

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

40th PARLIAMENT, 3rd SESSION

May 2010

Bill C-391, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act (repeal of long-gun registry)

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security passed the following motion after testimony was presented by witnesses who oppose the long-gun registry:

That this Committee, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1 (1), recommends that the House of Commons do not proceed further with Bill C-391, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act (repeal of long-gun registry), because the Committee has heard sufficient testimony that the bill will dismantle a tool that promotes and enhances public security and the safety of Canadian police officers.

The combined majority of Liberal, NDP and Bloc Quebecois members of the committee voted unanimously to pass this motion.

It was opposed by the Conservative Party of Canada committee members.

At the time of this writing, the motion has not been voted on in the House of Commons.

Excerpts from evidence provided by witnesses who support Bill C-391

Detective Sergeant Murray Grismer
Saskatoon Police Service, as an individual

I am a serving member of the Saskatoon Police Service with over 23 years of service protecting the citizens of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan. At present, I hold the rank of detective sergeant, assigned to the major crime-serious crimes unit.

The courts in Saskatchewan have qualified me as an expert witness, able to give opinion and evidence on firearms. I have provided assistance to both federal and provincial prosecutions in the area of firearms-related crime. I'm a master instructor for the Canadian firearms safety courses and an approved verifier certified by the registrar of the Canadian firearms registry.

I want to make it clear from the outset that my comments are mine and mine alone. They do not reflect the opinion of my employer, chief, or the police service.

That said, I am the elected spokesperson of the Saskatoon Police Association on firearms issues, specifically the Firearms Act and the firearms registry. I was also the spokesperson for the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers on the issues of the Firearms Act and the firearms registry until the fall of 2002. During that time, I sat on the advisory panel to the Honourable John Nilson, justice minister and Attorney General for the Province of Saskatchewan, which brought forward Saskatchewan's position to opt out of the administration and enforcement of the Firearms Act.

I also represent the opinion of thousands of police officers across Canada who are, in my opinion, the silent majority and, for some, the silenced majority: not only police officers who have been ordered not to speak out against the long-gun registry, but also officers who fear for their careers should they voice an opinion publicly in opposition to continuation of the registry or against the position adopted by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, their chief of police, or commanding officer.

To say the police community is divided on support for the long-gun registry is an understatement. The committee has heard from Mr. Charles Momy, president of the Canadian Police Association, who claimed that he represents the opinion of 41,000 police officers in Canada. The CPA endorses the continuation of the registry, yet in truth, they adopt this position without ever having formally polled their membership.

The CPA's position is not that of the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers, nor that of the Saskatoon Police Association. The Saskatchewan Federation is the only provincial federation or association that has polled its entire membership on the issue of the registration of firearms. When polled, the Saskatoon Police Association was 99.46% against a long-gun registry, while many of our compatriots in Saskatchewan were 100% in opposition to the registry.

There are some who may choose arrogantly or foolishly to consider the opinions of those who oppose the registry as uninformed or uneducated. Nothing could be further from the truth; we are neither. Instead, we recognize the cornerstone of public safety is the training, screening, and licensing of owners, not the registration of non-restricted rifles and shotguns.

The mantra of the former government of the day and the CACP (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police) was that "gun control is crime control". The registry misses the target of the criminal use of firearms. Instead, it targets millions of legitimate firearms owners in the name of crime control. The fact is, the registry can do nothing to prevent the criminal use or criminals from obtaining firearms any more than the registration of vehicles can prevent them from being stolen or used by impaired drivers.

Ms. de Villiers of CAVEAT advocates on behalf of Canadians Against Violence. This is a laudable cause and one that I believe every Canadian supports, for violence makes victims of us all. To Ms. de Villiers, I offer my profoundest sympathy on the loss of your daughter, Nina de Villiers. However, a registry for long guns would not have stopped such a tragic event or addressed the failings of the justice system, and the retention of the registry will do nothing to prevent any such further event. Training, enhanced screening, and licensing of firearm owners, as we see today, might have prevented Jonathan Yeo, in the first instance, from being able to obtain a firearm. However, not even Canada's strict licensing regime or firearms registry can prevent random acts of violence. The best example of this failure is the shooting rampage at Dawson College by Kimveer Gill.

(Toronto Police) Chief (Bill) Blair and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police contend that Canadians continue to support the registry that costs taxpayers over \$2 billion and that in over a decade cannot be shown to have prevented even one death. Furthermore, what he is not telling you is that the CACP is not unanimous in their support and never has been.

