

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse Act

Mr. Boudria: There is one possible alternative which I offer to the Minister as a possible suggestion. The Bill would say in this clause that the Governor in Council would appoint members upon recommendation of the board. Those additional members would technically be Order in Council appointments, but they would only be made upon recommendation of the board. You would have in that regard the independence that the Minister is looking for and at the same time they would be accountable to Parliament pursuant to the McGrath Report, which was later ratified by a decision of the Prime Minister, as announced in this House.

I do not think that it is a very complicated amendment. I offer it as a suggestion to the Minister, and he or his official may want to propose something.

Perhaps we can stand that clause momentarily and go through the other clauses in order to have a few minutes for the Minister's legislative draftsman or expert who are accompanying him today, and then we could have a review process, the kind of process that we have described, in order to make it consistent with the policy of the Government and of this House.

• (1540)

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Madam Chairman, I do not think there is any conflict between what the Hon. Member is saying and what we are trying to achieve. I think the question is does Clause 8 achieve what we are trying to build in?

Under the Governor in Council appointments, as that procedure is established in Clause 7, the Minister is obligated under Clause 8 to have consultations with the board prior to making recommendations. That is in Clause 8 now in order to meet the various requirements, be they linguistic, cultural, professional and so forth. Whether or not an amendment should be considered whereby the arm's-length is retained, which we all want and which is consistent with the recommendations and whether or not Clause 8(b) does that, is the question. Possibly to help the committee move on, if it is acceptable that we stand Clause 8, we will go through the other clauses and look at whether or not there is some method by which we can meet what I think seems to be an agreement on both sides of the House.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Clause 7 agreed to.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Shall clause 8 carry?

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: It was agreed that clause 8 would be stayed for a while.

Clauses 9 to 12 inclusive agreed to.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Shall clause 13 carry?

On Clause 13—*Principal Office*

Ms. Copps: Madam Chairman, could the Minister give us the rationale behind the suggestions that the principal office shall be in the National Capital Region?

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Madam Chairman, the centre is not expected to be housed in a separate building as such. In other words, what we are dealing with is not a mortar and bricks entity. We will be dealing with a small staff of professionals and we will be relying on a great amount of interchange within Departments, federal-provincial as well as professional. We feel as a Government it is best to have the office in the National Capital Region because of the expertise available, if not only in Ottawa but at least because of the communication that takes place in Ottawa on a number of health-related issues.

Ms. Copps: Madam Chairman, I am not questioning the rationale for it, although there are certainly other centres of expertise in terms of the problems of substance abuse. I just wonder about the procedure of putting that into the legislation. It seems to me that if the National Capital Region is the most logical place for it, then that can be determined by the Minister. Actually, to lock that in in the legislation I think is highly unusual. That sort of thing is not usually written into any piece of legislation. Would the Minister give the rationale for having it? It kind of handcuffs the office. The Addiction Research Foundation has many operations in other parts of the country other than Ottawa.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Madam Chairman, I think the clause is drafted in such a way that while the National Capital Region is mentioned, I am sure the board would want to look at whether the National Capital Region is the best site. There are reasons that one could put forward why it is the best site. One could also mention the matter of the legislation that is drafted relative to Crown corporations if an example is needed. If the Hon. Member looks at the last part of Clause 13 she will see as well that there is discretion as to location. I think both eventualities are actually covered.

Mr. Nunziata: Madam Chairman, the clause refers to a principal office which would suggest that there would be other offices in Canada. Can the Minister indicate what he envisions with respect to the centre once it is in full operation? Does he envision offices in major cities throughout the country? Does he envision more than one head office?

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Madam Chairman, it is not the intention at this time or our visualization that there will be offices across the country but rather one office working as a clearing house, working in liaison and working with interchange. If the board in its wisdom decides to have additional presence in other locations of Canada than where the principal office would be located, that would be a decision for the board to take. I think the board has to take it on the basis of delivery of service. That I think should be the criteria rather than the legislation dictating to the board where different offices might be located.