

*Government Orders*

of them in groups and in private. I must emphasize that legitimate owners and users of firearms are law-abiding citizens who respect the law, who want the same kind of country that people in the cities want, a country that is safe for everybody.

I have to admit they make a good point when they say to me: "How do these new laws help the country become safer? How do these new laws not become a punishment for us?" We owe it to the legitimate gun-owning community to explain to them clearly, to provide them with details which indicate that they are not the victims in the situation but are partners with all Canadians in trying to make our country safer.

We have a way to go yet in providing full explanations. I am very hopeful that through the committee process, through this debate and future debates that many of these concerns will be addressed.

I have told the gun-owning community over and over again that I believe in parliamentary process. I believe that appropriate measures with respect to firearms control can be taken that respect the needs of rural and urban Canadians.

The balance between rural and urban Canada is difficult to find at the best of times but this is an instance where we must work together to find the balance. The primary purpose of my job with respect to Bill C-68 is to help my urban colleagues, urban members to understand better the needs of rural Canadians with respect to firearms legislation.

The issue is not really a partisan issue because it seems to cut urban-rural in all parties. At the same time, I do not want it to become a split between urban and rural Canada. It is an opportunity through the parliamentary process for both rural and urban Canadians to understand better the needs of the other.

It is incumbent on us to listen carefully to rural Canadians, those who legitimately use firearms, that they not become the target of this legislation. They must become partners. I look forward through this process to bringing forward ideas, amendments, proposals that will hopefully address these concerns. I will be seeking the co-operation of urban members in this regard.

I believe deeply that the minister has been listening to rural members, as he listens today. I believe we can, with good judgment, find solutions to this matter that will be helpful to all, including myself, a member representing a rural area. That is not to say all of my constituents are in favour of not doing something about gun control. I have constituents that are in favour of these measures. It cuts both ways. In my efforts to represent my constituents, I must remember that both sides are represented in my communities.

• (1235)

I have some serious concerns with Bill C-68 that I will raise through the committee process and at third reading. I have invited my constituents, to the extent that they can, to participate in the process with me. I have guaranteed them my commitment to carry forward their concerns.

To start with, I would like to specifically talk about gun registration. My constituents have many concerns and worries when they have before them a plan to register their firearms. They worry that this will lead to the eventual confiscation of their firearms, particularly their long guns. They worry that the registration system will be an insecure information system to which criminals and others will have access, information concerning the firearms they possess.

They worry about the cost, to themselves as individuals and the cost to the country. They worry that the system will be cumbersome and that they will have to jump through hoops. They worry about privacy. The fact that they own firearms is a matter private to them and their families.

They wonder what impact registration will have on family violence and what impact it will have on the criminal element in our society.

We owe it to the legal gun-owning community to explain their concerns item by item. I do not believe we have adequately done that. We have an opportunity in the weeks and months ahead to do it. As I have in the past I will call on my colleague, the Attorney General, to help with those explanations.

Rather than go into the details of some of the things that I would like to see changed here, I will communicate with my constituents item by item as these matters come up. In view of the limitation of time, I wish to say that I have faith in the parliamentary process. I owe it to my constituents, not only on this issue but all issues to bring forward a balanced point of view.

I have tried to convince my constituents, the gun-owning community in my riding, that we have an opportunity with Bill C-68. I know many of them are upset. Much misinformation is out there but we have an opportunity here to correct some of the problems with existing legislation and to develop a system that hopefully will mean this is the last time we have to debate gun control in Parliament.

If we do a good job now as parliamentarians, if we do a good job listening to our constituents, and if the committee is prepared to listen and respond, as I am sure it will, then we can finally put this to rest.

As we have seen with the leadership in our budget, by the leadership of the government on the east coast and in many others areas, including measures that the Attorney General is