The fact is, the CACP publicly supported Allan Rock in the establishment of the registry in the beginning and continued to support it for the next 15 years, denying the mountainous cost overruns despite the ever-mounting evidence of the true cost to Canadians. This was projected in the beginning by firearms groups across Canada.

The complicity between the CACP and successive Liberal governments to establish and maintain the registry is nothing short of duplicitous. Now the CACP suggests to you that Canadians everywhere should turn a blind eye to the \$2 billion oversight, claiming the money is spent. They say get over it, the registry now only costs \$4 million a year to run. Moreover, this figure tends to change depending on which chief or senior member of the RCMP happens to be speaking.

At first blush, it may appear to be a miracle in business management rather than an exercise in creative accounting due to the amalgamation with the RCMP. Past yearly budgets of the Canadian Firearms Centre were in excess of \$92.8 million.

Chief Blair will attempt to convince you that the retention of the registry is an officer safety issue. To the layperson, having no personal knowledge of firearms or the registry, this may appear reasonable. However, once one knows and understands the failings of the registry, the issue of officer safety takes on a far more sinister meaning. For officers using the registry, trusting in the inaccurate and unverified information contained therein, tragedy looms around the next door.

Knowing what I do about the registry, I cannot use the information contained in the registry to swear out a search warrant. To do so would be a criminal act. Thus I cannot in good conscience tell any officer, junior or senior, to place his faith in the results of a query of the Canadian firearms registry online.

To illustrate, it's acknowledged by persons within policing, the firearms centre, and the recreational firearms community that there are, at minimum, in excess of one million firearms in Canada that have not been registered. The registry does not indicate where firearms are stored or who may have control of the firearm, nor does it denote ownership. Tens of thousands of firearms are registered inaccurately using patent numbers and catalogue numbers in place of serial numbers or model numbers. Many firearms in the registry have multiple registrations for the same firearm.

This is but the tip of the iceberg for problems with the registry. Projections from within the Canadian Firearms Centre privately state it will take 70-plus years of attrition to come close to eliminating all the errors and to have all firearms currently in Canada registered.

This level of inaccuracy is unacceptable for any industry, let alone law enforcement. Police officers deserve better; the public and courts demand better. If there were to be the same potential for error within the national DNA data bank or the automated fingerprint identification system, the public and the courts would be outraged, and with just cause. Every entry in these databases is empirical – a level of accuracy the registry has not and cannot attain.

As a team leader for the Olympic security force, I had the opportunity to speak with police officers from across Canada. The vast majority of officers I spoke with did not support the continuation of the registry. They do not trust the information it contains and see it as a waste of time and money. Some I spoke with who did support the registry were shocked to learn of the vast inaccuracies and the potential officer safety risks associated with the registry.

Police across Canada cannot and must not place their trust and risk their lives on the inaccurate, unverified information contained in the registry. From my perspective, if doing away with the long-gun registry saves even one life of one of Canada's front-line police officers, it is worth it. Retaining the registry at the risk of one police officer is too great a price to pay.

Mr. Ignatieff has proposed first-time failures to register long guns be treated as simple, non-criminal ticketing offences, instead of criminal offences, as they are currently. This epiphany has received the endorsement of many members of the CACP. However, it is disingenuous at best, nothing more than mere smoke and mirrors in an attempt to appease the concerns of the public and firearms owners across Canada.

The truth of the matter is that the CPA demanded such a condition of Allan Rock and the Liberal government of the day in order to receive their support for Bill C-68, the Firearms Act. Thus section 112 was placed into the Firearms Act, which makes it a summary offence for the firearms owner to possess an unregistered firearm in the first instance. The only difference is that Mr. Ignatieff's proposal makes it a ticketable offence like a traffic ticket. His problem is there is no federal mechanism, such as the Summary Offences Procedure Act, which allows for this. Firearms owners would still be forced, by

appearance notice or summons, to attend court and be liable on conviction to a fine of not more than \$2,000 or imprisonment for six months, or both.

Polls indicate that the majority of Canadians want to see the registry for non-restricted rifles and shotguns ended. I contend this position is supported by the majority of police officers in Canada.

Bill C-391 is worthy of your consideration and support, for it brings an end to a registry that represents the largest and most contentious single waste of taxpayers' dollars, a registry consumed with errors and inaccurate data, and, more importantly, a registry that risks the safety of front-line police officers across Canada.

