

*Government Orders*

The legislation of 1989 was good in its intent in that it was seizing the assets or the profits of the criminal activity. However, one would beg to ask why the value of that would go over to the federal government and not the provincial one.

Just to highlight my point, in my riding of Dartmouth there are two police forces. There is the RCMP in the county. It is woefully understaffed and that has caused big problems with morale and its pursuit of the administration of justice in keeping the community safe. It does the best job it can with the resources it is given.

However, to give an idea of what the municipal police forces are facing, in times of recession these types of crimes go up. In times of recession there are more break and enters. There is more violent crime. There is more trafficking in drugs. There is an increase in all kinds of criminal activity where there is a profit to be made.

In my riding of Dartmouth the current chief of police, Chief McRae, and the former chief, Chief Cole, will tell you that in the last two years because of cutbacks in transfers to the provinces by the federal government and then cutbacks in transfers from the provincial government to the municipal government, they have had to freeze their budgets.

• (1600)

They have frozen their budgets at \$11 million over the last two years but there has been no freeze on the crime rate. The crime rate continues to accelerate but because of the type of downloading of debt from the federal government there has not been a corresponding increase in the level of resources given to municipal police forces like the police force in Dartmouth.

They tell me in Dartmouth that not only is crime going up as resources are frozen but they are now absorbing costs previously absorbed by the RCMP, the federal law enforcement agency. In affect costs have been downloaded from the federal government to the provincial or municipal level.

Budgets are frozen, crime is on the increase, there is no money coming to help them from anywhere and even the RCMP, which has seen its budget frozen over the last few years is now talking about charging municipal police

forces user fees for forensic work. As budgets have been frozen and other costs have continued to escalate Dartmouth has lost 13 officers over a period of two years which is a 10 per cent reduction.

I called just before this bill came up and was told the cost of undercover work, if it was contracted out, would be \$60 per hour per officer. Usually in drug undercover work there are at least two officers required as well as a patrol car. The work is not usually done during daylight hours so overtime is paid in many cases.

The cost of law enforcement when it comes to trying to break some of these drug rings and crack down on the distribution and sale of illegal drugs in our communities is excessive. In Dartmouth in the last year we have statistics showing there were 108 trafficking charges in a city of 68,000 to 70,000 people. There were 73 possession charges and 181 people taken into custody.

They tell me in Dartmouth there has been a significant increase in the level of crime since 1991, primarily because of the economy and this government-made recession, however there has been no increase in the level of resources given to combat these crimes. This bill goes somewhat in the direction of rectifying this.

Instead of the federal government getting the value of the assets that are confiscated in cases of criminal activity, particularly dealing with illegal drugs, some of these proceeds will go down to the provincial and municipal governments. They will not be going down to the respective police forces but hopefully they will find their way to the forces that are expending resources to get rid of the low life that is infecting our communities far too often.

This is the type of legislation that perhaps we should have more debate on. We are at third reading so it has gone to committee but there are some questions that will probably still have to be asked. It is unfortunate that we are pushing this through as quickly as we are but in the dying days of the government, with six days left before these guys opposite are kicked out of office for a good long time, I guess they are trying their very best to at least put it on the record that after nine years they did try to address some of the serious flaws in the criminal justice system.