

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In the time available to it, the Special Committee has examined a wide range of issues involving Canada's firearms laws, and has recommended a broad package of measures to improve them. Many questions remain to be further investigated by the Canadian Advisory Council on Firearms, but the Committee's recommendations would, we strongly believe, provide for a much more effective system than now exists, or that would exist if the government's package of measures was implemented as proposed. Such an improved system is necessary in the interests of public safety.

In many ways, the Special Committee has gone beyond what is proposed in Bill C-80 and the accompanying regulatory proposals. For example, our recommendations would provide for a significantly strengthened FAC screening process for first-time applicants, including parental consent for applicants between 16 and 18 years of age, and an emphasis on the national implementation of mandatory competency and safety training courses as soon as possible. We have also proposed a renewal procedure to make the system more rational and less onerous on firearms owners, as well as transitional provisions to protect the interests of those who have been using firearms responsibly for years.

Our proposals would also ensure that all military and para-military firearms remaining in the country, after further imports and sales were stopped, would ultimately end up in the hands of genuine gun collectors, rather than simply becoming restricted weapons. To ensure that the designation of gun collector has genuine meaning and consequences, our proposals would ensure that this key category, present in the Criminal Code but completely undefined for so many years, would be both properly defined and regulated. We also recommend that safe storage requirements be applied to all firearms owners. We would also expand the role of the Canadian Advisory Council on Firearms, and provide for the parliamentary scrutiny of any regulatory action.

Finally, our recommendations for tougher minimum penalties and stricter enforcement of these penalties for the use of a firearm in the commission of a crime, would directly address the area of greatest concern — the criminal use of firearms. We would also urge the federal government to take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that appropriate border controls are in place to prevent firearms smuggling.

We thus believe that our recommendations would protect public safety better than those proposals presently before Parliament. We believe that our proposals would also protect the legitimate interests of law-abiding firearms owners and users. We thus urge the federal government to implement our recommendations as soon as possible. If the present session of Parliament does not end before action can be taken, Bill C-80 should be amended and enacted in accordance with our recommendations, and additional legislation as required tabled without delay. If, however as we expect, Parliament is soon to be prorogued, we call upon the government to table as early as possible in the next session an improved bill which reflects our recommendations.