

Government Orders

We as parents have a responsibility. When a child is born and when a young child leaves the house to go to kindergarten, you do not know how that child will turn out. But if you do not do your level best, if you do not do everything in your power as a responsible member of the community to provide the nurturing, love and guidance for that child, it is almost guaranteed that you are sealing the fate of that child to a life of negativity and downfall. Even if you do everything right there is no guarantee but if you do not do anything to help young people you are almost sealing their fate to a life that is not very positive.

• (1625)

I encourage all the people who affect young people in the communities. It takes one person to make a positive impact on your life. That person could be a counsellor, an RCMP officer, a teacher. That person could be a friend, an aunt, or an uncle. Somebody to be there to reach out and encourage a young person is what it takes sometimes.

Remember, the responsibility is not just in legislation or amendments. The responsibility is the relationship we forge as members of this wonderful country, members of our wonderful and diverse communities, that contribute to making life better for everyone.

We have a responsibility for Canada's future which is going to be drawn out through the young people whom we nurture, guide and teach. Government and all of the governance we leave behind is in their hands. We have an onerous responsibility, but if we do nothing, we will reap nothing.

I appeal to all Canadians to remember that laws are guides. They guide us. We work in the highest court in the land. We are building, remaking and changing laws, but we cannot legislate caring, loving and nurturing, the things that we have to give to ensure that the situation with young offenders is abated.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River): Madam Speaker, the secretary of state talked about a crackdown in this legislation which is coming forward. I certainly would like to know what type of crackdown is being proposed.

A constituent who has written to me, Mr. Forsen, talks about the need for tougher penalties. This gentleman is a grandfather. His two grandsons are repeat offenders and all they got was a slap on the wrist. He is afraid to leave home because he has been robbed by these two grandsons in the past.

I want to know what kind of crackdown the hon. member is speaking of here? She has suggested that only 25 per cent of the acts are violent, but I would put those I mentioned in that violent class as robberies were involved. Can the hon. member explain to concerned Canadians what type of crackdowns are being proposed?

Ms. Blondin-Andrew: Madam Speaker, this is directly from the news release of the Minister of Justice who tabled the amendments on the Young Offenders Act.

The highlights of the bill include: increased sentences for teenagers convicted of first or second degree murder in youth court to ten and seven years respectively; dealing with 16 and 17-year olds charged with serious personal injury offences in adult court, unless they can show a judge that public protection and rehabilitation can both be achieved through youth court; and extending the time that 16 and 17-year old young offenders who have been convicted of murder in an adult court must serve before they can be considered for parole.

The bill also includes: improved measures for information sharing between professionals, like school officials and police with selected members of the public when public safety is at risk; retaining the record of serious young offenders; provisions that will encourage rehabilitation and treatment of young offenders in the community when this is appropriate.

This does not necessarily speak to the question the member asked. I do believe in the various communities that will be affected by this legislation there are people, for example the provincial and territorial justice ministers, who are looking at attempts to better deal with young offenders in their own regions and provinces. That might include community service work for example.

One suggestion has proved to be quite viable in the aboriginal community. Young offenders have been sent out on the land to do hard physical labour in camps. They have had to cut wood, haul water and do a lot of physical work. It has been found that the recidivism rate with those young offenders is virtually nil. It is not necessarily boot camp. They learn something. They learn how to survive. They learn coping skills. They regain their self-esteem. Those are the kinds of ideas that are being entertained and I do not find them totally offensive if they are coupled with other positive rehabilitative measures.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis): Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity, as the Official Opposition critic for Training and Youth, to question my counterpart, the Secretary of State (Training and Youth). As a courtesy, I had agreed to change my speaking schedule, and I am not sure this will suit the hon. member opposite, because she has given me a golden opportunity to talk about the Youth Service Corps which was the subject of the first part of her speech. I will start with a comment and then ask a few questions.

The employment and learning strategy includes the Youth Service Corps, but I would like to point out that this year, only 2,500 young people across Canada will be able to take advantage of this initiative, while we have 400,000 young people across