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CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Bill to Amend—Third Reading of Bill C-12

Speech by:

The Honourable Larry W. Campbell

Wednesday, June 17, 2015

THE SENATE

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BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator McInnis, seconded by the Honourable Senator Frum, for the third reading of Bill C-12, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, in keeping with Senator McInnis' comments, I will not be lengthy either.

I would like to thank Senator McInnis for his kind words regarding my expertise, but it should be noted that he is not without substantial experience in the area of prisons, addictions and mental illness — and, like the bank robbery, this was not that he committed them, but that in his life he has had extensive experience and so I respect his decisions.

I don't like fighting on a hill I can't win, and this bill really represents such a hill. Instead of recognizing the futility of keeping drugs from prison, this government instead pushes its own rock up the very same hill. It is doubtful that there is a prison in the world that is drug-free. The nature of the disease, of the addiction, ensures that this will remain so. The addict has no choice. He either gets the drugs or he gets sick.

If I lived in the perfect world as envisioned by the framers of this bill, we would not be having this discussion. Senator McInnis describes the issue of drugs in prisons as a difficult challenge. He says we should not back away and I agree. But instead of adding on time for testing positive, we should be finding ways to treat the problem. This may involve the use of opiates as a maintenance drug inside the prison.

It is interesting that I had a discussion yesterday with a senator who is adamantly against things like supervised injection sites, but

would be open to having heroin maintenance in prisons. I thought that that was quite remarkable.

• (1450)

This would also involve intense counselling and treatment inside the prison to put the disease in remission. These actions would make it safer for all — guards, inmates, and the public — when they get released.

I don't have to tell honourable senators that if you can smuggle a handgun or a cellphone or power tools into a prison, getting something small and easily packaged, like drugs, inside is not all that big of a problem. There are simply just too many ways for it to come in, and I believe we discussed that the last time.

It's a myth to think that urinalysis or denial of parole will be an incentive for a prisoner to stop feeding his or her illness. It flies in the face of scientific evidence.

Evidence clearly shows that treatment versus punishment for a medical condition pays dividends — less violence, more cost-effective — and releasing inmates who are prepared to work hard in society and to stay in remission.

I have no idea why the framers of the bill thought there should be a section on parole revocation for breaching conditions of parole. It's already in the law. It's implemented all the time. "I'm out on parole, and I have conditions of not to be in a certain area, do not have alcohol, do not have drugs, do not associate with other persons." It's all covered. "If the police catch me, I'm gone. I'm back in jail." In essence, this bill does nothing.

I realize that many of these prison hang-'em-high bills appeal to the grassroots of the Conservative Party. I hate to tell them that a significant number of them are turning away from the Conservative Party.

I would ask that senators look at the public benefits of this bill, recognize that there are none and vote against it. Thank you.