

At the hearings I attended, we heard some very valid points from native women's groups. Some of these native women were hunters themselves. They had recommendations for the justice minister if he is concerned about suicide and about violence to native women. They said he should arrange for some federal funding for British Columbia to restore the suicide crisis line; that he should arrange federal funding for alcohol and drug abuse. They see funding as the problem, not the hunting of food for the survival of the tribe.

Some of you heard Senator Tkachuk's presentation last night. Look at the Application for Registration forms with the 20 questions. This was another issue that was raised at the hearings. A native chief from Kamloops said, "I hate to tell you this, but there are many in my tribe who cannot read or write." How can we reconcile the promotion of the use of those application forms with that statement? I asked the chief, in his opinion, although his people may not be able to read or write, whether they would have the equivalent of a master's degree in the safe handling of firearms, and he replied: "Yes, they are taught from a very young age. They can safely handle guns. They could even teach about firearms." Under this bill, no one seems to be concerned about those kinds of things.

In Vancouver, we heard from one very impressive young woman who was a competitive shooter. She had won at a number of venues. This is a pastime that she enjoys pursuing with her husband and her family. She showed us, as she said, "Exhibit A, my small hand." She could not use a gun with a barrel any bigger than four and a half inches. She had an expensive little Smith & Wesson for target shooting. She told us it falls into the category of "Saturday Night Specials." It is not, but it falls into a category of weapons that will become restricted or abolished. Why should she have to pay a price like that? She is a law-abiding citizen who has done everything right. She even works for the government as a public servant.

Of greater concern was the point made — a valid point, in my opinion — about computer lists. People are worried about that. This is not propaganda emanating from the National Rifle Association, promoting fear of being stripped of handguns. This is a simple question: What guarantee do we have about the security of such a list? We are now told that that list will be safe. We had a presentation about it.

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Some may recall that a number of years ago the U.S. government invited a dozen professional hackers to test the security of the computer systems. Within 48 hours they had cracked every one of them. That is not very comforting. You then read — and we heard about this earlier today — that the Mulroney letter, secure in the hands of the Justice Department and the RCMP, is out on the street. That does not provide a lot of comfort to ordinary citizens and gun owners.

Some have said, "You have all these crazies out there who want guns." We had one presentation in Kamloops that sounded a bit like the National Rifle Association in its rhetoric. Senator Ghitter was quick to draw to their attention that they did their cause no good by exaggerating and putting forth false information in their presentation. We put an end to that.

In addition, we had a good system, which was instituted by the chairman, Senator St. Germain. After the formal presentations, he allowed time, in both the morning and afternoon sessions, for individuals in the audience to take four minutes to come forward and express their views. Two things were made clear by both of these groups when they made their presentations: First, they were for crime control. They were for harsh, severe penalties against criminals charged with the misuse of guns, but they were opposed to national registration. They were concerned about the costs to themselves, and many were concerned about the costs to the government.

Someone said that if you could wave a magic wand and all the guns would disappear, we would have a much better and more civilized country. I have a lot of friends in police departments. I served with them for a number of years as their negotiator. I am on the Vancouver Police Foundation. I speak regularly to senior officers of both our Vancouver police and the RCMP. They say that if you did wave a magic wand and all the guns disappeared within 72 hours, any criminal or anyone else could acquire a gun from those that are smuggled across the border.

I am talking here about the police, and that is their position, in spite of the position taken by the Canadian Chiefs of Police Association. I understand why they would make such a presentation, since they must be seen to be on the side of motherhood and gun control. However, I am told that to meet the registration requirements of this legislation they will have to take from resources within their various police departments; resources that should be used for fighting crime, and that it will turn them into bookkeepers and registrars. They also say that if they do not get federal funding to assist in this undertaking, they simply will not do it.

We heard a presentation from the Kamloops department — a three-man RCMP department — whose concern is that one-third of their force will be doing registrations and will not have time to deal with matters of police responsibility.

The conclusion is that we will incur costs of millions of dollars. I do not accept the premise that it will balance out nice and neat. That is nonsense. It never works that way. It will cost ordinary Canadians millions of dollars — ranchers, farmers, natives, and so on, who use guns as tools of their trade, or for their livelihood. Who knows how many millions, but it will be significant. I could understand the expenditure if we knew that this legislation would have some effect on crime issues, or solve