

Government Orders

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Does a member of the official opposition wish to be heard. I have been given indications that no one wishes to do so. Therefore, this concludes the debate on this issue.

[English]

The Chair will reserve on that matter and will bring back a decision as quickly as a reasoned conclusion can be brought back to the House.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am interested in some of the comments by the member for Mississauga West. Certainly having been raised in a family in which the father was a police officer would give her some insight into the concerns police officers express when it comes to criminal activity. Seeing if nothing else the breakdown in our laws and the effectiveness of what a police officer can or cannot do any more is a story in itself.

I am also interested in the comments relating to the smuggled weapons and the use of illegal weapons, that the illegal gun market would literally dry up once we have a good registration system in place and some supposed criminal sections that would deal with that.

I do not believe the member has ever been over to the Fort Erie border crossing to look at the extent of what we have as security at the border crossing. There is a joke among the customs officers and the people who live in that area. If a boat comes across from the American side and it rides low in the water, it is full of alcohol. If it rides halfway down in the water, then it is full of guns. If it rides high in the water, then there are drugs in that particular boat. When it gets over to the other side to the Canadian shore there is no one there to stop it to see what really is in the boat because our border security is at a minimum.

• (1605)

Resources at the front line have been cut back to the nth degree. Police departments right across the country are suffering now because of a lack of being able to hire the adequate number of police officers to look at it.

How will the illegal gun market dry up through a registration system when the front line cannot even stop the smuggling problem in this country, which is way out of hand and our police departments do not even have a finger on it? Even if they did they could not do anything about it.

Mrs. Parrish: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member opposite and I am sorry that customs officers joke about such serious things as gun smuggling, drug smuggling and alcohol smuggling.

I do not think smuggling is a joking matter and I do not wish to correct the hon. member opposite but I did not say it would dry it up literally and immediately. I think it is a step in the right direction.

I think if we do not begin somewhere we might as well all throw our hands up and say open the borders and let everybody bring whatever they want in.

The President of the United States visited here on Thursday and congratulated us on an amazing start in the direction of cleaning up illegal guns. I am very proud to be part of a team that is doing this.

My father on his deathbed talked about guns. He talked about the danger. He came home one night very sad because a rookie cop had gone up the stairs ahead of him to a domestic dispute and a shotgun blast had come through the door. It did not kill him. It knocked his eye right out. My father has always believed that if you register guns you can at least make the people who have lost them or have allowed them to be stolen out of their homes responsible for that loss.

Again, I believe this is a beginning. No one has the perfect solution. I will reiterate what I said. We cannot be frozen into inactivity by the overwhelming concern of the problem.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was impressed by what the member had to say and the concerns she expressed for a safer society. I think that is what we are all looking for. I wonder if the member would address the possibility of changing existing laws that allow violent offenders to enter society after serving only two-thirds of their penalty. That is something we could do right now.

Melanie Carpenter, for all intents and purposes, was murdered by someone who was released because of a mandatory requirement included within the statute and the laws that this Parliament has created. We can change that.

I wonder if the member would be willing to support that kind of legal initiative in this house that would prevent violent offenders from being automatically released into society before they expend their full sentence within prison to at least protect society to that extent.

Mrs. Parrish: Mr. Speaker, I always find it amusing that Reform members opposite tend to turn the conversation away from what we are trying to deal with and into their favourite locations.

I believe that violent criminals in this society will be dealt with in a reasoned and planned fashion by the minister, as he has done with the gun legislation. I think you cannot look at one incident or one piece of legislation and keep it separate from others.

I have absolute faith in the Minister of Justice that in the course of his term he will address all of your concerns and all of my concerns.

Mr. Glen McKinnon (Brandon—Souris, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank you and for that warm applause across the way. My friend and colleague from Crowfoot was a police officer at the time of my younger years, still living in the area where he was serving. I respect him very much since those days and even today.