

[English]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I want to assure the House that, with the opposition, the government is most concerned about the growth of crime and criminal conspiracies in Canada. We would agree with the motion, that there are particular problems with respect to the drug trade in British Columbia, loan sharking in Ontario and mafia-type conspiracies in Quebec. The government has increased, and continues to increase, its activities to combat crime through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and by other means to protect the public and to bring these criminals to justice. I will speak first about the increasingly serious problem of abuse and trafficking in illicit drugs which, as hon. members have pointed out, continues to escalate in most communities in Canada. It is clear to all of us that the trafficking in and use of heroin, cocaine and the abuse of chemicals such as methamphetamine—Speed—MDA, LSD and other related drugs is a problem of increasing dimensions and a major cause for concern.

The use of heroin by the younger generation is on the rise. As recently as 1968 there were only 12 known habitual users of heroin in Canada under the age of 20. In 1973, this total had increased to 709. It is estimated today there are between 16,000 and 19,000 heroin addicts in Canada. It is also significant to note that Europe used to be the major source of supply for heroin entering Canada. During the past year, however, all indications are that most of the heroin entering Canada originated in Southeast Asia. The European supply was cut back due to rigorous enforcement in France and lack of heroin cultivation in Turkey. As many members know, the Turkish government has reversed its stand and will again allow cultivation of heroin.

With respect to cannabis, a significant development is the recent interest in importation and trafficking of cannabis drugs on the part of major criminal organizations. In the recent past, those primarily involved with the importation and trafficking of cannabis were the younger entrepreneurs. During 1973, five gangland-style murders in Montreal were directly connected to an investigation on the importation of hashish.

The Royal Canadian Mountain Police presently assumes primary responsibility for investigating offences of trafficking in drugs at all levels of police jurisdiction, local, provincial, interprovincial and international. Drug trafficking is a large, highly organized criminal operation involving contacts and resources at all levels of jurisdiction. Competent drug law enforcement requires a comprehensive and consistent process in the total community. Specialists in drug law enforcement are capable of dealing with specific situations, as is presently the practice of members of the RCMP special drug squads, but consistent enforcement at an adequate level will only be accomplished efficiently by all police forces and all members of those police forces assuming responsibility for enforcement.

As far as the federal government and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are concerned, the following priorities for drug law enforcement are required: (a) the RCMP to provide leadership to improve drug intelligence, co-ordination and co-operation between all police department;

Organized Crime

(b) the RCMP to have primary responsibility for enforcement of drug trafficking offences at international, national, provincial and local levels and to provide assistance as required to other police forces where resources are available; (c) as a general rule, all police forces should accept responsibility for drug law enforcement within their respective jurisdictions and should be encouraged to develop the capacity for drug law enforcement where it is now lacking.

The RCMP offers a two-week drug investigation course for members of municipal and provincial police departments. In 1972-73, 38 members of municipal and provincial police departments took advantage of this course. In 1974-75, 123 members attended these courses. Hon. members should also note that the number of federal drug enforcement positions in the RCMP has increased from 102 in 1969-70 to 543 projected for 1975-76. For the fiscal year 1973-74, in excess of one million man-hours was expended by the RCMP in drug law enforcement.

I should also point out that because of the increase in the scope and size of international and national traffic in illicit narcotics, the drug enforcement program now includes international investigations. Many successful international investigations have been conducted by the RCMP in France, Italy, The Netherlands, England, Spain, Lebanon, Pakistan, India, Hong Kong mainland, Mexico, and the United States.

These investigations have been conducted in co-operation with Interpol, through close co-operative ventures such as Franco-American-Canadian meetings on drug enforcement and by sending RCMP investigators to source and transit countries to work on joint international investigations. In addition, the RCMP now has drug investigators stationed in Paris and Hong Kong to assist in international drug information liaison.

• (1630)

I now wish to deal with British Columbia in particular. I am advised that between 60 and 70 per cent of the total illicit drug problem in Canada is centred in British Columbia. Heroin addiction is the major problem, and it is estimated that 10,000 persons are involved in the illicit use of this drug in that province. In the city of Vancouver, a single dose, or capsule of heroin now costs \$35. Each person using heroin will purchase an average of two capsules each day. This means that 10,000 heroin users will spend \$700,000 each day, or \$20 million each month.

During the past two months, 21½ pounds of heroin have been seized as a result of drug investigations in British Columbia. The RCMP recently conducted a major undercover operation in the greater Vancouver area during which 25 persons were charged with selling narcotics. Sixteen of those charged were considered to be major international or national drug traffickers. Unfortunately, the magnitude of illicit heroin traffic in British Columbia is such that these recent successful operations have not reduced the current availability of heroin.

There have been new initiatives, however. In British Columbia there are now 107 RCMP federal drug unit positions, of which 69 are assigned to the Vancouver RCMP drug unit. The Vancouver unit is to be increased by 17 positions by April 1, 1975, for a total of 86. The depart-