

*Government Orders*

caused by firearms, for a total of about 300 suicides per year. These statistics cannot be overlooked.

The inquest conducted in Montreal, last November, by coroner Anne-Marie David shed some light on the deficiencies, and the resulting dangers, related to inadequate regulations. Coroner David's report was released on January 26.

Throughout the hearings, the most frequent criticisms were related to the inconsistency of the current regulations. Lieutenant Guy Asselin of the Quebec provincial police testified and said: "The regulations are not necessarily clear, which does not help those who have to enforce them, nor those who want to comply with them".

The spokesperson for the Quebec police and fire chiefs' association, Mr. Richard Côté, made essentially the same comment when he said: "Police officers do not know how to interpret the law. You almost have to be a legal expert". Mr. Côté added that these regulations were included in the program of only two of the nine CEGEPs offering the police technology course, and that the related training lasted only a few hours.

If police officers themselves cannot understand the regulations, how can the Minister of Justice claim that his bill will increase safety at home? Police officers are not the only ones who do not know the regulations. Those who are directly concerned, and I am referring to the owners of firearms, hardly know there is such a thing as regulations on the safe storage of firearms.

A Léger & Léger poll has confirmed these disturbing facts. The poll was conducted from September 1 to September 13, 1994, among 515 owners of firearms residing in Quebec. When asked whether they knew about these regulations, only 53 per cent of respondents thought there was a law on storage, 31.8 per cent said no and 15.1 per cent were undecided. It is clear that, in addition to a national registration system, a thorough review and targeted advertising are necessary.

The Minister of Justice forgets that sometimes simple solutions are the most effective. If the government made it compulsory for businesses to supply individual locking systems for every firearm sold in this country, the problem would be practically solved.

The minister keeps repeating that registration of owners and firearms is just like getting a driver's licence or a licence for your car. If the minister had pursued his analogy, he would have realized that cars are sold with locking systems. I may have a driver's licence, but that does not mean I can start my neighbour's car without an ignition key.

My point is that every firearm sold in this country would have a device that would make it totally harmless. The owner would

then be under the obligation to keep the firearm locked at all times, failing which he would be breaking the law. In this way, gun collectors would be able to exhibit their pieces, and in season, hunters would be able to practise their favourite sport.

I support the recommendations of coroner David, in which she urged the Minister of Justice to amend the wording of the regulations for storage, display and safe transportation of firearms, to make them more consistent and ensure they are more readily understood by the general public.

Similarly, the Minister of Justice should pay particular attention to the recommendation that the regulations be changed to oblige people selling guns to lock or disarm all weapons intended for sale and to prevent them from storing restricted firearms anywhere but in a vault and prevent the delivery to a customer of a firearm not equipped with a safety catch.

• (1310)

In conclusion, I believe that setting up a national registration system is a positive step, subject to my earlier comments. I must, however, say again that I find it most regrettable that the Minister of Justice bowed to pressure from the gun lobby. By spreading owner and weapon registration over eight years, the minister is stating very clearly that he does not want the system implemented during his term of office. Furthermore, I believe the minister backed off significantly from his original plan of action by permitting the purchase and sale of handguns between owners of the same type of weapons.

Finally, it appears that the minister has not yet completed his consultations and that he is now leaving it up to the Standing Committee on Justice. He wants the committee to look at the following questions: Should we allow the owners of prohibited firearms to bequeath these weapons to their children? Are there handguns that may be used for target practice? Will the use of replicas of powder fired guns be allowed at celebrations?

The minister should have assumed the consequences of his choices himself rather than force the parliamentary committee to make some of the unpleasant decisions.

In closing, we hope the minister still has sufficient leeway to take our recommendations into consideration.

[English]

**Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin this debate before I get into the text of my intervention by touching on a couple of comments the justice minister made.

This is the most confusing time for the justice minister to bring new legislation on gun control into the picture. The reason is that we have court decisions, one in Alberta, clearly indicating the orders in council passed by Kim Campbell are invalid.