

• (1220)

I anticipate that the committee hearings into the bill will consider this matter in some detail and will receive input from those who have interest in the outcome. That is why I am very much looking forward to receiving the committee report.

[*Translation*]

The bill also contains measures that will make it possible to tighten the process for screening firearms owners.

[*English*]

Canadians who wish to obtain guns must first have a firearms acquisition certificate, or FAC. Several of the new measures will take concrete action to improve the screening of those who want to obtain these certificates.

The new stricter screening measures will require a minimum 28-day waiting period before the issuance of the FAC. It will require applicants to provide the names of two references who can furnish information to local firearms officers. It will require the new FAC document to include a photograph of the holder to prevent use by unauthorized persons.

I am also convinced of the need to encourage a high standard for the responsible ownership and safe use of firearms. Therefore, I intend, with provincial co-operation, to make it mandatory for all FAC applicants to pass a firearms safety course or test. These courses are already provided for in the Criminal Code, but were never proclaimed in force. They were part of a package of amendments introduced in 1978.

I am now prepared to take immediate initiative to remove the obstacles that prevented them from being implemented sooner.

[*Translation*]

The implementation of this measure will extend the scope of these programs to all parts of Canada and to all classes of firearms owners and users, and we are prepared to work with the provinces in launching them.

We are also prepared to contribute to the important development and start-up costs for this project.

[*English*]

We are also prepared to contribute to the important development and start-up costs for this project, as I said. We will be developing national standards and curricula

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for the programs that ensure knowledge of the law, the responsibilities of firearms ownership and safe practices for using and storing guns.

I also want to ensure that the new measures will be as close to self-financing as possible. The current FAC fee has been unchanged since the law was last amended in 1978, and falls far below the actual costs incurred by even the current screening process. The amendments will place the authority to set the future of FAC fees in regulatory provisions.

We do not believe that high costs should be used to deter legitimate gun owners, but we are committed to maintaining cost recovery in the future. This will permit further adjustments without amending the Criminal Code.

The new FAC fee will be set at \$50 for a certificate that is valid for five years. This should bring the new programs close to complete cost recovery by the end of the initial five year period.

I believe that it is important to involve all interested Canadians in developing a more effective firearms control program. For this reason, I am establishing the Canadian Advisory Council on Firearms to draw together a broad range of expertise and interest in the field of firearms and gun control, and to represent the widest possible range of views.

I have been receiving nominations for this body throughout the summer and I expect to be able to announce a number of appointments in the very near future. This new advisory council will give Canadians with many perspectives on the role of firearms in society a real voice in the development of new gun control laws and policies.

The council will be asked to consider some of the most difficult issues raised by the screening of gun owners and the guns themselves. They will be asked, for example, to consider the role of medical or psychiatric information in the FAC screening process. We need to know whether it is possible to identify persons such as Marc Lépine beforehand. We also need to know what sort of information to look for.

There are also difficult questions of confidentiality and access to information that must be addressed. Is the safety of the public better protected by preserving the confidentiality of psychiatric treatment, or by ensuring that information is disclosed to the police.