

80 per cent of the land mass that governments which are opposed to this legislation represent. No one wanted to come. Most were too busy. Senators from every point of this nation are here to deal with this bill, but it was not important enough to go to Whitehorse. It was not important enough to go to the Beaufort Sea. You did not have time. You were too busy. You just did not understand. You do not want to understand because you do not want to hear the other side.

Some of us live in rural communities. We may come to urban communities and live in them, but we also live in another world. We are just asking you to try to understand the logic that comes with a motion like this. The Speaker, having grown up in this environment, knows the impact that this type of legislation will have on the Métis, the natives, and the ranchers. I can tell you. I have spoken to them. I was there.

Some may think that certain senators are trying to undermine this bill, but this is what we were told. What Senator Sparrow said here today is what we heard day after day in our hearings. These hearings were not partisan. I do not give a darn if it is a Liberal bill or a Conservative bill; it is still a bad bill. I did not agree with many of the provisions in Bill C-17, and they still cannot be enforced in the Northwest Territories. However, I am not here to talk partisanship.

This is logic, my friends. Please look at this bill for what it is worth. Listen to the logic and the message. Believe me, there are two sides to every story. Senator Sparrow has just transmitted an important portion of one side, the side that has driven this country and developed this country. It is the pioneers and the people who have gone to the remote regions and taken the risks who have made a great difference in our great nation.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** If no other senator wishes to speak on the amendment, I will put the amendment to a voice vote now. If a standing vote is requested, it will be deferred until tomorrow at 5:30 p.m. Are honourable senators ready for the question?

**An Hon. Senator:** Question.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Those in favour, please say "yea."

**Some Hon. Senators:** Yea.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Those opposed, please say "nay."

**Some Hon. Senators:** Nay.

**The Hon. the Speaker:** In my opinion, the "nays" have it.

*And two honourable senators having risen.*

**The Hon. the Speaker:** I note the request for a standing vote. It will be deferred until tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.

• (2050)

We are now back to the main motion.

**Hon. Terry Stratton:** Honourable senators, I first want to thank senators who travelled to Manitoba to attend the hearings which we held at seven locations in that province. The legislation before us today, Bill C-68, respecting firearms and other weapons, has provoked a great deal of debate among Canadians across the country.

As many senators will know, there is considerable opposition to many parts of this legislation, particularly from residents of my home province, Manitoba. A Southam poll conducted in late May of this year indicated that 60 per cent of respondents in Manitoba are opposed to this bill. Since this legislation was first read in the House of Commons in February, and even before then, I have received hundreds of letters in my office from across Canada, representing both sides of this debate.

The majority of the letters I have received are from Manitobans opposed to a universal firearms registration system. I have met with individuals who are on both sides of this issue and listened to their concerns. I chaired a committee of senators who travelled throughout Manitoba to hear a broader expression of views on Bill C-68. I feel strongly that, as senators, we have an obligation to reach out to the communities we represent and ensure that their views are heard in the Senate. Representing the Manitoba region as I do, I believe that I have a good understanding of where Manitobans stand on this issue.

Honourable senators, I have heard the thoughts of the provincial government of Manitoba on this bill. It is no secret that it is opposed to certain aspects of this bill. Representatives of that government appeared before both the House of Commons and the Senate standing committees reviewing this legislation and presented their views on that matter.

The provincial government of Manitoba does not support a universal firearms registration system for Canada, and for very good reason: It believes, as do I, that universal gun registration will not deter the use of restricted or illegal firearms. Canada already has a ban on certain weapons, and has very tough registration requirements for handguns. Nevertheless, criminals still manage to use these weapons, despite the fact that handguns have been required to be registered since 1934.

Honourable senators, I am against spending millions of taxpayers' dollars on a universal registration system which the government has failed to prove will enhance public safety. In fact, I have heard that the administrative burden of gun registration will take police officers off the streets, and therefore have a detrimental impact on the safety of our communities.

This is a real concern to many people. From testimony that has been given at the hearings on this bill in Manitoba and in Ottawa, I believe that many Canadians are not convinced that spending millions of dollars on a gun registration system is the best way to go. Many Canadians sincerely believe that this money would be better spent in other ways, such as putting more police on the streets, educating citizens on existing gun regulations and enforcement of current regulations.