

*Government Orders*

Bill C-7 provides the necessary legislation to support the resources dedicated to enforcement. Bill C-7 is the third and final significant piece of legislation to ensure that the strategy succeeds. It must therefore be seen as part of the whole strategy and not in isolation.

Within my department alone programs have shifted to focus on new target goals. The federal component of the strategy falls under the responsibility of many departments, health, justice, Solicitor General, finance, external affairs, and national defence.

Canada's drug strategy secretariat is co-ordinating the promotion and evaluation of programs among these departments.

The community support program allows community groups to develop solutions specific to their substance abuse problems and we also have programs to address the unique problems of our native peoples, especially solvent and inhalant abuse, and the department has also introduced the national native role model program.

While the controlled drugs and substances bill constitutes a necessary tool to prevent diversion of drugs it also contains provisions to ensure that drugs intended for medical, industrial or research purposes are made available to those who need them.

This bill would be beneficial to all Canadians in that it would provide them with additional protection against the serious consequences of drug diversion.

Without such legislation drugs would be more subject to thefts and robberies. Drugs would be more easily accessible in the streets. People would be more vulnerable to the consequences of illicit drug supply.

Contrary to some assumptions, this bill is not indifferent to treatment programs, especially for those who are drug dependent. As a physician I support the availability of help and appropriate tools for those who seek to get back to a normal life.

• (1345)

My government is sensitive to the medical and social consequences of drug addiction. The department of health will continue to grant methadone authorization for the treatment of drug dependence. Methadone is a controlled drug and its use well recognized in the medical community.

The methadone program has the full support of the government. This is an initiative directed at use reduction. It assists many opiate abusers to re-establish a constructive life by promoting rehabilitation, reducing health risks and costs to the community.

The department of health will continue to encourage and make available methadone treatment for appropriate patients. Bill C-7 was criticized for not providing drug dependent persons who have committed criminal offences with access to treatment. My government is very supportive of rehabilitation.

Although the bill does not provide for mandatory rehabilitation treatment, the courts have always taken into consideration as part of a sentence the rehabilitation aspect of persons convicted of drug crimes.

The bill does not go against such a practice. It is commonly accepted as a criminal law notion. Rehabilitation has been identified by jurisprudence of the last decade as being an integral part of any sentence rendered in Canada.

We must also take into consideration the necessity for patients first to be referred to qualified health care professionals so that sound assessment and appropriate treatment programs are available to meet their needs.

Drug dependence is a complex health issue. It requires professional diagnostic treatment and rehabilitative interventions. Motivation on the part of the patient is a crucial element in the success of treatment. The bill itself cannot determine who is a good candidate for treatment and who is not. The courts have the opportunity and responsibility to exert discretion and to refer candidates for treatment to qualified health care professionals.

However my government is supportive of all programs aimed at decreasing the dependency and disastrous consequences of illicit drug use.

The department of health is responsible for the national AIDS program. A great deal of thought has therefore been given to the spread of AIDS through intravenous drug use. We are convinced that the strategies used to curb the spread of HIV among drug users will enhance our efforts to reduce drug use in Canada by linking drug users with health professionals and treatment programs.

Needle exchange programs were used successfully by many communities to reduce the spread of HIV. Sections of the Criminal Code dealing with drug paraphernalia have specifically been excluded, such as medical devices such as needles, from the statutory definition of instrument for illicit drug use, thereby allowing for the distribution of sterile needles by health professionals to known drug users who are at risk of AIDS.

It therefore follows that the critical path for a drug free future lies in prevention and rehabilitation, but we also have an escalating problem today that must be recognized and dealt with promptly. We must give law enforcement professionals the tools they need to deal effectively with those who continue to prey on the addicted and on the young would-be addicts.

If we are serious about advancing the broader social goal of maintaining safe and peaceful communities, we must promote law enforcement now. The youth of Canada are of primary importance in my government's platform. They are the key to our country's future.

My practice as a physician has put me in constant contact with our youth. I am also the mother of three sons. I understand the daily difficulties our young people face, their hopelessness and their vulnerability. This makes them prime targets for those in