

Government Orders

improvement, and a response to some of the concerns that have been raised by people on all sides of the issue. Some of the proposals in Bill C-80 in fact address concerns of the firearms-owning community about some of the red tape and inconveniences that they face in using firearms for what are otherwise legal and accepted uses.

It is a very important opportunity to put this issue before the Canadian public to reassure them that we have in fact in place a good system of gun control legislation and that we wish to make it better. We can also focus attention on something which I see particularly in my own city of Vancouver. It is a large urban area with a port where we have a drug trade and a lot of crime. Very often these crimes are accompanied by the use of firearms and many of those firearms that are used are firearms that are prohibited under the Criminal Code. They are firearms that are not readily available to the public whereas the perception that is given to Canadians is that anyone can go and buy these guns. That is not the case and we do face a very serious question of law enforcement. I hope the committee may want to make some comments about the question of penalties, et cetera, and whether we in fact have a regime in place that meets the needs of Canadians.

On that note, I will conclude my lengthy introduction to debate on this motion with the very sincere plea that the House will respond to this motion to get a public process in place to address what may be one of the most serious and most contentious issues that the House will be asked to deal with in this session.

I have said to people across the country on all sides of the issue that my goal is to have a regime of gun control legislation that enables those great many Canadians who are uncomfortable with firearms to be confident that those who have them are using them correctly, that there is a process of vetting, and that they are competent to use them. That other group of Canadians wish to use firearms for sporting and hunting purposes, which are a longstanding part of our culture, and I will not even get into the question of our aboriginal people who have hunting rights protected by treaty, for example. Those Canadians who wish to use firearms in a law-abiding and responsible way will be able to do so with confidence as well.

That is the most we can ask of a legislative framework—a sense of balance and a sense of sensitivity that enables us to proceed as a civilized society with a concern for public security and a respect for all Canadians.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Madam Speaker, I have a very short serious question, which I think could advance the debate, that I would like to put to the minister.

I know the member for Halifax said that he would not agree to a question, but I am wondering if he would reconsider. I could put a very short question to the minister which I think would help in the debate. I ask for agreement to put the question to the minister.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Will the hon. minister agree to respond to one question?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Allmand: Madam Speaker, the question is this. In the comprehensive package of measures that the minister announced on June 26, there are many items that are not in Bill C-80, as she admitted.

However, the motion before us today simply refers the matters in Bill C-80 to the committee. Would the minister give us an assurance that, as far as she is concerned, the committee could look at all the measures that she put forward on June 26 and not simply the measures in the bill? I think that is her intention, but I would like to make it absolutely clear. I would hate to see the committee bog down on some strict rule of interpretation that we could only look at the bill and not her entire package.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, yes, I would be very pleased to give that assurance to the hon. member.

My understanding was that this wording would encompass that. That is certainly the intention on this side of the House because it is a comprehensive package. I do think it is an important opportunity.

The hon. member who asked the question is a veteran of the previous engagement with this subject in the House, and will recognize how important it is to look at it from all aspects. Yes, I am looking forward to a comprehensive response from the committee on all aspects of the package that I have put forward. That is my anticipa-