

The two other dominant themes which were voiced by witnesses from all perspectives were the overriding necessities of dealing more effectively with the criminal use of firearms and of preventing illegal entry of firearms at the border. The only answer to the first problem would appear to be significantly stronger penalties for such use and a profoundly more serious approach to the enforcement of those penalties. The answers to the second problem are less clear, but no less critical.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

Much of the debate before us was about whether more or less gun control was needed, and whether the government's package added enough further controls or too many. The Special Committee believes that it is more effective legislation, regulation and administration that is required, and that this involves a somewhat different approach. We have taken from both the government proposals and the recommendations of the witnesses those ideas which we feel will contribute to that aim, added some additional elements, and then tried to mold all of these ideas into a qualitatively different system which will accomplish the objectives common to all the concerns discussed above. The Special Committee believes that this is a balanced package of proposals that will both provide better protection to the public, and avoid unnecessarily hampering or preventing the activities of legitimate gun users.

The Special Committee affirms that private ownership of guns in Canada is a privilege. Unrestricted availability of firearms would not be responsible governance, but neither would restrictions making it difficult or impossible for persons of all ages, both sexes, and varying physical abilities to pursue legitimate recreational activities in a responsible and safe manner. The Committee believes that the best approach is to ensure that only properly qualified persons have access to the firearms necessary and appropriate for their sport, whether it be hunting, competition shooting, or collecting. This means improved FAC screening, but above all, adequate training to ensure that everyone with a firearm knows how to use and store it competently and responsibly.

The Special Committee also believes that such a system can and should be designed and implemented so that it has a minimal impact on current law-abiding users of firearms. There should be no further importation of dangerous weapons such as military assault rifles. Where a legitimate purpose now exists, the activity, the firearms suitable for it, and the persons who engage in the activity, should be defined and regulated.

There should also be transitional provisions that ensure that those who presently own and use firearms can retain their guns if they can show that they are competent to use them. There should also be transitional provisions that ensure that new screening requirements, such as competency training, are not applied to those who have been using firearms safely for some time. In this way, a more effective system can be phased in gradually.

#### **5. THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

Because the Special Committee believes that it is at the initial point of access that improvements in the system must begin, Chapter 2 of our report will look at the screening process, in particular the FAC system. Chapter 3 will then look at types of firearms, and the problem of