

The riding of Saint-Hubert is a high-tech aeronautical engineering and airport centre. Located on Montreal's south shore with an 84 per cent francophone majority, it includes the cities of Saint-Hubert and Lemoyne and part of Longueuil, as well as the city of Greenfield Park with its large and dynamic anglophone population.

I want to speak for every one of my constituents in my response to the throne speech. This speech is a universal disappointment because the economic solutions it proposes are unsatisfactory and because it lacks a clear message for the unemployed and for low-income Canadians.

In his speech, the Opposition leader denounced the lack of vision of this government, which is unable to give Canadians hope for a real economic recovery.

Others before me have already listed the wide gaps left in the throne speech with regard to taxation, public finances and the economy.

I want to deal with two questions raised by the national conscience, on which this government does not seem to have a position. Although we are concerned about the economy, social issues are equally pressing.

While Canadians and Quebecers are impatiently calling for vigorous state intervention on crime, the throne speech bitterly disappoints us by not addressing the urgent need to control firearms. Existing legislation, even laws that were recently improved, must be amended in order to meet objectives.

• (1625)

The throne speech was full of good intentions. However, where are the promised positive, concrete measures aimed at increasing public safety and crime prevention, as mentioned in the throne speech? Why have they not been identified?

The number of family incidents involving shotguns, pistols and revolvers is increasing. Women continue to be the most common victims of deadly assaults with prohibited or restricted weapons. Handguns are still the preferred weapon for committing suicide. There is a general consensus that the amendments brought about by Bill C-17 on gun control were a step in the right direction, but Canadians and Quebecers are telling us that we have not gone far enough.

Despite the new regulations calling for improved screening with respect to firearms acquisition, it is disturbing that civilians are still allowed to own semi-automatic weapons. Most of the firearms in circulation are not registered and all a person needs to acquire a pistol or a revolver is a certificate which can be obtained free of charge.

### *The Address*

An Angus Reid poll conducted on September 15 and 16, 1993, revealed broad public support for the registration of all firearms. Such a move is supported by 86 per cent of all Canadians, including 91 per cent of all Quebecers, while 70 per cent of Canadians, and 79 per cent of Quebecers want an outright ban on assault weapons and handguns.

Where in the throne speech can we find any indication of a willingness on the part of the government to address these urgent expectations and to ease the concerns of citizens across the country? As we all know, the legislative priorities of this House are economic in nature given the serious hardships experienced by Canadians and Quebecers. However, fighting crime should top the list of the government's major concerns, particularly because of the social tensions and personal dramas stemming from the state of the economy.

Even with the recent amendments to the Criminal Code, it is still a simple matter to acquire a firearm and the cost involved is merely symbolic. This House should take courageous steps, setting aside partisanship, and give Canadians the protection they want. It is estimated that more than six million handguns are currently in circulation in Canada. This is indeed a frightening statistic.

What we need is a universal registration system for all types of firearms. The sale, trade and resale of weapons needs to be regulated. A genuine policy should be formulated for training dealers, who should be required to pay licensing fees to finance control programs. Restrictions should be placed on the acquisition of restricted weapons and users of these types of weapons should be required to obtain an annual permit.

A permit should also be required to purchase ammunition. All citizens should have the opportunity to oppose all applications for permits to acquire or carry weapons. A notice of application should be published in advance in the newspapers, as happens in the case of several kinds of licenses, including liquor licenses.

All automatic and semi-automatic weapons should be banned. Strict minimum sentences should be imposed on persons convicted of possession of illegal weapons. Local registrars should be given mandatory investigative powers. Finally, and most importantly, the cost of permits should be increased to give the provinces more money with which to enforce these controls, because without them, even the best of laws will remain nothing more than wishful thinking.

Had all of these measures been in place, I am confident that the Auditor General would not have made the comments he did in his report about weapons smuggling.

• (1630)

Our American neighbours are now realizing with dismay that the law of the Old West has produced an armed, defensive and criminalized society instead of protecting honest citizens.