

[English]

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although there is so much to add to what has been said already, I will keep my remarks very specific and short.

The hon. member talks about awareness. I would like to bring to the attention of the House some other information and ask for her support at the same time.

The hon. member was here earlier in the day when the member for Ottawa West commented that later today she was going to drive to the airport to pick up her daughter and grandson and return to the House to vote.

If we can believe the statistics that have been collected, if the hon. member for Ottawa West or any other member were to drive to the airport in Saskatchewan, the chances of being injured or killed on the way to or from the airport or on the way to or from any community in the province would be much higher than being injured or killed by a firearm.

According to statistics collected regarding the Trans-Canada and Yellowhead highway in Saskatchewan, let me briefly put three statistics on record. The number of accidents, injuries and fatalities over five years in the province of Saskatchewan, average per year accidents are 1,026 injured; 389 fatalities; 24 on the highway.

Firearm statistics: the five-year average in the province of Saskatchewan gives number of accidents with firearms, 18; number of injuries, 16; number killed, 2.6.

• (1255)

The third statistic, five-year average, the total number of homicides in the province of Saskatchewan are 28.2. The five-year average, number of homicides involving guns, 5.4. The average number of people killed on the highways in Saskatchewan average 24 a year. The average number of people killed in gun related homicides, 5 per year.

This year the federal government has withdrawn all support for the national highways program. There is no commitment of federal funds to support the upgrading of highways in the province of Saskatchewan yet it is imposing increase costs on the people of Saskatchewan for safety reasons, to register firearms.

I wonder if the representative of Canada's official opposition can tell us in the interests of safety whether she is as committed to national highways funding as she is committed to the national gun registry?

[Translation]

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. The member wonders what difference there is between a car and a firearm. It

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is very simple: A car is used for transportation purposes, while a firearm is used to kill.

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with another government member.

Bill C-68, as drafted, has certainly raised a great deal of interest throughout Canada, particularly in the western provinces. One thing we can say is that this bill does in fact have the approval and support of a large number of Canadians.

First of all, let us be clear that almost 80 per cent of Canadians are in favour of this bill, including 90 per cent of Quebecers, and I have also learned that 68 per cent to close to 80 per cent of Albertans back the government's gun control bill.

Throughout this debate, we have listened to the opposition describe for us their vision of Canadian society. It is not a vision I share, particularly the vision of the members of the third party, who accuse us of daring to compare Canada and the United States. They would have us believe that the Canadian government wants to limit the rights of its citizens. Their allegation that the Canadian government, and especially the justice department, is violating the most fundamental rights of Canadians, is simply not true.

I would also like to tell you that I come from a small community where rifles and hunting are part of everyday life. My grandfather was and my own father to this day is an avid hunter. With him, I explored the forests of this country, especially those in the Gaspé area. My father also taught me how to handle a firearm and I can only say I am most grateful. He did, however, instill in me a certain respect for firearms and the danger they can represent for society and for the individual.

[English]

It is important to make the statement that never did the government ever intend to withdraw the right to hunt. That is a fundamental right we all share. However, it is the view of the government to make sure that people understand that owning a gun is a privilege. It is an item, a tool which we use that requires a lot of respect, requires some amount of control.

I will not on any further about my personal experiences. A number of people testified in committee over the course of the past few months and without any doubt there is a definite need for gun control.

• (1300)

There are all kinds of reasons; social reasons such as health and safety which require some kind of control in order to maintain the Canada we know, the kind of society that regrettably some of us might take for granted.