

Government Orders

I listened to the original remarks this morning. It was interesting. The speaker who introduced the bill this morning for the Conservative government mentioned that the RCMP Public Complaints Commission was going to be rolled into the RCMP External Review Committee. The remark that justified this was that there would be a saving of roughly \$1 million. It would eliminate duplication and it would save seven person-years.

I would like to point out that the RCMP Public Complaints Commission is virtually the only agency in Canada where Canadians who have a complaint against the state police force, the RCMP, can go and be assured of a fair investigation of their complaints.

To remove this agency or to in any way weaken it by depriving it of human resources and financial resources is certainly going to ensure that the public does not have an effective agency with which to raise its complaints and ensure that its complaints will be dealt with.

I would point out that the RCMP is probably one of the finest police forces in the world, but it does have situations occur in which there are breaches of the law, where officers act inappropriately, where some officers behave in a manner whereby they should no longer remain as members of the RCMP. It is absolutely clear that in a very large organization for one reason or another you are going to have people who do not fit in.

In an organization that can use the kind of force that the RCMP can against the public, be it direct application of force, be it by intimidation, whatever, there have been some terrible examples of injustice. It is the RCMP Public Complaints Commission that has really given an opportunity for the members of the public to be assured that their complaints can be dealt with effectively and efficiently.

The attempt to roll the RCMP Public Complaints Commission into an External Review Committee that handles grievances of RCMP officers and other matters that arise out of personnel cases is a conflict of interest. It not only destroys the effectiveness of the complaints commission, but it probably creates a situation, with the elimination of financial and human resources, that will render it ineffective.

I would like to use an example of a single case. There are all kinds of cases across Canada that can be used to

justify a call by the opposition and by other people in Canada not to amalgamate this, not to cut its resources, but in fact to strengthen the resources.

The RCMP Public Complaints Commission came into being on September 30, 1988. On that night in Gibsons, British Columbia, a young man happened to be intoxicated and sleeping in a bar. The RCMP were called to take the individual out and they took that individual to jail. It was interesting that they chose to jail the individual since there was no fight or difficulty involved. The person was just asleep. They threw the individual into jail and there were a number of other people in the cell.

An altercation started in the cell and at some point during the evening the corporal of the detachment removed that prisoner from the cell. There was an altercation, the individual was injured, and it turned out quite badly.

The person was returned to the cell. The other people incarcerated with this individual throughout the night called for medical attention for the individual. The call for medical attention was disregarded. The next morning all the other individuals in the cell were sent out, no charges were laid and they disappeared.

The individual who remained, the one who had been taken into custody that night and held in the cell, was held even longer because there was an outstanding parking ticket. Later the brother appeared, paid the ticket in Sechelt and the person was unceremoniously dumped out into the street.

The person could not navigate as he had been so badly injured. A taxi driver came by, picked the person up and took him about 30 kilometres away to a hospital. The individual got to the hospital and after an examination it was determined his face had been stove in, his ribs broken and his spleen ruptured. They helicoptered him to North Vancouver where he underwent treatment and recovered.

A complaint was lodged almost immediately with the local detachment of the RCMP. It was not handled in a way that satisfied the parents of the individual. The parents tried a number of routes to get some satisfaction. It took close to a year after going through the ombudsman in British Columbia, the RCMP and a whole host of other agencies.