

S. O. 31

Last week Albertans learned that because of the practice of sentence merging a convict on parole who reoffends has his new sentence added to his old sentence for parole purposes. Time served on the first offence counts as time served toward parole on the second.

A convicted rapist in Edmonton sentenced to 15 years will be eligible for parole in only 18 months. If he had reoffended after his parole was completed the earliest he would have been eligible for parole would have been the year 2000.

We must ensure that the justice system works the way it is intended to, and the way Canadians expect it to. In the case of violent offenders, sentence merging for parole purposes must be stopped.

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IRANIAN NEW YEAR

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, March 21, the first day of spring for Canadians, is celebrated by Iranians throughout the world as the first day of their new year, or *Nowruz*, meaning new day. This secular observance of the start of the Persian calendar, the arrival of spring and the renewal of life on earth has continuously taken place over the past 2,500 years.

Iran, formerly called Persia, is one of the world's most ancient civilizations. Recent political events in that country have caused many Iranians to leave their homeland and resettle around the world, including in Canada where we have benefited much from the rich heritage of their traditions, values and ideals.

Members of this House wish a happy *Nowruz* to all Canadians of Iranian descent. We welcome not only their celebration of this time of renewal but also their contribution to Canada's national cultural mosaic and to our way of life.

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CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Ken Monteith (Elgin—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, some of my hon. friends in opposition from the Windsor area have had nothing but ill to say of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement since it came into effect. Perhaps I could point to some major projects in their area that

the companies involved say can be attributed in large part to an increasing flow of Canada-U.S. trade since the FTA and forecasts of even greater growth under NAFTA.

There have been \$25 million in improvements to the Canadian side of the Ambassador bridge, and another \$75 million on the U.S. side; \$28 million will be spent upgrading the inside of the Detroit-Windsor tunnel, and another \$25 million will be spent refurbishing the plaza on the Canadian side; \$38 million is being spent to enlarge the CN-CP railway tunnel; a \$100 million expansion of Sarnia's Blue Water bridge will be started in 1995; and there are also CN's plans for a new railway tunnel between Sarnia and Port Huron.

That is more than \$290 million in investments in Canada's trade infrastructure in the Windsor-Sarnia area. Perhaps my hon. colleagues would like to comment on the jobs that investment is creating and will create in Canada.

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NATIONAL PAROLE BOARD

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's recent patronage appointments to the National Parole Board have further reduced the level of corrections experience held by National Parole Board members. In fact, the percentage of board members with such experience has declined from 85 per cent in 1977 to 40 per cent today.

National Parole Board members make life and death decisions every day and as such require experience in the criminal justice field. Without such experience, their decisions may unnecessarily place Canadians at risk.

The 1988 Daubney report of the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General said:

The board can only be as good as its decision makers. If those who are appointed as decision makers do not have the requisite qualifications or experience, their decision making is unlikely to be as effective as it should be.

• (1415)

I call upon the Prime Minister and the Solicitor General to re-examine the process of making these appointments and to put the safety of Canadians first instead of delivering million dollar farewell gifts to Tory supporters.