

Private Members' Business

on the weapons themselves, because when one is determined to commit violence, one will find the means.

I have got here very interesting statistics. I would like to give you, Mr. Speaker, statistics which I had on the number of applications received by the RCMP in 1989. I think they received about 200,000 applications, I can't find the exact figure but it was something like 200,000 applications. If the RCMP had to examine carefully every one of these applications, Mr. Speaker, if they had to go and check where these firearms were going to be stored, they would be faced with an incredible task and while they would be doing this, they would not be working on preventing other crimes. Drugs would be rampant, dealers would push drugs freely as members of the force would be tied-up with other tasks.

• (1750)

The hon. member has alluded to the way firearms are categorized in Canada. Now, Mr. Speaker, you know that most firearms in Canada belong to the unrestricted category and can be acquired without restrictions. There are also more dangerous firearms that are mentioned in Bill C-80. I think that the hon. member for Ottawa South knows that Bill C-80 is nevertheless providing for important measures to limit the access to dangerous firearms; those firearms are all the same used for legitimate purposes and are part of restricted firearms and there are firearms that do not serve any legitimate purposes such as machine guns and truncated shot guns that are among prohibited firearms.

One of the reasons of such a classification of firearms is to allow people who control firearms and enforce the law to concentrate their limited resources to controlling those firearms that are most dangerous to society.

The law provides that the majority of resources assigned to selection and enforcement be concentrated on high-risk firearms and owners. We select all new owners of firearms and require that people who want to acquire a firearm go through an additional selection test and register their firearms.

Another reason in support of the current classification is to minimize the impact of legal restrictions on the activities of most firearms users who use hunting rifles

and unrestricted guns for recreational or hunting purposes.

The proposed amendments which the Minister of Justice will introduce respect this classification.

Bill C-80 includes compulsory provisions concerning the secure storage of weapons, but they refer to collectors of restricted weapons, not to those who apply for firearms acquisition certificates.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, before I yield to another member eager to deal with this issue, I should like to tell the hon. member for Ottawa South that Canadians who own firearms are law abiding citizens and make sure that Canada is a safe place for all. Mr. Speaker, they will certainly support all reasonable and efficient methods to help make a selection among all applicants for firearms acquisition certificates, but they should not be expected to support unreasonable or unworkable measures.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the provisions of this bill are not justified, at least to my mind—I think I indicated earlier the reasons why I am against it, as the elected representative of an area which would be greatly affected if firearm acquisition was made more difficult. The situation would be unacceptable and, for this reason, I feel that the motion moved by the Hon. Member for Ottawa South is unreasonable because it helps very little in the development of efficient safety standards which would apply throughout the land and that the provisions would be difficult to enforce because it would increase the workload of the various police forces with very few real benefits.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I find the motion of the Hon. Member for Ottawa South absolutely unacceptable and I consider it in a sense as a slap on the face of a great many Canadians who are responsible people and who do not deserve such coercive legislation as this.

[English]

Mr. Rob Nicholson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to join in this debate on firearms. It is a subject which I have spoken quite a bit about lately, not just in connection with this private member's bill, but Bill C-80 which is currently before the House.