be set at six months before the normal full parole eligibility date of one-third of sentence.

Furthermore, the purpose of day parole would be limited to preparation for eventual release. Other activities, such as training, attendance at educational or health related programs or work detail, would be transferred to the temporary absence program where release periods are shorter and supervision more intense.

With this change, for example, the minimum possible time in prison for a six-year sentence would be 18 months instead of 12 months. For a nine-year sentence the minimum to be served in prison would be 30 months rather than 18 months. Those serving sentences of three years or less would be unaffected.

The unescorted temporary absence regime will be changed to alter the emphasis from preparation for release to programming and training. Maximum security inmates will not be eligible at all for unescorted absences. The National Parole Board will be responsible for conditional release decisions respecting lifers, schedule offenders and detained offenders who have been classified to other levels.

Additionally we believe that the court, having heard all the evidence and having had before it the police, the victims and the expert witnesses, should not be limited in setting the over-all sentence. Therefore the government proposes a new provision called judicial determination whereby judges will be able to specify that offenders convicted of a schedule offence or a serious drug offence must serve at least half their sentence behind bars instead of the current one-third of sentence before parole review.

We do not propose this role for judges because they have demanded it or even because they favour it, but because they are best placed within the criminal justice system to say whether there should be a higher guaranteed minimum prison term in some cases. This proposal is in recognition of the fact that there is a wide gap in our sentencing and correctional system, to put the problem politely. To put it less politely, the problem under the current system is that judges are seen by the public to set a certain period of punishment and then the parole board later applies a different set of criteria that sometimes result in parole decisions that do not seem to follow the intention of the court.

I acknowledge that this provision places a burden on the courts, but it is one that they alone are equipped to fulfil and one I hope that they will not hesitate to accept and apply where warranted.

Further, I think this provision gives Canadians the assurance that the view of the court will be more accurately respected and reflects the government's view that early release may be just too early in some cases and does not, I hasten to add, signal a change in our belief that parole is an essential part of the criminal justice system.

We have signalled out some offenders for a potentially longer period of incarceration, but we believe that it is desirable that others, the first time non-violent offenders, have a final chance to show that they can and will take steps to straighten out their lives and quickly become law abiding members of society.

This group is the one already most likely to benefit from release on parole at the earlier date, but unfortunately the failure to release them is too often the result of the complexity of the bureaucratic process of determining parole rather than the merits of the case.

Therefore this bill proposes a new provision to the House to be called accelerated review which would set out a more efficient review process for eligible offenders. The process would work in the following way. There would be in the first instance a review of the files by one parole board member accompanied by the recommendation of correction officials. The essential criteria, as with everything in the bill, would be public safety and whether or not the offender has the potential to commit a violent crime if released.

If an offender were accepted under this process release on parole would take place at exactly one-third of sentence. If during the accelerated review, evidence were put forward suggesting that even though the offender was not serving time for a violent offence the potential for a violent offence was there, then the offender would be referred to a full panel hearing for a decision in the normal way. Evidence of the potential for violence might be suggested by a previous conviction which did not result in a penitentiary sentence, behaviour while in prison, or any other factor relevant to future behaviour.