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Mr. David Griffin, Executive Officer, Canadian Police Association: The Canadian Police Association represents 28,000 front-line police personnel from across Canada. We have members of the RCMP, the railway police, and members of the First Nations police as well.

Over the past six years, the Canadian Police Association has supported the federal government's gun control program. This support has been subject to several re-evaluations, most recently at our National Assembly held in March of 2001. At that assembly our delegates voted once again to support the registration of all firearms.

The licensing of firearms owners and the registering of firearms are important methods of reducing the misuse of, and illegal trade in, firearms. By rigorously screening and licensing firearms owners we reduce the risk for those who pose a threat to themselves or others. There is evidence that the system has been effective in preventing people who should not have guns from getting them. Effective screening is essential to continued success and while we support improvements to make screening more efficient, public safety must remain a priority. The licensing of firearms owners also discourages casual gun ownership. Owning a firearm is a big responsibility and licensing is a reasonable requirement. While we do not penalize responsible firearm owners, licensing and registration encourages people to get rid of unwanted, unused and unnecessary firearms. Indeed, in December 2000, many police agencies across Canada received tens of thousands of turned in firearms from people who chose to surrender them as opposed to seeking a licence for them.

Registration increases the accountability of firearms owners by linking the firearm to the owner. This encourages owners to abide by safe storage laws and compels them to report firearm thefts where storage may have been a contributing factor. Safe storage of firearms reduces firearms on the black market from break-ins, reduces unauthorized use of firearms, reduces "heat of the moment" use of firearms, and reduces accidents, particularly accidents that involve children. Registration provides law enforcement with valuable information that helps in the enforcement of firearm prohibition orders and supports police investigations. The registry is accessed thousands of times each day by police from across the country. We have seen a number of concrete examples of police investigations that have been aided by access to the information contained in the registry.

While police will never rely entirely on information contained in the registry, it is helpful to know if guns are likely to be present when approaching a volatile

situation, for example, in responding to a domestic violence call. The officer, in assessing threat and risk, will weigh this information carefully.

Registration facilitates proof of possession of stolen and smuggled firearms, and therefore, aids in prosecutions. In the past, it was difficult to prove possession of illegal rifles and shotguns. Registration provides better information to assist in investigation of thefts and other firearms occurrences. Recovered firearms can be tracked to the registered owner using firearms registration information. Registration is critical to enforcing licensing and without it there is nothing to prevent a licensed gun owner from selling an unregistered weapon to an unlicensed individual.

Illegal guns begin as legal guns. Registration helps to prevent the transition from legal to illegal ownership, and assists in identifying where the transition to illegal ownership began. We have been encouraged by the steps proposed by Canadian Firearms Centre leadership, and adopted by the Minister of Justice to streamline the licensing and registration process in order to achieve greater compliance by law-abiding Canadians. To date approximately, 80 per cent of firearms owners have obtained licences and more than two-thirds have registered their firearms.

Ease of application, simplified forms, electronic processing capacity, quicker processing, and greater cost- effectiveness utilizing current and evolving technologies are part of the proposals contained in Bill C-10. Further, compliance with the legislative time frames established in Bill C-68, measures to accommodate reasonable concessions to law-abiding gun owners, for example the grand fathering of prohibited handguns; and most important, focusing attention and resources on ensuring continuous ineligibility for those individuals who present a risk to public safety, are also proposals contained within Bill C-10. We are generally supportive of these proposals.

In order to achieve the stated public safety objectives of the legislation in a manner that ensures a high level of compliance, the Canadian Police Association has advocated that the consequences of simple non-compliance with the administrative requirements of the program, such as failing to notify the centre of a change of address, should be treated in a remedial regulatory manner and not be normally subject to criminal sanctions and/or licence revocation.

We believe that registration fees should be waived to facilitate optimum compliance in the most efficient, cost- effective manner possible.

