

*Private Members' Business*

I believe that today's computer technology would make it easy and relatively inexpensive to keep a registry of firearms. I think it is a privilege to own a firearm and it would be normal for such a privilege to be controlled.

It has been said many times that hunters would be really unhappy if they had to register their firearms. I personally know many hunters and none of them would oppose such a measure. Hunters are subject to many rules for hunting, except rules regarding firearms. This is incredible. Thousands of moose hunters must take part in a draw every year and if their name is not chosen, they are not allowed to hunt. They accept these rules because the wildlife must be protected. Yet there is hardly any restriction on firearms.

What about protecting people? Something is out of balance and I am convinced that, if you exclude the lobby of those who sell firearms, the common sense of the ordinary citizens who hunt is such that there would be no problem in implementing the compulsory registration of firearms sold, through the most effective and least expensive system available. I sincerely hope that the review of this excellent bill tabled by the hon. member for Don Valley North can continue in the legislative committee.

• (1745)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to participate in private members' hour tonight. I would like to say that my colleague in her legislation has proposed some really sweeping changes to the way that most common firearms in Canada are dealt with.

All of us remember a great deal of what the witnesses at the committee said with regard to Bill C-17. If I can back up a bit, prior to Bill C-17 there was another bill. I think it was Bill C-84 which died on the Order Paper. When it came out is when I first got involved and talked to many of my constituents, the gun dealers and the gun clubs in my riding, as well as in all the ridings in Calgary and indeed into southern Alberta.

While Bill C-84 contained many clauses that were totally unacceptable to me, we have been pretty good

with regard to Bill C-17. There are some things in it that I am not particularly fond of, but there is compromise within the system.

What my colleague is asking for is the complete registration of all firearms. I cannot accept that and I will not accept that. I would certainly have to vote against it. There are many reasons.

I would like to say first of all that I own shotguns and I own rifles. I have taken training. I think the majority of Canadians that own shotguns and rifles are very careful, understand the safety and use every precaution in how they store, carry and use their weapons. No amount of legislation anywhere is going to prevent someone who is unbalanced or perhaps mentally incompetent from shooting a person if he or she gets hold of a firearm.

What we are doing in the legislation we pass is trying to put forward a law or rule that makes society safer. We have to look at the total society. We have a lot of rural areas in our country. I am from Alberta and there are a lot of rural people, farmers, ranchers, hunters and fishermen who utilize shotguns and rifles daily. They are well trained and use them safely.

What was contained in Bill C-17 which was passed last year has gone a long way to improving the safety of our society. There are areas in that bill which I want to deal with. We placed restrictions on high fire power and military-type firearms. My colleague from the New Democratic Party was speaking about military-type firearms. They are restricted. We increased penalties for misusing a firearm. We have reinforced the screening system through which all Canadians have to pass before they are allowed to own a firearm. It is called the FAC, the firearms acquisition certificate.

Anyone in Canada purchasing a firearm must obtain a firearms acquisition certificate, generally speaking at their local police station. You fill out a form answering specific questions. There is a 28-day waiting period.

The most important thing we have asked for is that certain people sponsor firearm acquisition certificates so not anyone can go out and purchase a rifle or a firearm instantaneously. There is a 28 day waiting period. You have to have people within your community that know you, that can sign their names to vouch that you are indeed a very careful person.