

It is important to remind the House at this point that release on parole is not a right but is a privilege to be earned. Parole is a form of conditional release, meaning that any release must be accompanied by supervision and strict conditions which relate to the original crime, the parole location, persons not to be associated with or provisions relating to the use of drug and alcohol. Violation of these conditions may mean a return to prison and future parole determined by a full and very sceptical panel.

• (1220)

The next important changes being put to the House are in the regime currently known as mandatory supervision. Earned remission has with the years become virtually automatic. Other disciplinary procedures such as loss of privileges or confinement in segregation have proven more immediate and more effective.

The Bill C-67 regime itself is an incentive to good behaviour because the potential lengthening of the sentence through absolute denial of remission is far more drastic for the inmate than a slight reduction in earned remission. In effect the entire earned remission scheme has evolved to a point where it is unnecessary and release at two-thirds of the sentence is almost automatic, with the very important exception of the detention provisions.

Offenders on mandatory supervision who violate the conditions of release are of course returned to custody. The first proposal therefore is to recognize the evolution of the system and accept that earned remission has become effectively statutory. Recognizing this formally means a shifting of resources to the programming, classification, parole supervision and security activities which can directly enhance the security of the public.

Second, I propose a further modification of the detention provisions to include serious drug offences which are set out in schedule II to the bill. It is our government's view that the major drug offences, trafficking and importing, for example, do enormous physical harm to Canadians. This violence which often may end in the death of a person is no less violent because it is indirect. Offenders convicted of serious drug crimes will be liable to a hearing if by virtue of their past record continuing associations or links to the prison drug trade it is likely that they would return to the active participation in the illicit drug market.

Government Orders

These same offences, as I described earlier, will also make the offender liable under the judicial determination provision to having parole eligibility set at one-half of the sentence.

Compare this to the present system with the possibility of day parole at one-sixth of the sentence and a very good chance of parole at one-third. Drug offenders often have external characteristics which might suggest good parole performance and release at two-thirds is almost a certainty unless a crime of violence was also committed. The reality is quite different and this amendment recognizes the very real harm that is done to society.

I also want to announce in connection with detention that the government will be adding five new offences to schedule I, all directly related to sexual offences against children. The offences are: incest, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, anal intercourse and oral intercourse. Adding these offences to the schedule not only means that the offenders could be detained if the harm done and possible repetition were serious, but the offenders would be liable to the imposition by the judge of parole eligibility at one-half the sentence instead of one-third and would not be eligible for the accelerated review process which I described a minute ago.

I would like to turn my attention to the victims of crime. As I said at the beginning of my speech, I believe that victims are often victimized twice: once by the criminal and again by a system that is unable to recognize the trauma and the suffering that they endure. What we are proposing is a fundamental change in favour of victims' rights. As I have set out, the different forms of temporary release and conditional release will continue to be a key element in the reintegration of the offender in society.

However, in the past our justice system has not given enough attention to the anxiety of victims who frequently cannot legally be given information which is essential to their peace of mind and cannot be sure that their voice will be heard once a trial is over.

There are therefore several changes to the operation of the National Parole Board and the Correctional Service that deal with openness of the system and go to the heart of what the victims want.