

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should enact legislation which will protect children from pedophiles by allowing members of the National Parole Board to enforce the long term incarceration of offenders whom they feel may reoffend.

I begin by sharing the story behind the motion with my hon. colleagues. In June 1988, 11-year old Christopher Stephenson was abducted from a Brampton shopping mall by 45-year old Joseph Fredericks, a repeat child sex offender who was known by criminal justice officials to be in a dangerous state of mind. Fredericks murdered Christopher.

The details of this need not be recounted here. Rather we must focus on action which we as legislators can take to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring. The loss of Christopher's life was both needless and preventable. This is apparent to anyone who takes a moment to review the recommendations made by the inquest that looked into Christopher's death.

Those recommendations, collectively called the Stephenson report, tell us that corrections officials knew that Mr. Fredericks was dangerous when he was released. They knew that he was certain to reoffend. They just could not do anything about it. The legislative authority required to keep Mr. Fredericks in prison simply did not exist despite the fact that he was a certified psychopath.

It is within the authority of the House to enact such legislation. It is within the authority of the House to empower corrections officials to act to keep people like Mr. Fredericks off the streets as long as they pose a threat to our children. That is what the motion seeks to do.

Motion No. 305 calls on the government to enact legislation which will empower the National Parole Board to keep child sex offenders who are likely to reoffend upon release incarcerated beyond the term of their sentence. This was a key recommendation of the Stephenson inquest and it came at a high price.

When we look at the statistics surrounding child sex offenders it is clear that many Canadians are affected by this horrible crime. Fifty-three per cent of all females and thirty-one per cent of all males are victims of unwanted sexual acts. Eighty per cent of these incidents occurred when they were children or youth. A full sixty-three per cent of victims in all sexual assaults reported to the police are young people under the age of 18. Canadian children are prime targets for sex offenders and it is time that we took action to ensure their safety.

The magnitude of the task is apparent when we look at the profile of child sex offenders. In eight out of ten cases the offenders are either related or known to the victims. They occupy positions of trust in the lives of their victims. It is therefore no surprise that a sexual assault against a child often goes unreported.

Private Members' Business

One study estimates that for every incident of reported child sex abuse two and a half go unreported. Abusers will often threaten the children, thus making them too afraid to report the offence. Other times the offender will persuade the child that the sexual acts are part of any loving relationship and are perfectly acceptable.

Because of the power offenders often enjoy over their victims, their abuse often goes unreported. That is why it is crucial that we act in an effective manner toward child sex offenders when a child has the courage to speak out about abuse.

Current legislation does not allow for truly effective action against child sex offenders. Existing provisions of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act allow for the release of offenders upon completion of two-thirds of their sentence.

Amendments proposed by Bill C-45, which was before the House for first reading last week, would allow the National Parole Board to deny the release of offenders if it feels that they will reoffend within the term of their sentence. Bill C-45 is a giant leap forward in the fight against child sex offenders, but more needs to be done.

• (1335)

I do not wish to understate the importance of the amendments contained in Bill C-45. By removing the requirement to prove serious harm in order to deny parole to a child sex offender, we are giving the National Parole Board a very important instrument in the battle to protect our children.

The serious harm provision was removed out of a recognition that the effects of abuse on children are often not apparent for some time and that a unique sentencing procedure would have to be enacted to deal with child sex offenders.

It is precisely because Bill C-45 employs a non-traditional sentencing procedure that it is so progressive. Traditional sentencing procedures are simply not effective with respect to child sex offenders who have one of the highest reoffence rates in any criminal group. Studies show that 40 per cent of sex offenders reoffend within five years of being released from incarceration.

I believe it is time we took an even bigger step toward effectively addressing this horrible crime. I believe post-sentence detentions are the means to take this step. By keeping these offenders incarcerated as long as they are likely to reoffend we are acting in a constructive, progressive manner. It allows us to link punishment with rehabilitation.

The change in sentencing philosophy is long overdue. We need to send a message loud and clear that punishment is not just serving time. It is more than that. In order for punishment to have been completed convicted offenders must not be in the