

The provinces and territories could all elect to postpone implementation until all governments are ready to implement the program. Ten years would be too long and would not be acceptable, considering what Canadians expect gun control legislation to do in terms of protecting the public.

An assessment of universal registration by a few governments would not be very helpful. Unregistered guns and rifles would be moved from territory to territory, and the benefits of universal registration would be lost.

We need registration in all provinces and territories. According to a report on the unlawful entry, exit and circulation of firearms in Canada, in 1993 nearly 5,000 firearms were recovered by the police, which means 10 police forces serving 40 per cent of the rural and urban population of Canada. Half of these weapons were guns and rifles, which was one of the reasons why the task force recommended that all guns, and not just handguns, be registered upon entry into Canada.

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What would be the consequences of this amendment? The police would not be able to trace the ownership of many of the firearms they recover. They would not know whether they were stolen, illegally imported, sold, or used previously to commit a criminal act.

Enforcement would create problems for Customs Canada. How could Customs officers enforce export regulations that differ from province to province? In the case of foreign visitors, would a licence and a certificate be issued to someone who arrives in a province where the program is in effect? Should the training Customs officers receive depend on where they work? How will the public react to Customs laws that vary, depending on the province and territory?

Parliament has an obligation to ensure that responsible owners of firearms are able to comply with Bill C-68. This provision for opting in or opting out would not be in the public interest. It would upset owners of firearms, hunters from other countries and the police who must enforce legislation that is passed to protect the Canadian public.

The financial framework of the Canadian firearms registration system, tabled by the Minister of Justice before the committee of the House of Commons, shows a balance between expenditures and revenues. However, this financial framework is based on the assumption that the money will come from three million owners who will register seven million firearms.

The Senate committee's proposal to amend Bill C-68 would make the legislation so confusing and so vague that it will be impossible to enforce and will benefit no one. Province by province implementation would mean that the present Part III of the Criminal Code and the new Part III provided under Bill C-68

would need to be in effect and enforced at the same time. One wonders whether this would be legally feasible.

With its application in different administrations with different criminal codes, an individual in a province that has the registration system in effect could not sell a long gun to someone in another province that does not, because no licence would be required.

Clearly, serious consideration has not been given to the disastrous effects this amendment would have in terms of the application of the legislation.

The amendment also poses problems in terms of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Under Part III of the present Criminal Code, two years' imprisonment is the maximum sentence provided for the transfer of a long gun to an individual who is not authorized to acquire a firearm. Under section 101 of the new Part III, five years' imprisonment is the maximum sentence for this offence.

Those proposing the amendment on participation and withdrawal will not want to impose such unfair and discriminatory legislation on Canadians.

The amendment is obviously incomplete. It aims at suspending the application of provisions of Bill C-68 pertaining to the registration of long guns. However, the section proposing the amendment does not indicate which clauses of Bill C-68 are involved. Many of the provisions relating to selling, lending, importing and exporting refer simply to "firearms" and concern their registration. There is no way of knowing whether these provisions are involved.

These questions cannot be justified by the Senate. If the amendment is passed, it will tarnish the image of every senator in the eyes of Canadians.

Furthermore, the dates indicated in the new clause 194 are in contradiction with both the provisions of this clause and those of clause 193. According to clause 193, the bill must come into effect by January 1, 2003, at the latest. However, according to the proposed subclauses 194(1) and (3), Bill C-68 must come into effect, in the case of long guns, a maximum of eight years after Royal Assent, which, obviously, does not coincide with January 1, 2003.

The essential cooperation between the provinces and territories and the federal government can only occur if we all make a commitment to achieve the purpose of this bill, namely the public health and safety of all Canadians. Bill C-68 addresses crime through gun control in order to promote safety in homes and on the streets across the country. The provinces agree with this Parliament that, at the end of the day, gun control legislation must be supported by the public. The gun control legislation must be fully implemented.