

Government Orders

The goal of this study was to obtain information on the firearm used, its owner and the situation leading to the incident, in addition to the characteristics of the victims and the circumstances of the incident.

Thus we can see that guns are the preferred means used by people who want to end it all. Let us look at the specific aspects of this kind of death. Between 1990 and 1992, a gun was used in 26 per cent of all suicides. This percentage varies by age group. Thirty-seven per cent of all people under 20 years of age use a gun to commit suicide. In the 20 to 29 age bracket, this percentage drops to 27 per cent, and bottoms out at 25 per cent for people 30 years of age and older.

What is the age of the victim? The rate at which people 10 years of age or older use a gun to commit suicide is 5.2 per 100,000. However, we find the highest rate in the 15 to 24 age bracket, which is 7 per 100,000. Men, in a proportion of 92.7 per cent, use guns to commit suicide, compared to women who, naturally, make up the difference of 7.3 per cent.

I would like to continue by citing an interesting statistic which, unfortunately, concerns my region. The average annual suicide rate varies from 1.9 to 16.5 per 100,000 depending on the region. The rate is highest in the north of Quebec and in Abitibi.

As you can see, guns are not always put to good use in my riding. The riding of Manicouagan has a very high unemployment rate, which exceeds the average in other ridings.

Geography has somewhat isolated us from big centres, and this is an added stress weighing on residents and is also one of the contributing factors to the high suicide rate. The isolation factor should be considered in the analysis. However, this region is graced with all of nature's splendours, and, like the North Shore region, offers its residents so much untouched nature and free access to the oldest sports on earth: hunting and fishing.

As you guessed, residents of the North Shore need their guns to hunt. They can put them to a full and healthy use and they have proved this for many years.

• (1345)

With or without regulations, these people are able to make proper use of their weapons—for recreational purposes, needless to say.

Although it is important that Bill C-68 meet one of the goals established, namely gun control—no one in the Bloc Québécois is against this—, we must be very careful not to dig too deeply into taxpayers' pockets under the pretext of exercising some control.

We must ensure, among other things, that the registration fees collected by the department are not a kind of hidden tax. The Bloc Québécois is very wary of this.

Although we certainly agree with the principle that firearms must be better controlled and monitored, we should also be honest enough to admit that since a large number of firearms are used by suicidal people, gun control and registration will not solve the problem of suicide. Let us not forget that those who try to kill themselves with firearms may do so because they already have them in their possession; if not, the vast majority of them will simply use something else.

In closing, yes, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of better gun control. We must, however, avoid imposing extra costs on people like those in my riding who do not need them. These people are fed up with having to pay more and more all the time.

With all its facilities designed to control the system, the department is certainly in a position to control travel costs, so that Quebec taxpayers, including those in Manicouagan, do not have to pay excessive costs.

[English]

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when the Minister of Justice announced his firearms control program in November 1994 he did so after extensive consultation with individuals, groups, organizations and various government departments.

The overwhelming support of the Canadian people for the program shows that the minister listened well and responded to the concerns expressed during that consultative period. Headlines, editorials and columns in newspapers across the country almost unanimously repeat the theme "Gun control law on target".

When we look at our neighbours to the south we see a society that has enshrined in its constitution the right to bear arms. This emphasis on rugged individualism is characterized in part by the fascination with guns in the United States. Its citizens have embraced an all-pervasive, gun-toting culture.

Canadians do not share the American fascination with guns. Our society is essentially different from theirs and in an overwhelming fashion this has been communicated to the Minister of Justice. The minister has proposed legislation which is a reasonable response to the desire of Canadians to maintain a different social and cultural attitude toward guns. Canada must not slip into the gun mentality of the United States. As the minister said: "Canadians do not want to live in a society where they feel they need to own a gun for protection".

I do not believe it is possible to devise gun control legislation that will satisfy all Canadians. However, I do believe that with this legislation the minister has taken a colossal step in the right direction. He has used a two-pronged, balanced approach in attacking the public safety problem on the one side and the use of weapons in criminal activity on the other. The law will not resolve all our problems, but as a *Montreal Gazette* editorial