

Government Orders

We were also told through allegations made by the opposition that the registration of guns would cost approximately \$300 million. That is absolutely false. We have to make it very clear to all Canadians that the registration of guns will basically cost \$10 up to a maximum of 10 firearms.

We are not confiscating weapons. We are asking Canadians to register their guns. We register dogs and automobiles and all kinds of things. It is very important to underline the cost and not to pursue the exaggerations put forward by the third party.

The Minister of Justice said the cost of this program will be approximately an \$85 million disbursement over the next five years. However, having listened to the testimonials from various health groups we were also told we would probably save \$100 million a year in various incarceration costs because there would be fewer Canadians either murdered or facing justice, fewer Canadians in the courts. The cost savings are quite incredible.

Health officials from Quebec and other provinces estimated that in terms of lost productivity, economics, trauma care, the general cost to society once one has been either a victim of crime or a family member of a victim, close to \$6 billion a year is lost in total Canadian productivity. Six billion dollars is an incredible amount of money. These stats which were brought to our attention we must use in order to demonstrate to the opposition and to the Canadian population that in the end with the registration of guns we are actually saving Canadians money and we are also obviously saving lives.

Other aspects of the bill I find most interesting. Violence seems to be more and more of a preoccupation of the general public, and with reason especially in terms of guns. It was well explained to us by the opposition this morning, by the hon. member from Saint Hubert, but I think it is worth repeating. A statistic provided to us by a number of our witnesses states one stands twice the chance of being injured or killed by a firearm in rural Canada compared with any other urban area. One stands twice the chance because of the prevalence, the existence of firearms in these communities.

We are also told according to the *New England Journal of Medicine* that with the presence of a gun in a home there is five times the chance of someone committing suicide. With the presence of a gun in a home there is three times the chance of a homicide.

We also know guns are often the weapon of choice in domestic violence. Let us discuss domestic violence. I think it is a preoccupation shared by all parliamentarians regardless of their political stripe. We are told 87 per cent of victims of violence know their aggressors. We also learned 84 per cent of victims are women. Sixty-one per cent of the weapons used were long guns legally acquired. There is obviously a certain correlation with a weapon in a home and violence in the family. We must address that.

• (1305)

I could go on and speak more about the police who would like to know when they go to a home following a call on conjugal violence what they will face. Does a police officer not have the right to know what is in the home, 12 gauge, a .22, whether there is a history of conjugal violence? Is the person in possession of a gun at a certain address posing a problem to his family and does he have a history of causing problems to society? Those are legitimate questions which police officers must ask every day. We are not only doing it for them, we are doing it for the families. We are doing it for the victims, for society as a whole. These are the questions we must ask.

I would like to conclude on a positive note but regrettably I cannot. I am thinking of my brother who was at l'École polytechnique in December of 1989 and tells me the story of a young woman he knew very well. She was in her late twenties. She had the courage to return to school and was on her way to write her final examination. My brother had bade her farewell, wishing her the best of luck in her work, in her new career. On that dreadful day in December of 1989 he was to learn a few hours later that she was the victim of one of the most cruel crimes ever committed in Canada.

The passage of this bill will keep in mind the victims and will keep in mind those who regrettably could have been protected had such a law existed. I am hoping to pass this law for the victims of l'École polytechnique and above all to make sure fewer crimes and fewer deaths will result in the years to come.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, all of Canada heard it from this hon. member and the hon. member for Nunatsiak who preceded him. Let it be known the Liberal government has made a statement today on two occasions that it is not a right to own a firearm but rather a privilege. Liberal members have made the judgment that a citizen is privileged to own property. Will they extend that philosophy to the right or privilege of Canadians to own cars, houses, boats, to go on a vacation, to vote freely? Is it a right or a privilege?

I would like the hon. member to stand in the House, look right into the television camera and tell every aboriginal person it is not a right for them to own a gun but a privilege.

The member said that in rural Canada a person has twice the chance of being injured by a firearm, that where firearms are present there is five times the chance of suicide and that where firearms are present there is three times the chance of homicide. We have asked the government time and time again during this debate and I ask this member now to give us one substantive, specific piece of evidence that if a firearm were registered these statistics would be different.