

Government Orders

However we do not support targeting law-abiding Canadians simply because they own guns.

From day one Reformers stated that legitimate law-abiding gun owners were not the problem but rather that the problem stemmed from the criminal use of guns in the commission of crime. We need to ask why the minister has chosen to put these two parts of the issue together in the same bill. While I cannot answer the question for certain I believe it is a legitimate question. When we consider that Canada already has some of the toughest gun control laws in the world it is particularly an appropriate question.

To link tougher gun control to crime fighting might sound politically appealing, but there is no statistical evidence to support the legitimacy of the idea. If the minister could provide us with some evidence we would not oppose the original legislation. The reality is that he cannot provide the information because it does not exist.

Several constituents have come to me saying that they had written a letter to the Minister of Justice asking specifically for any evidence he might have to show that more gun control would do anything to help prevent crimes committed with guns and to show that a registration system would prevent even one death. So far none of the constituents have had an answer to their letters. That is a shame. It is a serious question and they are not getting the answer.

Another concern has been raised often in my constituency concerning the computer system that will be set up to accommodate the central registry. The concern of my constituents in this regard is about the central registry and a hacker accessing the system.

We know hackers are very capable. They have accessed military secrets in the United States. They can get the names and use them in two ways. First, they can be used to find the locations of large collections of guns so that they can be more easily stolen. Second, criminals could determine from the lists where easy targets for break and enter may exist, where they feel the guns are not there and therefore they are easy targets.

My constituents have many other questions over past weeks and indeed over the past year. However I will close by saying that I would like answers from the minister to the two areas of concern expressed by my constituents. I do not believe he can give an answer in terms of the motive behind the registry, not necessarily the minister's motive but the motive of future governments. Also there is the possibility of the computer system being broken into and guns being stolen or a break and enter taking place.

• (1810)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry but the member's time has expired.

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House this evening to address a matter that has attracted a great deal of concern in my constituency of Huron—Bruce.

On November 30, 1994 the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada announced the government's action plan on firearms control. This was a series of proposals designed to generate comments and constructive criticism from Canadians so they might have an equal partnership in forming the bill before the House today.

The people of Huron—Bruce seized the opportunity to comment on the issue, causing my Parliament Hill and constituency offices to be flooded with thousands of calls, letters and visits.

Among the proposals was a mandatory minimum sentence of four years in prison in addition to a lifetime prohibition against possession of a restricted weapon when convicted of committing any one of or a combination of ten specific offences with a firearm. Among those offences, attempted murder, armed robbery and sexual assault with a weapon were included. Also included in the proposals were new Criminal Code offences with strict new penalties for illegal importing and trafficking firearms, enhanced border controls with improved inspections, and permit requirements for import, export and in transit shipments of firearms within Canada.

I take this opportunity to commend the minister for putting forth the aforementioned crime control measures. I would however like to draw attention to Bill C-68, an act respecting firearms and other weapons that is currently being debated in the House.

The act encompasses most of the original proposals released by the justice department, including a new mandatory registration system and a ban on a variety of specific handguns and replica weapons. As I have mentioned before, the proposals prompted a massive outcry in my constituency. In response I have spoken and met with many groups and individuals in an attempt to acquire an understanding of their views.

The process has allowed me to speak directly with my constituents, thus giving me a good understanding of their thoughts and views. As an avid hunter and sportsman I am pleased to recognize the government taking the initiative to punish individuals for the illegal use of firearms. However I am not able to support further restrictions being placed on the legitimate and safe gun owner.

Bill C-68 is a bill that resulted from many tragic events in recent Canadian history such as the massacre at Montreal's École polytechnique in 1989 and a recent drive-by shooting in Ottawa. The events have fuelled the fires of public demands for changes to the Criminal Code with respect to the illegal use of firearms.