Mr. Jack Tinsley
Former inspector, Winnipeg Police Service, as an individual

I was a police officer in Winnipeg for over 33 years and retired with the rank of inspector. I was a SWAT team member for over 11 years, most of it as a team leader in the sniper unit. I have used deadly force in the defence of my life. I understand the concept. I spent a number of years in uniformed patrol and then moved into investigative policing in the drug squad. I made many dozens of undercover drug purchases from drug dealers and many undercover purchases of stolen or unregistered handguns, a number from parolees out on early release from prison. I have been declared an expert in the area of illegal street drugs and drug trafficking at all levels of Manitoba courts. These experiences and many others in a progression of higher ranks over the span of my career have led me to three conclusions.

One, drugs are now, and have been for the last 25 years or so, the direct or underlying cause of most crime. The majority of murders and crimes of violence, most robberies and break-ins, and even high-volume shoplifting and other property crimes, are now committed by persons involved in the drug trade or addicts. Organized crime now flourishes on the drug trade, and it has surpassed all others with its immense profits.

Two, criminals do not obtain firearms licences and they do not register their very disposable firearms. They could not care less about the rules. What is interesting is that the FBI recently released their latest crime statistics, and they believe 95% of all gun crime is now gang related. These are the same gangs that are running that drug trade. I accept that as credible information, and it cannot be dismissed as not being applicable to Canada as well. We can all rest assured that most or all drug dealers everywhere are armed. The huge sums of cash involved and the very characters of the often desperate players in their circle of trade dictate that.

Three, the Canadian long-gun registry, in its approximate decade of existence, has not proven to be a deterrent to violent crime. Outside of having the small and often unreliable benefit of allowing for us to count guns, and just the ones that honest gun owners have registered at that, it is not a particularly useful investigative tool for law enforcement,

which is exactly what the registry was intended to be in order to prevent gun crime and save lives.

These are bold statements, but they could not be more true. Unfortunately, you will not hear from great numbers, if any at all, of the hundreds of currently serving police officers, some of whom have been shot in the line of duty, or from more than a few chiefs of police who would tell you the very same things. There's a reason for this: they have been effectively silenced after making it known that they also believe the long-gun registry is ineffective and had previously let it be known that they would also testify to that fact at these proceedings. To be blunt, they've been ordered not to appear at this hearing by their respective chiefs of police, and therefore not to speak from their hearts and consciences with a mind to promoting effective alternatives for reducing violent crime against women and all other persons in this country.

Others, such as more than a few police association executives across Canada who have in the recent past clearly voiced their opposition to the continuance of the long-gun registry, for the same good reasons have now pulled away from standing here and telling the truth, as they perceive future ramifications for themselves when vying for appointed positions within the Canadian Police Association and other organizations.

On Monday, a currently serving Winnipeg Police Association director called me. George Van Mackelbergh is a respected officer who spent many years enforcing laws against the Hells Angels and other violent organized criminals. He most emphatically stated that he does not support the continuance of the long-gun registry. He is not alone. I've spoken to an abundance of experienced officers, several just this week, who have all said the same thing. The information benefits they have gained from the registry are too few and are unreliable. The cost is too high, and the bottom line is that only law-abiding gun owners have registered their firearms. The criminals, for the most part, have not.

Are the facts that dangerous that the national association of chiefs of police had to send representatives to each police chief across the country to exert political pressure on those dissenting and calling for the repeal of the registry to get back into the fold? Whatever happened to free speech? I have heard at least a couple of chiefs of police use the same cliché in support of the registry: "We applaud any initiative that makes our job easier." Should this include any ineffective initiative? I think not, especially when there are better options available, such as calling for the termination of house arrest and release from custody on a recognizance for violent crimes, which criminals ignore and have the opportunity to re-offend at will.

Is it right for a leader to use the power of his or her office to further their own political agenda and then deny everyone else within the ranks that opportunity in case they should disagree?

You might be thinking at this point that I don't know what I'm talking about. I assure you that I do, first hand. After the long-gun registry had been written into law, I wrote an article that outlined my perspective on the potential of the long-gun registry based on my

experience of 26 years at that time, as a police officer who worked the street. In short, I said it would not address violent crime issues, it would be expensive beyond belief, many citizens would not comply with the law, and that the way to go, if we as a country were serious about reducing violent crime, was to keep criminals locked up with meaningful sentences from our courts. I also said the laws that were in place before the registry came into effect were good laws and that we just needed to enforce them. All of this rings true today, 10-plus years later.

