

*Government Orders*

The advisory council will also be asked, first of all, to consider the questions relating to the use of safety training programs for FAC applicants. What should be taught? Who should teach it? Should the same thing be taught to all applicants or should the subject matter reflect the use for which the person wants the gun?

Perhaps the most valuable role of the council, Madam Speaker, is that it will serve to bring Canadians with a wide range of views on firearms together into a single forum. This will ensure that issues are considered fairly and thoroughly, and that the interests of all Canadians are taken into account in the development of new policies.

I want to just emphasize again that the first mandate of the committee will be to bring to me a blueprint for the implementation of the training provisions that have been in the Criminal Code since 1978. I am sure that members of the previous government will recognize that it is a complex matter to implement these provisions and will require a considerable amount of federal-provincial co-operation.

I believe that bringing those training provisions into place will be a very important part of creating a climate of public trust. Those very many Canadians, who are uncomfortable with the presence of firearms in our society, will have the confidence of knowing that those who purchase firearms in Canada have satisfied a requirement of competence and training, and that they have been vetted much more carefully by those who issue the firearms purchasing authorization.

As I said, I would like the committee to look into even a more stringent form of vetting. We have discussed this before. I do not want to hold up the legislation pending a resolution to that issue because I think it is more complex and raises, as I have said before, some interesting privacy and charter considerations.

I have spoken to the House about changes to two of the three major elements of Canada's gun control system: the screening of those who own guns and restrictions on the guns themselves.

The third element is the use of offences and sentences to deter the criminal misuse of guns. I have heard the views of many Canadians, especially members of Canada law-abiding, responsible firearms community, on the question of deterrence. They are of the view that responsible citizens are being asked to pay the price of maintaining public safety while criminals go unpunished. They are concerned that too much emphasis is placed on

crime prevention and not enough on deterrence or punishment.

I believe that the present Criminal Code measures provide for adequate deterrence and punishment, but I share the concerns that these provisions are not always applied as perhaps they should be. As the hon. members of this House will understand, criminal law enforcement, prosecution and sentencing for firearms offences are matters left with the provincial authorities and the judiciary under the Criminal Code.

I will, on behalf of the Government of Canada, undertake to urge my provincial counterparts to do everything in their power to ensure that firearms charges are laid in appropriate circumstances, that they are prosecuted vigorously and that appropriate sentences are sought.

[*Translation*]

I further intend to make every effort to inform Canadians about the changes in the law and the role of our existing gun control system. Steps will be taken to make this information as available as possible, especially to firearms owners and users.

A communications, public legal education, and information package will be assembled and disseminated over the coming months, leading up to the implementation of the new measures.

I am also discussing with my provincial counterparts the options for a general firearms amnesty program that would coincide with the proclamation of the new measures.

[*English*]

This would be intended to encourage Canadians to dispose of unwanted guns safely, to register handguns and other restricted firearms and to allow those who have guns that may be affected by the new changes to clarify their status without fear of prosecution.

I hope to be in a position to announce the details of this amnesty program in the very near future.

Madam Speaker, I hear grumbling from the other side of the House. There is a legislative basis in Bill C-80 to provide for an amnesty for that new category of firearms which is being designated as prohibited weapons. I hate to think that the hon. member would actually listen to what I am saying to get a clarification. These will be designated as prohibited weapons under Bill C-80, but in terms of a broader amnesty, lack the statutory authority. That may be a recommendation of the special commit-