

Safe Storage

Gun theft is a problem. Stolen guns are often used in crimes. At the same time, unauthorized access to guns is a critical factor in many of the accidental shootings which occur particularly those involving children as well as some suicides. Defining and regulating safe storage should reduce theft and unauthorized access. The definition should include requirements such as:

- secure, locked containers of unbreakable material (ideally a safe for handguns)
- separate locked storage of ammunition
- secure trigger locks (not handcuffs)
- temporary disabling standards for any weapons to be hung or displayed in glass cases
- standards for transporting all weapons either in locked containers or the trunk of the vehicle (not gun racks)
- a record of guns owned including type and serial number
- in light of the potential threat associated with theft of gun collections, higher standards for collectors which may address issues such as access to the building in which the guns are stored, for example, alarm systems. As well, collectors should be required keep a record of all firearms owned, the type, serial number, and acquisition information, subject to periodic inspection
- standards for gun sellers and off-site storage should be most rigorous with guidelines defined for display of guns

FAC and References

References provide a way of confirming the details on the FAC. In obtaining references, the applicant gives notice of his or her intention to buy a firearm. This could be critical. For this reason it is absolutely essential that the applicant confirm his/her references and obtain their consent and signatures prior to submitting an application. The class of references, particularly in light of the absence of civil liability, is also critical and must be carefully considered. Community checks are another way to assess the suitability of an applicant and to notify people close to the applicant, who might have legitimate concerns, of the applicant's intention to purchase a gun. Because community checks are optional and time-consuming, the application should contain sufficient information to facilitate the task. Among other things, the FAC should contain:

- the names, addresses, phone numbers and relationship and signatures of the references
- the class of references defined in a way which encourages the provision of accurate information
- sufficient information to support community checks.(eg. marital status, residents at the same address, employer)

Fees

The current system runs at a deficit. A user pay approach is appropriate for all firearms fees (exceptions are made for subsistence hunters who are exempt) and the Minister suggested a fee of \$50 for an FAC. Amendments introduced in the Legislative Committee defined the renewal to be 50% of the cost of the initial fee. At the same time, the Committee added screening options, such as community checks, which may prove costly. Moreover the new costs of training and testing or the costs for screening the new class of collectors have yet to be determined. We believe that the system should be self financing. Components of the systems needed to ensure public safety ought not to be left out simply because of cost factors. Therefore it is essential that:

- the initial fee for the FAC be set at a level which can be reasonably expected to cover costs
- the costs of the firearms control system be reviewed on a regular basis and the fees adjusted accordingly.

2. FUTURE AMENDMENTS

In their submissions to the Government and in our joint statement, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Police Association, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and a diverse range of other groups have advocated registration of unrestricted firearms and presentation of the Firearms Acquisition Certificate or equivalent for the purchase of ammunition. Amendments to effect these were proposed but ruled out of order. However, the Minister has stated that she believes that the system will move in this direction. We would like to ensure that it does.