

*Supply*

• (1325)

To be truly effective, crime prevention must tackle the social and economic factors linked to crime; it must go to the roots of the problem, which include poverty, unemployment, drug addiction and family violence.

[English]

We know that the human costs of crime and the fear of crime, including the effects of victimization on individuals in our society, are all too high. I believe the facts speak for themselves when I say that we must pursue a broad based approach to crime in our society, an approach that recognizes the traditional role of our established agencies, but also examines social policies.

To be truly effective the prevention of crime must involve examining the underlying social and economic factors associated with crime and criminality, the root causes of crime such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, alcohol and substance abuse and finally violence, to name but a few.

Fundamental to this approach is a shared responsibility among governments, their criminal justice systems, social service agencies, education systems and communities not only to fight crime but to deal with the social problems which ultimately lead to criminal activity.

The establishment of a council on crime prevention that would bring key players together to address crime prevention and safety within our communities is one of the commitments of this government. It is one that the Solicitor General is working on in collaboration with the Minister of Justice. The council will serve as an advisory body to all levels of government on broad policy priorities and activities related to crime prevention.

The composition of the council will reflect the wide variety of stakeholders in crime prevention and social development. To succeed then in our efforts to prevent crime and find practical solutions we must not only work in tandem with our partners in the criminal justice system but broaden our partnership to include our communities and neighbourhoods.

Without this support we cannot present a strong and united front in solving the difficult problems that touch us all, whether our efforts are directed at family violence, youth at risk, illiteracy, high risk offenders stemming from the drug trade or eliminating hate crime. Crime prevention is also an important part of the work of the National Parole Board and Correctional Services of Canada. Both of these agencies are concerned with the safe reintegration of federal offenders, those who have served sentences over two years, in society.

It is a fact that the majority of federal offenders, two-thirds, serve their sentence and do not break the law after being released into the community. Ensuring greater public safety for

Canadians entails reducing the risk of those who do reoffend. Public safety remains the primary and constant factor of all correctional decision making. It is recognized that public safety is best served when offenders are given the treatment and training they need to successfully reintegrate into the community.

Correctional Services of Canada's life skills program for offenders is a good example of the type of fundamental work under way in our federal penitentiary system to help offenders acquire the skills they need to make a clean start in life.

I said earlier that our approach to fighting crime is a two pronged approach. The other side of the public safety coin is the need to find more effective ways of dealing with repeat violent and sex offenders. Improvements to handling and treatment of these offenders in the federal corrections system is a priority.

In its election platform the government recognized that Canadians want better protection from dangerous offenders and we are serious about following through on our commitment. Several reports, including those coming from inquests and Commons' committees on justice and legal affairs, have stressed the need for action in this regard.

We are developing a series of amendments to the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. For example, we are working on measures that would enable us to more easily detain until the end of the sentence repeat sex offenders who victimize children.

• (1330)

The Solicitor General has also stated that he wants to look at tightening up the sentence calculation process so that offences committed by repeat offenders on conditional release will result in more time served in penitentiaries.

We are also reviewing with the provinces a number of measures which could improve public protection from high risk offenders, including the greater use by the provinces of the dangerous offender provisions at the time of original conviction and sentencing. As well, the federal government will take steps to address the release of high risk offenders into society at the end of their custodial terms.

Society must protect itself from individuals who may be unfit for release and we are working with the provinces to deal with this issue in a way which is consistent with the charter.

Also being studied are methods of bringing the corrections and mental health fields together in a co-ordinated and integrated manner. While supporting tougher measures for violent and repeat sex offenders we must also highlight their need for enhanced rehabilitation programs while in prison to reduce the chances of these individuals reoffending.