

*Government Orders*

of the guns that are used to kill women are legally owned at the time of the shooting.

**An hon. member:** Registering them will not help.

**Mrs. Finestone:** If this sickening truth cannot impact on your attitudes across this floor—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member is an experienced member and I would ask her to please address all of her remarks to the Chair.

**Mrs. Finestone:** Mr. Speaker, it is the sickening truth that firearms are the weapon of choice for men who murder their wives. I was trying to point out that my colleagues across the floor need not laugh at this moment. It is a serious moment in this debate.

In 1987 the English writer Martin Amis wrote: "Bullets cannot be recalled. They cannot be uninvented. But they can be taken out of the gun". I would add that the safest way is to take the guns away.

As a government we must introduce strong legislation to maintain the peaceful nature of our communities. This responsibility begins with the implementation of tighter firearms control laws. I unconditionally support the legislation presented by my colleague the Minister of Justice.

[Translation]

This bill reflects the wishes of the majority of Canadians. According to surveys, up to 70 per cent of all Canadians want stricter gun controls.

Several large national groups, such as the association of chiefs of police, have endorsed this initiative. Teachers' federations have stated that measures, like the Minister of Justice's bill, were needed to counter violence in our schools.

[English]

Nationally, women have spoken out on this issue for years. Women's organizations from across the country and from a wide variety of societal and cultural backgrounds have been calling for tougher gun control laws for a long time. They have asked for tighter restrictions and I am proud to say that we are now responding.

Perhaps the most eloquent support for this initiative and for the Minister of Justice came from Suzanne Laplante Edward who said: "I think this guy is going to go down in Canadian history. This man just wants Canada to be safer". Mr. Justice Minister, we all agree with that statement. She knows what she is fighting for. Her daughter was killed at l'École polytechnique five years ago. Since then Mrs. Laplante Edward has worked relentlessly for firearms control.

Indeed this legislation is an achievement. It is the kind of initiative that brings about positive social change and preserves our quality of life.

It takes decisive action against automatic firearms. As of January 1, 1995, 21 types of assault guns will have been prohibited. Handguns with no legitimate purpose will be prohibited.

The firearms control legislation recognizes the need for increased and more effective sanctions for the misuse of firearms.

Contrary to an observation made just a few moments ago, four years is the beginning and not the end of the term. It introduces stiff minimum penalties that will serve as true deterrents. For the first time, mandatory minimum sentences of four years in prison in addition to a lifetime prohibition from possessing a restricted weapon are introduced for a series of violent offences including sexual assault with a weapon and aggravated sexual assault.

Anybody charged with criminal harassment, better known as stalking can be temporarily prohibited from owning a firearm. That will save women's lives.

• (1545)

Third, the package sets tougher regulations on lawfully acquired firearms. It creates a national registration system for all firearms. Let us not forget that it is often a legally acquired firearm that is used in domestic violence. The shotgun over the mantelpiece is even more threatening to women than the illegal firearms across our border. Keeping track of property for the purpose of information and regulation is commonplace in our society.

I am going to finish with a quotation from an editorial in *La Presse*:

[Translation]

The editorial asked whether we could imagine a citizen owning a car without being licensed to drive, without a licence plate, without insurance, without driving within the speed limits, parking the car any which way and anywhere and leaving the key in the ignition? Of course not. So, why must we accept that a gun owner be entirely free to purchase, own, hide, store and use the gun of his or her choice.

There are six million—

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired. Unless there is unanimous consent for the member to continue I have to go to the next speaker.

[Translation]

I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended six minutes, pursuant to Standing Order 33(2).