

New Young Offenders Act stresses rights: Kaplan

by
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The new Young Offenders Act - which officially became law on April 2 - contains important changes to the way the courts, the police and your community will deal with young Canadians in trouble with the law.

The new Act replaces the 76-year-old Juvenile Delinquents Act, a law which has been amended only once since it was first enacted in 1908.

The new legislation is the result of an extensive consultation process over many years involving federal and provincial governments and legislators, concerned individuals, justice workers and community leaders.

New Rights and Responsibilities

The new law puts the onus on young Canadians to be more responsible for their actions and to make restitution for their mistakes.

At the same time, it also recognizes that young people have special needs and should be dealt with differently than adult offenders.

Consistent with the new Charter of Rights, the new law also guarantees young people the same legal rights as adults, including the right to legal representation, bail, appeal and to be kept fully and properly informed.

It also gives greater responsibility to parents and the community

leaders to help young offenders.

The old act did not formally recognize the major role parents and members of the community now play in steering young offenders away from future crime.

In fact, the Juvenile Delinquents Act gave the State absolute jurisdiction over these young people and limited the influence of parents and the community.

This situation has proved to limit the relationship between parents and children at a time when a rapport was needed most.

Uniform Age

Another important change is the establishment of a uniform age at which an individual can be determined to be criminally responsible, and at which age the line is drawn between adult and juvenile offenders.

Under the old legislation, each province had its own classification of when a person was a "juvenile"

and when he or she became an adult.

As of this week, the uniform age for criminal responsibility will be set at 12 years. Beginning next April, the dividing line between juvenile and adult offenders will be the eighteenth birthday.

New Options

During our discussions, it became evident that what was most needed was alternative ways to deal with young people in trouble with the law. Too often, past reliance on custody produced not responsible citizens, but more experienced criminals.

Young people in trouble will not necessarily have to go to court. If the problem can be dealt with in the community, outside a formal court system, the new law encourages that route.

The new Act therefore provides judges with a number of important options to deal with young offenders.

We have developed a number of sentencing

options, which we believe will benefit the young offender and society as a whole.

For instance, a young offender may be required to pay his or her victim compensation for losses or damage to person or property. Or he or she

may be required to do community work to compensate for their criminal behaviour.

These are just two options available to judges, who are given greater flexibility in dealing with individual cases.

On the other hand, if a

young person commits a serious offence, he or she will be dealt with in a way that ensures the protection of society. In appropriate cases, the youngster could be transferred to adult court for trial.

I believe the change in the new act will have a

positive impact on young people and steer them towards becoming more responsible citizens.

If you have any questions, or would like to know how you can get involved in helping young people who get in trouble, just drop me a note at my office in the House of Commons, Ottawa. No postage is needed.

In the news

April 14

Two shows for children by Tanglefoot, presented by Huronia Performing Arts for Children, will be performed in Midland Secondary School. Ooples and Boo Noo

Noos, for children ages three to seven, at 1:30 p.m., and Fish, Fur and Trees, for children age seven to 12, at 3:30 p.m.

April 18

Euchre party in the Midland Legion at 8 p.m. Lunch, prizes, \$1.50 per person. Sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary of Branch 80.

April 18

Register by April 18 for a natural dyeing course at Sainte-Marie among the Hurons. Course is May 26 from

10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Sainte-Marie, \$10 Friends of Sainte-Marie, \$12 for non-members.

April 23

Register by April 23 for May 3 course in herb gardening at Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Fred Prescod, horticulturalist with the Royal Botanical Gardens is giving the course.

April 24

Midland Secondary

School students are performing E.J. Pratt's play Brebeuf and his Brethern at 7:30 p.m. in the foyer of Sainte-Marie among the Hurons.

April 25

Midland Commodore Computer Users Group meets the first Wednesday of each month in the cafeteria of Ernst Leitz Canada Ltd., Midland. For more information, telephone Frank Murphy (534-3378).

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part of our team, we'll provide support and financial assistance, but it's your gift of kindness and sharing that will really make the difference.

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Probation and Aftercare Foster Home Program,
110 Eglinton Avenue West,
Toronto, Ontario 484-1920



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