

During Police Week, I spoke to some police officers in Hull. What struck me particularly is that when they were being recognized for their work, we found members of the Hull police but also OPP and RCMP officers who had done tremendous services in that city. We also found citizens who had co-operated with the police to give that city a better security image and to promote greater public confidence. It is our role to take part in that kind of meeting because it is also up to us to encourage people to realize that it is partly their responsibility.

In closing, I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Mississauga East, for giving us this opportunity to highlight the good work done by our police.

[English]

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to add my voice and that of my party, the New Democratic Party, to those who have already spoken. I congratulate the hon. member for Mississauga East for putting forward this motion. It reads:

That this House recognize the professionalism, personal sacrifice and dedication shown by members of Canada's many police forces in the course of carrying out their duties in the service of Canadians.

I would like to bring a different perspective than what we have already heard here today, the perspective of one who lives in a more rural setting and who has worked with the police over the past 20 years, both as a prosecutor and as a defence counsel.

• (1940)

My dealings with the police have shown that they must be not just police officers but they must be social workers, counsellors, life savers, medical people, coaches and public relations people within the community. All of these things are part of the everyday life of police.

In the province of British Columbia the rural areas are policed for the most part by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a police force that I would suggest all Canadians are very proud of, whether it be ceremonially, for the work they do within the communities or for their reputation internationally as perhaps one of the leading police forces in Canada.

Others have spoken about the police forces in specific cities or in specific provinces. I take nothing at all away

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from the work that they do, but I want to emphasize, as a person who has worked for, worked with and socialized with police officers, that I have grown to respect not only the fact that they put their lives on the line many times in their police work, but the fact that they get involved in their communities and that often they must put their duties ahead of their own personal family lives.

In recognizing the dedication and personal sacrifice I specifically talk about some of the problems that police in small communities have in being transferred out every few years as is the policy of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the fact that they often spend long hours. In some of the work they have to do they become very jaded by getting too close to some things, whether it be in undercover drug work or in the motorcycle squad that followed the motorcycle gangs around for years. They have difficulty in all of their undercover work in not being able to pay adequate attention to their own families and personal lives. That great personal sacrifice of these people often leads to separation and ultimately divorce and separated families.

I think of the number of people within this House who know the sacrifices that they make in being away from their families and going about their duties as members of Parliament. Similarly those sacrifices are made by members of our police forces in the hard work that they do for our communities.

In talking about police officers as medical officers I know that in many cases police officers are called to scenes of accidents which are not pretty sights. They are often the first on the scene after whoever originally called in the call, or discover people who are clinging to the last remnants of life. It is their duty to go in and try to assist, sometimes in very unpleasant circumstances with the blood and the screaming of those left. They are trained to deal with that in everyday life.

I recall just recently a young woman constable in British Columbia was given a special award for being on the scene when a gentleman had an attack and his heart quit. This young woman had just taken a course in CPR two or three weeks previous. She used her training to bring him back. He is healthy again, I am pleased to say. The young woman constable has been recognized not just for doing what she saw as her duty, but having done