essence this section provides the prison service, known as the Correctional Service of Canada, with its operating mandate and its rules of operation.

Part II defines the system of parole and the operation of the Parole Board. It will replace the Parole Act.

Part III establishes the office of the correctional investigator in law.

I anticipate that part II, which deals with conditional release, will be of most interest to the House. However, before turning to the provisions of part II, I would like to deal in a little more detail with the essentials of part I and part III.

As I said before, part I tells us how the correctional service will operate and under what rules. It is a complete modernization of correctional legislation, representing a decade of intensive work in collaboration with voluntary and professional groups, judges, Crown attorneys, the police and provincial governments. It reflects recent jurisprudence and the impact of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Part I also sets out a very important guiding principle, the protection of the public within its statement of principles of correctional law.

• (1210)

Along with this all important principle, protection of the public, there are a number of other principles enunciated in the bill: staff powers, the right of search and seizure, inmate rights, procedural safeguards , principles that compel the different parts of the justice system to stay in touch. Understanding this part of the bill is essential to understanding the entire bill. It is important to emphasize that the principle of protection of the public is fundamental.

Part III of the bill at long last establishes the position and mandate of the correctional investigator in law. Since 1973 this office has operated under part II of the Inquiries Act. Part III clearly describes the correctional investigator's mandate, investigative powers and procedures, which are essentially to act on behalf of inmates who feel that they have been dealt an injustice while they are within the corrections system.

The correctional investigator will have full discretion in determining when and how an investigation will be conducted. The bill establishes the power to hold hearings, the right of access to information and documents, authority to examine persons under oath, and access to correctional premises as required.

In general terms part II of the bill will toughen the existing rules of eligibility for parole, in particular in relation to violent offences, serious drug offences and sexual offences against children. However, as a necessary balance, first time, non-violent offenders will have a chance to gain regular parole when they are first eligible at one-third of their sentence.

It is a curious truth that sometimes society is better protected by moving certain offenders through the system and out of prison faster rather than leaving them behind bars where hope, job prospects and family support can fade away all too quickly. The rationale for doing this, while well supported as a rehabilitative measure, will also allow us to free up almost $1 billion which we spend each year to lock people up. By doing so we can place a greater emphasis on keeping the violent and dangerous offenders behind bars longer. Again, as in part I the protection of the public is the paramount principle.

Since the proposed changes to the different types of conditional release are not easily comprehensible without reference to the existing system, let me quickly set out its fundamentals.

Currently offenders receiving a sentence of more than two years will normally serve their sentence in a federal penitentiary. Under the old system an inmate was eligible for day parole and unescorted absences at one-sixth of sentence, full parole at one-third of sentence and release on mandatory supervision at two-thirds of the sentence. Escorted temporary absences could also be granted from the start of the sentence, although this was rare and release on mandatory supervision could be denied through the operation of a review hearing established under Bill C-67 in 1986.

Most of these provisions in the bill have been altered to reflect our commitment to deal more severely and effectively with violent offenders. We believe that the release for most offenders at one-sixth of a sentence is simply too soon. We propose therefore that the minimum time in prison before consideration for day parole