We would not have objected so vehemently to this section of Bill C–41 if the government had specified which offences may be subject to alternative measures. We could support the use of alternative measures for specific non–violent offences to reduce expensive court procedures and incarceration. However no such specifications appear in Bill C–41.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and Victims of Violence recommended section 717 be amended to "restrict the availability of the program to persons who have committed less serious offences and first time offenders". Specifically reflecting the opinions expressed by these witnesses, Reform introduced an amendment during clause by clause consideration to limit the use of alternative measures. Our amendment was defeated.

• (1920)

The government failed to describe in the bill what may or may not constitute an alternate measure but rather has left this discretion up to the provinces. This has effectively granted broad discretionary powers to an unnamed source that is to be variable from province to province. This will create an inconsistency in the justice system of the country, something we can ill afford.

Reform introduced an amendment proposing that a set of federal standards be established for the implementation of alternative measures programs by provinces to ensure justice is consistent in Canada. Our amendment was defeated.

The discretion given in the bill to the provinces responsible for the administration of justice is not reflected in Bill C–68. When Reform introduced amendments during clause by clause consideration of the bill to return to the provinces the authority to regulate gun clubs and gun shows our amendment was defeated.

The parliamentary secretary said there should be federal standards for the regulation of these businesses. The inconsistency in the government's justice legislation clearly demonstrates that the objective of justice to reduce crime is not the motivating factor behind Bill C–37, Bill C–68 or Bill C–41.

Under Bill C–41 alternative measures can only be used if the offender fully and freely consents to participate, with no consideration being given to the victim. Reform proposed the use of alternative measures only after due consideration has been given to any views expressed by the victim against whom the offence has been committed. The rights of victims should always come before those of the offender.

We also introduced an amendment stipulating that these measures could only be used for a person who has not been dealt with by alternative measures before or has been previously convicted of an offence. Both amendments were defeated.

As stipulated in Bill C–41 it is not mandatory for records concerning alternative measures to be retained. Nor do the records have to be transferred to a central repository. This means when someone commits another offence that a previous offence which was dealt with by an alternative measure will not be available for sentencing in the second case.

One has to wonder how serious the government is about doing background checks on applicants for a firearms licence as outlined in Bill C–68. Because of this provision in Bill C–41 pertinent information regarding an admission of guilt may not be discovered by chief firearms officers unless they conduct lengthy and expensive checks into the records of all local police forces. Again Reform introduced an amendment making it mandatory for the police to retain records and for those records to be placed in a central registry. Again that amendment was defeated.

We therefore today move to delete the section dealing with alternative measures from Bill C–41. We have also introduced an amendment to delete section 718.2 from the bill which gives the courts the authority to increase or reduce a sentence for relevant, aggravating or mitigating circumstances relating to the offence or the offender.

Reform believes this section of the bill is totally unnecessary. The courts already take aggravating and mitigating circumstances into consideration when determining the length of a sentence to impose on an offender.

We do not believe this section serves any purpose except to advance the justice minister's position that sexual orientation should be a protected category in the charter. We object to the minister's back door attempt through the bill to keep his word to provide added protection for certain groups of people and thereby create a semblance of special status for those groups. Rather than amend the charter and thus draw widespread public opposition, he is appeasing this group of Canadians by including the term in the Criminal Code.

Reform believes all Canadians are equal before the law. We do not accept that anyone should be granted special protection or status before or under the law and therefore move to strike this section from the bill.

I am appalled the government has chosen to limit debate on this contentious bill. It had ample opportunity to bring the bill back to Parliament months ago when the committee reported it back to the House. The government obviously delayed report and third reading stages of the bill in anticipation of it being lost in the bottleneck of legislation the government is scrambling to pass before the summer recess.

It is quite obvious the government is afraid to allow Bill C–41 and Bill C–68 to sit over the summer, providing Liberal MPs an opportunity to discover how their constituents really feel about these bills. I have to question the confidence of the government with regard to these pieces of legislation. I therefore implore