

Tuesday, June 08, 2010

Position on Bill C-391

The Long Gun Registry prevents crime.

Background

Bill C-391 is a Private Member's Bill that seeks to abolish the long gun registry. A parliamentary committee is studying the Bill before it receives a third and final reading. MPs could vote on legislation to abolish the registry within a few weeks.

At its regular meeting on May 14, 2010 the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council (WRCPC) unanimously voted to endorse a joint statement on firearms from the Canadian Police Association, the Canadian Association of Police Boards, and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. In the joint statement, police leaders from across the country declared that they "are unified in [their] support of the new operationally-focused Canadian Firearms Program." The statement has also been supported by the Domestic Assault Response Team of Waterloo Region (DART), a multi service committee that describes the registry as an essential tool in reducing spousal homicides.

Rationale

Canadians deserve to live in safe communities. At \$4 million per year the long-gun registry is a cost-effective strategy that complements social development and law enforcement efforts to prevent crime before it happens. The registry enhances community and police officer safety by:

- Helping police to prevent violent incidents at homes and in schools and workplaces;
- Leading to the seizure of firearms from people deemed high risk;
- Assisting police to trace lost and stolen firearms;
- Promoting accountability in safely storing firearms, reporting of lost or stolen firearms, and tracking firearm transactions.

The misuse of firearms leads to significant number of death and injuries in Canada each year. While the long gun registry cannot prevent *all* of these situations it is a step in the right direction. The registry has been shown to significantly reduce gun incidences. Close to 88% of women who are killed in a situation of domestic assault are killed by the use of a shotgun or rifle.

The registry was a direct result of the fatal shooting by a single gunman of 14 young women at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989. After that tragic event, the coalition for gun control was founded to advocate for the establishment of the registry (see www.guncontrol.ca).

Since the introduction of gun control Canadians have seen decreases in all gun related injuries and death including suicide.

The joint police statement for the continuation of the long gun registry lists ten “myths and facts” (see www.truthsandmyths.ca) that clearly support the long gun registry as a critical tool for public safety and security. But the evidence for supporting the long gun registry comes not only from police data on seizure of weapons and reports of lost or stolen guns but also from death and injury prevention data from the medical and public health professionals. WRCPC has long taken the position that when it comes to crime prevention the smartest decisions are those that are based in good research and evidence.

Position

The WRCPC contends that the positive record of the long gun registry is worthy of the continued support of Canadians. We can't put a price tag on the lives of citizens or officers in the line of duty. The registry also sends the message that the possession of weapons brings with it a high level of responsibility. The registry is supported by police, medical and health professionals and those working in the area of family violence. The experience and knowledge of these experts should receive strong consideration in any deliberations about Bill C-391. WRCPC unanimously supports the positions of these experts in urging the Federal government to keep the long gun registry and stop the implementation of Bill C-391.

About the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council

The Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council works collaboratively to reduce and prevent crime, victimization and fear of crime. It is an advisory committee to the Region of Waterloo and consists of over 40 members representing the community-at -large, social services, education, health, planning, justice, police, and community agencies among others.

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