That is the purpose of Motion No. 2. I emphasize that the present system in the country is in a state of crisis. Ten years ago the subcommittee on penitentiaries produced a unanimous report. I see that you are indicating that my time for debating this motion has come to an end. I will pursue this subject on the next motion.

Mr. Gordon Towers (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, Motion No. 1A reads as follows:

That Bill C-67, be amended in Clause 2 by striking out line 25 at page 2 and substituting the following therefor:

"(4) on completing the first review of the case of an inmate".

This clause deals with Section 8 of the Parole Act requiring that inmates be reviewed at their first parole eligibility date. Section 8(1) contains the general requirement that inmates shall be reviewed by the Parole Board at the times prescribed by the regulations but, more specifically, no later than the first eligibility date. Section 8(4) requires that the board, upon reviewing the case of an inmate as required by subsection (1), shall in all cases decide whether to grant a parole.

This implies that at any of the reviews referred to in Section 8(1), which encompasses not only the first review but all subsequent ones, the board is limited to making a decision about day parole. The clear intent of Section 8(4) was to specify only the type of decision the board is to make at the first review. The amendment makes this intent clear.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to both Motion No. 1A and Motion No. 2. It would appear that Clause 2 of the Bill is a step in the right direction in that, as the Parliamentary Secretary has pointed out, it would require the Parole Board to review a case not later than the day on which an inmate has served the portion of the term of imprisonment. That means that it now becomes mandatory for the board to review a particular case for day parole before a specified date.

That leads one to question why that has not already been happening. I share the concerns of my hon. colleague, the Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson). It seems that there is a difficulty in this particular area. We were not told at committee what the backlog is or what the average wait is for individuals who become eligible for day parole. By legislating this requirement we are, in effect, ensuring that the case of an inmate will be reviewed at a particular time rather than continuing with the existing situation which leaves it up to the discretion of the board. Presently the case of a person who becomes eligible for day parole may not be determined for some time after that eligibility date.

The intent of this amendment to the Parole Act is to ensure that those serving prison sentences in institutitons who are not a threat to society are released at the earliest possible opportunity. I am sure that most Members in the House will agree that prisons should only be used as a last resort. In my view and in that of many of my colleagues incarceration should be the exception rather than the rule. As was pointed out earlier, the prisons in Canada today are overcrowded. We have a very serious problem with double-bunking in a number of institutions.

Given the philosophy of the Government, it appears that it will continue to build new prisons. We were told last year that the Solicitor General (Mr. Beatty) is planning to build a new prison in the Prime Minister's (Mr. Mulroney) riding of Manicouagan. We asked in the House of Commons on a number of occasions whether the Government would hold in abeyance the construction of that prison. It is obvious that if you build more prisons and provide more prison cells, they will inevitably be filled.

The Nielsen Task Force, which reviewed various Departments of the Government, specifically addressed the issue of prison construction. Those who reviewed that subject recommended that there be a moratorium on all future construction. They believe, as I do, that we should not be building new prisons in Canada. We should, rather, review the use of incarceration. In Canada we have a tendency to overuse incarceration. We know that it costs in excess of $40,000 a year to incarcerate one individual. It also costs in excess of $100,000 to build each new prison cell. Yet the Government is still keen on building new prisons rather than trying to find ways of reducing the prison population.

This particular amendment will serve that purpose to a certain extent. It will expedite the release of prisoners who, for whatever reason, would be eligible for day parole. The inmates we are dealing with here are not dangerous offenders *per se*. The inmates who become eligible for and are granted day parole are those who do not pose a threat to society. They are inmates who can be released into the community without any threat of harm to the community. These are precisely the types of people who should not be sent to prison in the first place. These types of offenders should be punished in some way other than through incarceration.

There are judges in Canada who feel that incarceration is an appropriate method of punishment. However, there are other considerations which must be taken into account including the cost of incarcerating prisoners. It is clear that there are other ways of punishing offenders who become eligible for and are granted day parole. Community service orders are a good disposition, in my view, through which a community can benefit as a result of a punishment meted out by the courts. I am pleased to note that in the City of Metropolitan Toronto, for example, there is an increased use of community service orders. Under a community service order, rather than sending an offender to prison the court orders that the offender complete a specified number of hours of community service, be it with a volunteer organization or other municipal organizations. In that way not only does the community benefit through direct volunteer work, but it also benefits financially because the cost of incarcerating that individual is eliminated.