

iii) *The Special Committee's View*

The Special Committee believes that there must be established a mandatory competency and safety course, the successful completion of which would be a condition to obtaining an FAC for the first time. The Committee recognizes the overwhelming support for the implementation of such an educational component in the acquisition process from virtually all witnesses who appeared before it. The Committee sees a need for the establishment of national standards for these courses to be recommended by the Canadian Advisory Council on Firearms and imposed by the federal government. It is also crucial that there be qualified instructors available to conduct the courses. The Committee suggests that these courses be conducted on a user-pay basis, and that administrative costs be kept to a minimum. The Committee also feels that all first-time FAC applicants should be required to successfully complete a course, rather than simply passing a test, as Bill C-80 proposes. Successful completion would entail certification by a qualified instructor that the applicant had met the national competency standards.

The Special Committee understands that the groundwork necessary to make such courses available in all parts of the country will be extensive. It is the view of the Committee, however, that any further delay in the implementation of this essential feature of an effective screening system cannot be tolerated. The federal government must begin by setting national standards and then work with the provinces to ensure the availability of courses. The training requirement must then be imposed on a national basis. This must be done as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Special Committee recommends that that portion of section 106(3) of the Criminal Code, which requires that any training requirement be proclaimed province by province, be repealed forthwith. The Committee recommends that the remaining requirement be imposed nationally on all first-time FAC applicants as soon as possible. This should be done after consultation with the provinces, but in any event no later than June 30, 1992. The training requirement should also be amended to provide that all first-time applicants must successfully complete a course covering the competent and safe handling of firearms, and knowledge of firearms control laws. These courses must conform to national standards. Successful completion of a course would entail certification by a qualified instructor that the applicant met the national standards.

C. Mandatory Waiting Period

It has been proposed in Bill C-80 that there be a 28-day mandatory waiting period between the application for an FAC and its issuance. The rationale offered for this proposal is that it would enable the police to make a more thorough assessment of FAC applicants, while at the same time provide a time period that would hopefully discourage impulsive crimes or shootings. There is at present no time limit set out in the Code for the processing of an FAC application; however, as noted earlier, in those cases where the firearms officer has no valid reason to delay issuance, he or she must provide the applicant with an FAC.

The Special Committee believes that once the requirement for the successful completion of a mandatory safety course is implemented, it will provide for a built-in waiting period that would be of sufficient duration to accommodate both rationales put forward by the Minister of Justice for such a