● (8:40 p.m.)

This is one of those experimental projects, of which we have had quite a few in Vancouver and some of which have worked out exceedingly well. I am thinking of one which was started under the aegis of the father of the hon. member for Vancouver East, when he was a member of the legislature. At that time he conceived the idea that a good many women who were being released from mental institutions needed a place to go in order to get re-established in ordinary life. A co-operative boarding house was established where they could stay until they found jobs for themselves and became acclimatized to the outside world. This project was frowned upon by a number of people in its initial stages, but eventually became such a success that the provincial government took it over.

This Halfway House in Vancouver is in somewhat the same category. It was started in 1965 by a number of people who were convinced that there was a need for a place for people who wanted to get rid of the drug habit, a place where they could be surrounded by a home atmosphere and where they could deal with this habit under carefully controlled conditions until they were rehabilitated. These people were encouraged to get a job as soon as they were able, preferably outside Vancouver since drugs were more easily available there. Vancouver of course is one of the worst drug centres in Canada.

Since the Vancouver Halfway House was begun in 1965, almost two years ago, over 400 persons have been in residence. A large percentage of these people have at some time been charged with an offence connected with drugs. Some of them of course have come straight from Oakalla, or the penitentiary, but no one is turned away, provided they indicate a desire to attempt withdrawal from the drug habit. In addition, some of these people are parolees. It is significant that the parole board, recognizing the value of the house, has taken a favourable view of it in relation to parolees.

I visited Halfway House at Christmastime. It is located just two blocks from where I live,

and I shall be going back regularly during the time the house is in recess this summer, if we get sufficient time off. I was most interested in what I saw there that afternoon. The people who are doing the work at the house are themselves in a more advanced stage of withdrawal from the drug. The directors are citizens of Vancouver from different walks of life. I believe there is a United Church minister on the board, as well as a former member of the legislature. A number of the directors have been in business, and it is rather significant that there are four registered physicians on the board of directors. This fact is of importance with regard to the prescribed doses of methadon, which is a withdrawal drug.

The directors have written a letter to the Minister of National Health and Welfare in which they state they are aware that the police forces, provincial and mounted police, have had many reservations about Halfway House. However, the attitude of these forces is changing for the better at the present time, and the directors are seeking an interview with the top officers of both police departments.

This work has been conducted, as well as it is possible to do, in one of the old houses in Vancouver. It is a very old, ramshackle house of the shingle type. These people are doing well, considering the limitations placed upon them by the place in which they work. It is very interesting to note that within the last two weeks seven people from Halfway House have found employment in various parts of the province, two of them in Vancouver and the other five outside the city. When I was there at Christmas I found they kept a very careful record of two things. They keep a careful record of the people who come in, the jobs they get and where they are located. They also keep a record of where every single tablet of that methadon drug goes. There is nothing to the objection raised by some people that this house is a place where methadon can be passed on to other people. They keep track of every single tablet, and I am assured it is used right in the house under the supervision of the prescribing doctors.

As proof of the fact this place is doing good work, I can cite the fact it is now the recipient of a grant of \$1,000 per month from the city of Vancouver and the provincial government. The officials of Halfway House have to supply to the city of Vancouver and the provincial government a monthly medical statement and a monthly financial statement. Both the provincial government and the city therefore are