

Association, and the International Practical Shooting Confederation all cited legitimate and safe uses for semi-automatics, including military-design firearms, in both competition shooting and firearms collecting. The International Practical Shooting Confederation, in particular, stated that its competition activities would be severely hampered, particularly for those who are older or handicapped, if semi-automatics were not available. It was also pointed out that placing semi-automatics in the present category of "restricted weapons" under the Criminal Code would prohibit their use for hunting. The Canadian Wildlife Federation, the British Columbia Wildlife Federation and the Federation of Ontario Anglers and Hunters cited bird shooting and the use of semi-automatic rifles by those who are handicapped as examples of at least some need for semi-automatic firearms for hunting.

It is the announced intention of the government to use its existing order-in-council powers to prohibit or restrict military and para-military semi-automatics, primarily because of their high fire-power and their symbolism. The Minister of Justice proposes to ask the Canadian Advisory Council on Firearms to identify criteria or design features, such as night sights, bayonet mountings, folding and telescoping stocks, and pistol grips, which could be used to identify those military and para-military firearms to be prohibited or restricted. The features would serve only as a guide to the classification process, and such factors as the manner in which these firearms were advertised would also be taken into account.

The Minister of Justice opposes, however, the prohibiting or restricting of all semi-automatics, because some of them have legitimate hunting purposes. Instead, it was suggested to the Special Committee that the proposed limits on ammunition magazine capacities would serve as an alternative to specific controls on the firearms themselves. The Committee has a number of difficulties with the magazine capacity proposal, which we will address later in the report, and in general we believe that a more comprehensive approach is needed to deal with the entire question of semi-automatics, including military and para-military weapons.

The Special Committee has a number of other problems with the Minister of Justice's proposals. There is no indication, for example, as to whether or not those military-design firearms to be prohibited would be grandfathered, and some of these firearms are presently completely unrestricted. Any failure to deal with the grandfathering of prohibited firearms in these circumstances would be grossly unfair to all present owners.

Insofar as the Minister of Justice is proposing to leave some of these military and para-military firearms as restricted weapons only, the Special Committee has two concerns. First, this would allow their continued importation and sale. Second, in regard to those military-design firearms which are already in the country, the Committee does not believe that restricting these existing firearms using the present provisions would accomplish what should be the long term aim.

The restricted category presently allows ownership only for particular uses, which include collecting, target shooting and other limited purposes, but not hunting. Those permitted purposes, other than collecting, however, involve the continued use of these guns as working firearms, which the Special Committee believes should eventually be phased out. Most importantly, there is no definition of a "genuine gun collector", and this is the only purpose for which the Committee believes the future ownership of those military firearms already in the country should be allowed. The Committee believes that the public is best protected if ultimately all of those military-design firearms which are preserved, end up in the hands of genuine gun collectors.