

*Government Orders*

However there has been a problem in the criminal justice system in dealing effectively with that situation. There has been a problem in the judiciary in applying the strictness of fines and of penalties the public demands and that should be applied. There has been a problem in the prosecution because it has been extremely difficult to offer the level of protection to those young girls, the victims of crime, but also the witnesses to crimes that happen to themselves and to others in that circumstance.

They come forward with the certainty that if they give testimony in a court of law against these monsters walking the streets one of two things will happen. Either the criminal justice system would deal with a conviction in such a light manner that 6 months or 12 months later the individual is back out on the street doing the same thing with young kids again, or there would be threats to the personal safety of the individual who came forward as a victim and a witness to the crime as well as threats to their families.

I relate something that happened about three years ago which marked me forever. It was late on a Friday afternoon. There were far too many calls to return and I was tired after a week up here. My secretary said I had to take a phone call.

It was a mother who was more than distraught. She was beaten by a system that could not respond to what she saw as her child's need, a mother despondent because she did not think she could help her child. Her 15-year old daughter had been lured into prostitution at the age of 13. At one point the daughter said she had made the break and she did not want to do that any more. Two days later a van showed up in front of her house with her pimps or the part of the international criminal element that deals with street prostitution of juveniles. They had their buddies and they parked outside.

Within two or three days the daughter told her mother she had to go back to Toronto, back on the street. The mother begged her and beseeched her not to do it. Her child had been raped, abused, beaten and threatened with death. She had seen some of her friends beaten close to death by this criminal element, these monsters, these pimps. Why would she go back to a life like that? She feared for her own personal safety and did not believe the criminal justice system could afford her the protection necessary to put those demons away.

• (1235)

Outside her own personal safety she went back to the street out of the fear for the safety of her family and knowing full well that she might be a statistic, and maybe she is today. I hope not. She did not want her mother to suddenly turn around one morning while she was by herself in her kitchen and be confronted by thugs who would beat and perhaps sexually assault her. That is why that child went back to the street.

About a year later the mother called me and said: "My daughter has called and she cannot stand any more. She has been beaten, tortured, sexually assaulted and she is getting out. She is in Niagara Falls and I want to bring her home. We have to get her out of there. She has broken away from her pimp and I cannot get anybody to help".

I thought of my 11-year old daughter and my God, I hope that if I am ever in a situation like that somebody would at least do their best to take my child out of that danger.

It took a lot of phone calls, a lot more than it should have taken, before I could get somebody to act. The child was turning 16 on a Monday of a long weekend and the law enforcement agency said: "We can bring her back but what do we do with her? Where do we put her? These people will be back. Is she prepared to testify? If she is not, what do we do with her?" I spent until 11 p.m. that night trying to find a safe haven for that victim of crime and potential witness against the perpetrators of the crime.

The bill begins to address some of the real issues facing law enforcement agencies, the judicial system and certainly facing the victims of crime and individuals who can come forward and give testimony in a court of law, knowing full well that if they do there are resources and programs available by statute that will assist in their protection and that of their families.

Every year we spend a lot of money to put somebody in jail. We spend a lot of money when we have to send law enforcement agencies and police officers to pursue criminals. We must put money into a program that will say to witnesses that if they come forward and tell their stories, we will do our very best in a very regulated statutory fashion with a program that has financing to protect them and their families against intimidation or, God forbid, physical violence or even death.

In my riding a young lady involved in prostitution broke away and wanted to stop. She wanted the people who had stolen her life to be dealt with by the criminal justice system. She was to give evidence against a gang of criminals operating right across Canada and in the northeastern U.S. She was to testify. A strong message to all those other victims of that type of crime was sent when she was found murdered before the testimony could be given. The individual she was to testify against is currently awaiting trial on murder charges.

I wish that were the only case I could relate. There are more cases in which young girls or women who have decided to get out of prostitution and turn evidence have had to live a life from one hell to another, a life on the run, not knowing when a car stops in front of them whether somebody will put a bullet in their head. That is reality street in a town of only 65,000 people. It is happening in Toronto, in Scarborough, in western Canada and in small town Canada.