

At the outset I am simply saying that in tackling the problem of violent crime in our society, it is one thing to keep prisoners in jail longer. It is one thing to add to the list of violent offenders, the types of crimes they commit. Unless this government is completely committed toward newer and better programs of rehabilitation, unless it is committed to really getting to the very core of the problem of violence in our society, it will make very, very little difference whether an offender spends one third of his time before parole or one half of his time before parole in jail.

• (1320)

Bill C-36 introduces changes to the rules of parole eligibility, making it harder for violent and sexual or drug offenders to obtain parole releases. Unescorted temporary absences will be denied to the most serious offenders. Day parole will be intended specifically for preparation for release before parole eligibility.

That may be good, but let us take a look at some of the statistics. For example, under the heading "Successful completion of escorted temporary absences" presently, without this bill, we have a 99.93 per cent success rate. Also, unescorted temporary absences, a 99.18 per cent success rate. So, let us not be in too great a hurry to throw everything out the window and start over again. Our system is working.

The unfortunate thing and the very tragic thing is that every now and then somebody gets through it and commits a heinous crime. Gingras is one very good example, Legere is another one. He was just convicted, I believe, over the weekend for murdering four people while at large. There are others. I am not saying that this is all part of the success rate. We have to think about the other 99 per cent as well.

I believe that inmates have to be gradually reintroduced into society. If you are going to throw the key away, their expiry date is still going to come. I would suggest to members of this House that it is better to try to rehabilitate, it is better to encourage inmates to rehabilitate themselves and to release as many as possible, as safely as possible. Risk management is not an exact science. Let us face it. It is not exact. But at least attempt to get as many through the system as is reason-

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ably possible, based on all the criteria available. That is better than to keep them locked up for their full sentence, knowing they are going to come out anyway, probably in some cases animals, certainly more animalistic than they were when they went in.

The highlights of the bill have been mentioned already. I do not want to repeat them here. I want to mention the clauses of the bill that we are prepared to support and mention areas where we are convinced that change or additions have to be added on to the bill.

We support the tougher criteria of the detention provisions of the parole process, making it harder for violent criminals to get out on parole.

We support the opening of the parole process so that victims may have an input into that process.

We support the streamlining of communications between the judiciary, Corrections Canada and the National Parole Board.

While I am on this topic, I differ with the previous speaker, the hon. member for York South—Weston. I want as full a committee process as possible. I want to listen to many groups and individuals, expert and non-experts. If it means going to the west coast or the Northwest Territories or the east coast, I am going to support that.

I am going to push for that. The member said he has been a member of the justice committee for seven years. Maybe he is tired of looking at penitentiaries. I do not blame him. I was a member of the defence committee for six years and I do not want to see another naval shipyard for a while either. If he does not want to move with the committee, he can send a replacement. That is no problem there.

What we are concerned about is basic government policies with respect to the changes introduced in this bill: rehabilitation, drug and sexual offender programs, skills programs, upgrading programs and so on. Programming is very important.

I know you can take a horse to water but you cannot make it drink. I think we can do more in our system to encourage those people behind bars to take advantage of the rehabilitative process. If they do not take advantage and learn from it, that is another matter. I am convinced with greater resources, and this means more money, time, effort, commitment and personnel, it can be done. It certainly can be improved upon.