

*Government Orders*

someone has a history of reckless and careless driving, their licence is taken away from them. All automobiles must be licensed.

• (1640)

What we are suggesting for guns is not even as serious as with automobiles. Guns are designed and manufactured to kill. Why should people, for their own public safety, object to the simple regulation of these weapons? It is no more complex or bureaucratic than it is for automobiles.

There are other substances that are dangerous as well, which we put controls on. Nobody can sell over the counter certain drugs and pharmaceuticals. They can only be sold by licensed pharmacists in drug stores and a prescription from a doctor is needed to get them.

It is for the public's safety that we are trying to screen out the acquisition of guns by dangerous people.

We hear all the same time-worn arguments against gun control in general. I just heard it expressed on the other side that it is not weapons that kill, it is individuals who kill. Statistics show that it is five times easier to kill with a gun than it is with any other weapon. While it is true that an individual must take the gun and use it, it is much easier to kill with the gun. Again, if one wants to restrict and cut back on the number of murders and homicides with guns, then it should be made more difficult for the irresponsible and those individuals who have criminal backgrounds and so on to get guns.

By the way, there are studies done by the Solicitor General's department which show that in every instance when we have tightened our gun control laws the rate of crime, homicides, and armed robberies with guns has declined. We all know that in the United States there is very little control over guns. If we compare the United States with Canada, in the United States 70 per cent of the homicides are committed with guns. In Canada, only 30 per cent of homicides are committed with guns because it is much more difficult to get a gun in Canada. Furthermore, the rate of murder in the United States is approximately 9 per 100,000, whereas in Canada it is 2.5 per 100,000. We have a much lower rate of crime with guns in Canada because we have tougher gun laws right now. We also have a much lower rate of homicide in

Canada than in the United States because guns are difficult to obtain.

We also hear this old argument about banning guns. Nobody is suggesting that we ban guns. We are simply suggesting that we regulate them to make them more difficult to obtain. People argue that if guns are banned then only criminals will have guns. As has already been pointed out in this debate, two-thirds of the homicides in this country are committed by first-time offenders. They are committed by members of the same family or between friends and acquaintances in a state of anxiety, alcoholism, narcotics, or in a severe argument of one kind or another. One party will go out to try to obtain a gun. If he gets it, he kills the other party. Two-thirds of our homicides are that type.

We know that we will not keep guns away from professional killers or organized criminals. They will always be able to get guns, but we can make it more difficult for those husbands who kill their wives, or people like Marc Lépine who are deranged and for some reason or another have a mania against feminism. It is the non-professional killer who commits the majority of the murders in Canada and, if we can make it more difficult for them, we will be doing something. We have accomplished some success in the past by closing some of the gaps in our gun laws, and we can continue to do that.

Before I sit down, I simply want to say that gun laws, of course, are no panacea. They are not going to eliminate totally crimes with guns. They are not going to eliminate totally homicides with guns, but they can substantially reduce crimes with guns, especially with those people who are not professional criminals. That is what we are trying to accomplish. We can do it without unduly interfering with the right of our hunters and sportsmen to carry on their hunting and their sports. It has been done in the past.

I was responsible as Solicitor General for developing and introducing the last gun control legislation in 1978. I switched to another ministry after I prepared the legislation. It was finally passed under a different Solicitor General and Minister of Justice. I can recall at that time all the same arguments that we hear today were thrown up in our face by the different lobby groups in the country, that if we passed the legislation in 1978 it would virtually destroy hunting and sports shooting in the