We also have submitted that the Government of Canada must place greater emphasis on strengthening the security of, and enforcement at, our nations' borders to significantly reduce the illegal entry of firearms and other contraband into Canada. Last year, our association passed a resolution prior to September 11, reiterating our concern that the safety of our citizens remains a priority in discussions of border controls. While we understand the importance of the movement of goods and people to support economic objectives, it is also critical that Canada remain vigilant regarding the threat posed by guns smuggled across the borders to the safety of Canadians. Canada has done a good job of bringing its gun laws into line with other industrialized countries. However, we are vulnerable to weapons imported from countries such as the United States because of their lack of effective gun control.

The Government of Canada and its provincial and territorial counterparts must adopt a tougher stance in addressing the sentencing of persons convicted of any crimes involving firearms, including a zero tolerance adherence to the mandatory minimum sentencing provisions of existing legislation and the expansion of the application and terms of the mandatory minimum provisions.

The Government of Canada should continue to dedicate resources to coordinated enforcement efforts.

National Weapons Enforcement Support Team, NWEST, has been beneficial to Canada's gun control program. The objectives of NWEST are to strengthen Canadian law enforcement's capacity to address the smuggling and trafficking of illegal weapons; strengthen Canada's expertise in criminal intelligence gathering with respect to the illegal movement of firearms; and to strengthen Canada's capability to trace illegal weapons.

As many of you know, Canada is now a source country for drugs in the United States. A 1999 study by Criminal Intelligence Service Canada revealed that, firearms are increasingly being traded for drugs in the U.S. Then they are smuggled into Canada for resale. Saturday night specials are brought into Canada illegally and often find their way into the hands of street criminals. Assault rifles and fully automatic shotguns are smuggled into Canada for sale to militia groups, organized crime groups and outlaw motorcycle gangs.

NWEST plays a crucial part in assisting police in enforcing the Firearms Act. Their role has been to increase public safety with respect to firearms. Just a few months ago, NWEST members assisted police in Western Canada in executing a public safety warrant when an individual made threats to a school principal and to several local business employees. The individual lived directly across from the school, and there was concern that he would follow through with his threats. A search warrant allowed police to find a number of shotguns and rifles that were unsafely stored in a closet in the individual's home. All the firearms were seized and NWEST members assisted police in having the individual prohibited from owning firearms and the guns disposed of.

Also in Western Canada, NWEST supported the police when an individual involved in divorce proceedings threatened to kill those involved in the proceedings. NWEST supported the police investigation and determined that the suspect had recently received a firearms licence and had three handguns registered to him. The investigation led to an arrest and the seizure of the guns.

In Atlantic Canada NWEST assisted police when two firearms were seized during an investigation of possible child abuse. The suspect was licensed and had a registered firearm. Two firearm charges were laid and a firearms prohibition is being sought.

In another incident, police in Atlantic Canada found a rifle in the wall of a residence. They suspect that the weapon was used in an unsolved homicide in 1987; NWEST is assisting in the examination of that firearm.

I also have a case with me from Winnipeg that was recently reported in the media. There was a seizure of a prohibited firearm in Winnipeg and a check of

the registry confirmed that the gun was registered to a Winnipeg area gun collector. Search warrants were subsequently executed and it was discovered that, although the collector had a number of legally registered guns, he also had a number of firearms that were prohibited and restricted. Two machine guns are missing, and the police are concerned that they have fallen into the wrong hands. *The Winnipeg Sun* article says that one of the missing weapons is an Israeli-made Uzi 9 mm that was made popular in Arnold Schwarzenegger's 1984 blockbuster *The Terminator*. The other machine gun is a compact American-made Ingram 9 mm. Police are going through the close to 400 weapons in the collection. That process will take several weeks. So far, they have discovered five unregistered handguns, and they are also checking for the weapons that are outright illegal. They are worried that the collector has lost track of several more weapons and that they may have fallen into the hands of criminals. While conducting an unrelated investigation, police came across a sub-machine gun that was also registered to this individual, and when they raided his residence, they seized close to 400 weapons including rocket launchers, bazookas and seven live grenades.