

A requirement for registration of all firearms would send a message to owners about the seriousness of the responsibility they undertake and could have positive psychological effects on their manner of use.

The public is with this kind of bill. In 1975 and in the recent Gallup poll as well, the numbers reported indicated that 80 per cent of Canadians are in favour of the registration of all firearms. I am sure that that issue is one that clearly is the same today.

Registration of firearms would allow far more effective measures to be taken by the police. If we look at some of the particular situations we have had, for example in the de Villiers murder in Ontario, there was no way of verifying whether or not someone was in legal possession of a rifle or a shotgun. They were not able to track that one down although the courts were aware that this particular individual was violent.

Right now there is no way of enforcing prohibition orders short of ransacking someone's home because police have no way of knowing whether there is a gun there. There is absolutely no control on stockpiling. We have heard of stories of that happening in Alberta. There is no way of tracking lost and stolen guns. There are 3,500 reported lost or stolen guns in a year. That is probably an underestimate because there is no legal requirement for reporting lost or stolen guns.

We should consider the difficulty of registering guns. We register dogs in cities and there are probably far more dogs for example in metropolitan Toronto than there are guns. I know the estimate I saw for guns for Toronto was about 55,000 which was higher per capita than Alberta. Yet I know we have 20,000 dogs in Toronto and at least that number in North York. In the whole of the Toronto region we are probably talking about 80,000 dogs that are being registered at no cost to the taxpayer.

Finally, as I said before, this is supported by many people. It is supported by the public and by law enforcement agencies. It is also supported by the Senate. The Senate sent a letter to the minister after it reviewed Bill C-17 and one comment was: "We wish to reinforce the message that effective gun control can always be improved". They talked quite clearly about better information through firearms registration, better control over safe storage, better training for firearms users. I agree with Bill C-17. However, I think this bill would substantially improve the control over firearms in our society. It is something which I recognize could probably not be completed in this term of Parliament, but it is certainly

something that I will continue to be advocating, as will many concerned Canadians.

• (1720)

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on this bill presented by the member. It is a very good bill and worthy of a good deal of consideration. I hope it will pass at second reading so it can go to a legislative committee for further examination.

The ideas she puts forward provide a good long-term solution. Eventually we are going to have to do this. It is a question of when we start. I know that there are a lot of people in Canada who feel that registering their firearms is an infringement of their privacy and that it is totally unnecessary. I understand that. It has never been done before, but that feeling exists. I can understand why it exists. However, it is becoming a problem not to have that information. That is the first aspect.

The second aspect is that we have never really had the technology before where this could be done as efficiently and as well as it can be done now. We are in a technological age and we must utilize the technology we have for the benefit of society as a whole.

The member mentioned the cost of the recording and registering of the firearms on a data system. She said that the cost would be very high. We had an estimate from the Firearms Advisory Committee through the Minister of Justice that this would be a very expensive procedure. I have also had information from certain sources that the cost has been blown out of proportion and that the actual cost will not be nearly as high as some people would have us believe.

I can understand one concern. If we say there has to be a central registry system, then we are going to have a jamming of whoever is in charge of doing this registration and it is going to be very cumbersome and counter-productive. I do not think that need to be the case. If we go into a registry system on a step by step process, we could eliminate these bottlenecks.

The member said that registering the purchase of new firearms, also sale of existing firearms from one person to another would be a good way to start. Even if we made this beginning, we would be a lot further along. Once we get the procedure in place, then certainly we could add to it and gauge how effectively the system is being utilized and whether, in fact, we are moving too quickly or too slowly. Certainly the need is there to start the system.