In the article, I also repeated the irrefutable fact that guns do not kill people; people do. I also said it was a good idea, and still is today, to have all gun buyers qualified for the right to acquire any gun. The old firearms acquisition certificate system that was previously in place provided the much-needed hands-on look at every FAC applicant by a police officer. The officer would contact spouses and ask hard questions about safety issues or concerns. Very few potentially dangerous persons slipped through the cracks in that era and got an FAC. It was a proactive approach of the first order. Today, we are mired in a bureaucracy that does not provide for that face-to-face interaction by applicants with a trained police officer who would conduct a thorough background check on each applicant.

The article was in fact published in 1999 in the *Winnipeg Sun*. However, quite some time prior to that happening, I provided a copy to the chief of police out of courtesy, and his reply was, "I respect your opinion, but I do not agree." His reply goes on to instruct me not to associate the article in any way with the Winnipeg Police Service. Subsequently, I spent the last nine years of my career as an inspector, with the exception of a couple of months in a district in the duty office on shift work. That's about seven years longer than any other inspector that I'm aware of.

Was this being disciplined or the career suicide I had been cautioned against? That's my guess, but I said what I felt needed to be said and I've never regretted it.

I have nothing to gain or lose by appearing here today. My conscience will be clear when I leave here. I have said again what needs to be said in clear language to this committee and to the Canadian public. It is time to abandon this long-gun registry. I'm sure it was instituted with the best of intentions, but it has cost us nearly \$2 billion and it has not been effective in deterring violent crime. There is no shame in saying that. New Zealand did after their nearly identical registry failed them after seven years in law. Then they scrapped it, and I quote, "It seems...to be an elaborate system of arithmetic with no tangible aim."

Australia instituted a \$500 million initiative in 1997, a law that forced Australians to turn in 640,381 personal firearms. A year later, homicide, assault, and armed robbery crimes had all increased. These are violent crimes. Non-violent crimes such as break-ins also increased dramatically. It would be generous to say their program was merely unsuccessful.

Others will come here and read off reams of numbers relating to how often the police across the country use the registry effectively. If numbers were always correct and provided a clear picture, the Canada Revenue Agency could fire all its auditors. Numbers can be cooked and slanted to support any claim, and they are then still open to interpretation. It can be said that the police did checks on persons or addresses x times a day, but the grim truth is that the criminals move often, don't register their illegally obtained firearms, and don't tell us. All police officers know that. I believe it would impress me far more – far more – if there could be just one story about how this long-gun registry saved a human life. Just one.

I, in clear conscience, said what I believed to be true about criminal activity in Winnipeg at that time and as a trend across this country. Another of my fellow senior officers spoke out as well. I believe he, too, was disciplined. But we said what had to be said.

Today we have chiefs of police telling their rank and file that they cannot speak out against this gun registry, and they're ordered not to attend here or speak out elsewhere about their beliefs about that. And their beliefs are based on facts and street experience, not on some sweeping statement from a leader who says all my police officers agree with this.

Some police association executives have spoken out and said, our membership supports this long-gun registry. They were literally taken apart by the membership after making those statements, because most of them said, we don't support that; who are you to be saying that on our behalf? And these chiefs are doing the same thing now. They're saying, we support this – but that's not the case.

I (am) a former licensed Manitoba big game hunting guide, an appointed member of the Ashern, Manitoba past shooters hall of fame, a past shooter at the Lunder Manitoba all-Canada goose hunt, a former member of the pistol club, and a former Manitoba hunter safety assistant instructor. This is my 46th consecutive year of holding Manitoba hunting licences.

I have seen from many perspectives how the Canadian long-gun registry affects the many groups of individuals I've been associated with in my life. To a person, from the subsistence hunter native friends I have in the north, with whom I've hunted caribou, to the big city professionals I've shot skeet with, none support this registry, and none claim to have benefited from it in any way.

