

particularly rifles and shotguns, there tends to be higher rates of firearms death, mostly involving rifles and shotguns. Some of these firearms are misused by their owners, others are stolen.

■ *Firearms which are taken or stolen from legal gun owners*; legal firearms which are obtained by children and youth figure prominently in accidental deaths, suicide and youth crime. Stolen guns also fuel the illegal market - over 3,000 are reported stolen each year.

■ *Firearms which are bought legally and sold illegally*. this includes trafficking and leakage of importation between the border and point of sale. Under the old Canadian law, a Firearms Acquisition Certificate (FAC) allowed an individual to buy as many rifles and shotguns as they wanted over a five-year period. These guns were not registered, except at point of purchase, and cannot be easily traced to the original owner. Moreover, because guns are not registered as they enter Canada but at the point of sale, huge opportunities for large scale "leakage" were created. For example, a Montreal area import/export company (Century International Arms) has frequently announced the theft of thousands of prohibited and restricted weapons - only after police arrested individuals using them in the commission of a crime. Since 1988, 26 separate incidents of theft, loss or disappearance of guns were reported in connection with Century I.A. A recent criminal investigation, Project Pinball, uncovered an extensive network of "law-abiding" gun owners without criminal records who were buying guns legally and selling them illegally. Over 2,000 firearms were seized and a dozen arrests were made in one of the largest seizures in Canadian history.<sup>24</sup>

■ *Firearms which are smuggled*. often but not always these are linked to other illegal trafficking, particularly drugs, and organized crime. Most (60-70%) of the handguns used in crime in Canada are smuggled. Several joint task forces including Project Gunrunner and the Provincial Weapons Unit have tracked large quantities of firearms to sources in the United States. This is a particular problem in larger cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

## **The Canadian Approach to Firearms Regulation**

Despite vocal opposition by some sectors, consensus developed among experts in public safety in Canada. They agreed that Canada should:

- control access to firearms by licensing owners
- reduce the illegal gun trade and increase accountability by tracking firearms
- enforce safe storage of firearms
- prohibit the sale of firearms where the risk outweighs the utility (particularly some handguns and military weapons)
- increase penalties and improve enforcement of the law
- support implementation with effective education and training