

*Government Orders*

events it was perhaps important to make sure that the package was as responsive as possible.

When I was appointed Minister of Justice at the end of February, because this was to be my legislation I wanted to give it a thorough review as well and in fact made some changes to the package before it was brought forward. But the genesis of this package of legislative changes quite considerably predates the events at École Polytechnique. That is why, there having been a considerable amount of consultation and input by colleagues in this House, I am anxious to move forward in the most timely way.

The legislation has been improved by representations made by members of this House through the discussion that has surrounded private members' bills, by proposals of members, and by proposals made on behalf of constituents.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the unfortunate and tragic incident at the Université de Montréal last December, and the recent events at Akwesasne, Kahnawake and Kahnésatake, all of the evidence suggests that the current legislation has been effective in reducing the number of deaths and injuries from firearms in Canada since it was enacted in 1978.

I believe, however, that there is still room for improvement. The measures I have introduced will effectively combine with the existing law and address the very real concerns of all Canadians about public safety and the place of firearms in our society. Canadians are very concerned about violence and the misuse of firearms.

I am convinced that the combined effect of the enforcement of the existing law, the amendments I am proposing, and non-legislative measures such as the implementation of firearms safety education programs, will significantly reduce firearms incidents and increase public confidence in the law.

I challenge Canada's firearms community to assist us in building public confidence that firearms have a legitimate place in Canada and that they will be owned and used safely.

I know that all members of this House share my belief that Canada's firearms community is prepared to support a balanced program to encourage the responsible owner-

ship and use of firearms and to protect the safety of all Canadians.

Public safety is everyone's responsibility and we must all work together to preserve it.

[*English*]

Bill C-80 is part of a larger package of proposed changes to Canada's gun control system. It is because of that larger package that the context of a special committee is appropriate to look at it, rather than a committee that is confined to the terms of the actual legislative draft.

Many of the existing elements of the system are based on regulatory measures or Order in Council powers based on legislative authority. Others are based strictly on statutory provisions. Bill C-80 will continue this two-track approach.

It makes a number of changes to the Criminal Code itself, but many significant changes will be made by regulations or Orders in Council based on either the existing law or the proposed amendments.

I have received a great many representations from firearms owners who feel that regulations or Orders in Council are an attempt to circumvent the normal review of Parliament.

As hon. members of this House will understand, the purpose of regulations and Orders in Council is to enable Parliament to delegate authority in areas where frequent or urgent changes may have to be made in a time frame that will not permit normal parliamentary scrutiny.

The provisions allowing the Governor in Council to designate prohibited and restricted weapons by order, for example, enable the government to respond quickly and effectively to new devices that come on to the world market. Using this power, it is possible to prohibit importation and possession before large numbers have entered the country.

Many of the provisions that cause members of the firearms community the greatest concern are actually proposed regulations for Order in Council provisions. As I suggested, it would perhaps be out of the framework of discussion of Bill C-80 itself because they are not in the bill itself.