I want to make a couple of final points that have always weighed fairly heavily in all my considerations of gun law. Registration is merely a step towards total abolition of private gun ownership. It was penned in 1918 by the British Home Office in a paper called "Committee on the Control of Firearms". So it's not new. Most countries overseas that instituted these laws did so to prevent civil uprisings, such as that which occurred in Russia. I believe that we are in no danger of that happening in Canada today. After the British public was effectively disarmed by these laws, and the Germans were set to invade and overrun them, the British public found itself virtually defenceless. A plea was

made to the United States, which then generously and without hesitation donated tens of thousands of family heirlooms, sporting guns, and ammunition to the British people with which to arm themselves and their Home Guard. Despite anything anyone says about the detriments of private gun ownership, those are the facts.

We are a free nation. Too many people have made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that we are free today so that we can own a firearm if we choose to, can say what we believe, and can worship where we choose and not fear our government. I ask that each of you follow your own conscience and act on this matter in the best interests of Canadians everywhere.

Chief Rick Hanson
Chief of Police, Calgary Police Service
Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police

Simple ownership of unregistered sporting weapons, including rifles and shotguns, should not be a criminal offence. This is just a matter of respect. We're turning honest, law-abiding citizens of this country into criminals.

As evidenced in Calgary over the past eight years, of the 877 firearms used in violent offences and subsequently seized by police officers, 88% were handguns. In Calgary, a large portion – more than 70%, in our case – of crime handguns seized by officers had been smuggled into Canada. Also, according to *Juristat*, over the past 30 years the use of handguns to commit homicide has generally been increasing, while the use of rifles or shotguns has generally declined.

No reasonable person would argue against firearms licensing. Most gun owners are just as anxious to hold irresponsible gun owners accountable. Responsible gun owners recognize that it is a privilege to possess firearms, and they should only go to citizens who would use them in a lawful manner. I will say that no direct links have been made between the existing gun registry and the behaviour of criminals – true criminals. My colleagues and I ask that the Government of Canada conduct a thorough review of the gun registry. We urge a more practical solution that addresses the realities of policing and firearms-related crimes being committed in our country.

What I'm presenting on behalf of the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police is where we stand, that is, the long-gun registry as it sits today frequently is little more than a placebo for the serious crimes that occur on the street. When people in Calgary were being gunned down by criminals with illegal, unlicensed weapons, all we heard about was the need to enhance the gun registry, but that didn't deal with the issue.

When our officers go into any kind of dangerous situation, they make an assumption that there are going to be weapons there. When they go in to do a search, they wouldn't assume that if the registry says three weapons, there are three weapons. If they're going to do a proper search, they'd search until they were satisfied that any weapons were recovered.

Mr. Dave Shipman
Former violent crime investigator with Winnipeg Police Service

I spent 25 years with the Winnipeg Police Service and nearly 19 of those years investigating violent crimes in the homicide robbery division. During 16 of those years I was also a member of the special weapons team and a team leader on the entry team. I retired 10 years ago and immediately took up a position as investigator in charge of the organized crime/gang unit with Manitoba Public Insurance, where I remain so employed.

I've been involved with the criminal intelligence service in Manitoba during these 10 years as well. For those who are not familiar with it, each province has its own criminal intelligence service with the federal governing body, Criminal Intelligence Service Canada. The CISM includes all law enforcement and investigative bodies in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario. The nature of my work, investigating organized crime and gang activity as it relates to organized insurance fraud, and my involvement with CISM, puts me in contact with serving police officers on a continual basis.

My experience in dealing with violent criminals and gang members is probably far more involved than that of the average police officer. Believe me when I tell you that I have put hundreds and hundreds of dangerous violent men in prison over the years, often for unspeakable crimes, including rape, robbery, home invasions, and murder.

It is in the arrest and interviewing of these men and their associates that I've obtained a good working knowledge of their mindset. First and foremost, let me say that a vast majority of violent attacks, attempted homicides, and homicides committed domestically involve weapons other than firearms – knives being the preferred weapon. Of the few domestic homicides I can recall that involved long guns, committed by either sex on the spouse, they were long guns that were legally owned and there had been no previous encounters with the law. No amount of gun registry would have stopped lives from being taken.

I have watched the long-gun registry with interest, both as a serving police officer and a gun owner/hunter. First, and it has been said time and time again, criminals do not register guns. The guns they seek out and use to commit violent crimes are most profoundly smuggled or stolen handguns and, to a lesser extent, stolen and cut-down shotguns or rifles. Firearms that are capable of firing at an automatic rate are smuggled in from the U.S., and drug dealers and gangs – the two intertwined – are the favourite customers. None of these situations can be corrected by a long-gun registry.

Handguns have always enjoyed a restricted status, and ownership brought significant restrictions as to how and where the firearm could be possessed. Automatic weapons were always illegal to possess, with the exception of law enforcement and legitimate grandfathered collectors. The national gun registry has done nothing to deter illegal possession of these guns.

Again, criminals intent on procuring and possessing these guns are not about to register them. So how does the gun registry assist the police in preventing gun crime? It simply does not, and it offers nothing to protect our citizenry from being victims of gun crime perpetrated by well-armed criminals.

I'm not against licensing of gun owners. The possession and/or acquisition of firearms should be a licensed, controlled process to prevent criminals and otherwise unstable or dangerous individuals from legally obtaining and owning firearms. But the registry is really only about counting guns – guns belonging to people who have chosen to involve themselves in the system.

Civil disobedience to the registry has been rampant, with entire provinces refusing to enforce the failure to register and attorneys general announcing refusal to prosecute. Amnesties that have lasted for years have been put into place. Thousands and thousands of legal guns remain in our country outside of the registry, and many thousands of illegal guns are stolen or smuggled into the hands of criminals whose last worry is the gun registry.

I've heard from proponents of the registry that it assists police officers because they can check with the gun registry to determine if guns are registered to the person they are interested in, or the residence or location they are attending. While this check can certainly be done, I've yet to talk to a serving street cop – I'm talking about the average constable attending call after call after call – who has checked the registry, even a single time, or who even knows how to use it. In checking with the supervisor officers of the major crimes unit, the homicide unit, and the organized crime unit, not one can ever recall using the registry before going to make an arrest.

I spoke to the head of the Winnipeg Police Service tactical support team, which is the new term for the old SWAT team that we were on. This is a 24/7 support unit that, from its inception to the level of coverage two years ago, has been involved in several hundred planned operations, mostly high-risk warrant service, drug warrants, Criminal Code firearm search warrants, and the like. He indicated that the gun registry is worthless in preventing gun crime. He did advise that, by protocol, members of his unit confer with the registry when planning tactical operations, but their experience was that the registry has been only sometimes accurate, only sometimes up to date, and largely ineffective – and I quote – “because we all know that criminals don't register their guns.”

By way of history, upon the inception of Bill C-68, the Winnipeg Police Association membership voted by way of referendum that they were strongly opposed to the long-gun registry. Identically, the Manitoba Police Association also opposed the long-barrel registry, after taking the issue to a vote by the membership. And so it went for the police associations in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Then-WPA president, Loren Schinkel, now with Manitoba Justice as coordinator of aboriginal and municipal law enforcement, often referenced Premier Gary Doer's line about the Government of Manitoba not supporting the bill, saying that we need to get tough on gangs and restricted guns, not turn goose hunters into criminals.

If the long-gun registry was going to be such a significant crime-fighting tool, does anybody believe that entire police services would fail to embrace it wholeheartedly? Yes, fragments of police services utilize the registry by way of protocol, but with criminals not registering their stolen or smuggled handguns or cut-down stolen firearms, previously legally registered or not, it is of little use.

Because of the hit-and-miss situation of any individual actually registering legal guns, because the registry does not keep up with the movement of individuals from place to place, because criminals do not register, no police officer could ever rely on a check against the registry to determine if a danger did or did not exist.

A police officer must be ever vigilant, no matter the circumstance, and the fact that the registry might indicate that an individual or an address does or does not reflect legal gun registration is of little assistance, all things considered. The old possession and acquisition certificate did as much, without the arithmetic of counting guns.

The most alarming area of gun use escalation surrounds the ever-increasing street gang activity tied dramatically to the drug trade. As I deal on a daily basis with gang members in my current occupation and monitor their other criminal activities through my involvement with serving police officers in the criminal intelligence service, I can tell you first hand that gun crime is escalating and that handguns are far and away the weapon of choice of these criminals to enforce their piece of the drug trade pie. Anytime I get a gang member in my office, I turn to the subject of guns somewhere along the way, and it is not unusual for the gang banger to brag, "I've got a nine; I've got a Glock."

Shots ringing out in certain parts of Winnipeg have become commonplace activity, and drive-by shootings of individuals and residences the same. The registry is not the answer to stopping this. The long-gun registry was an ill-thought-out piece of legislation in answer to the tragedy at École Polytechnique in 1989. It did not stop another similar tragedy at Dawson College in 2006. It will not stop the next deranged individual from attempting a similar attack in the future.

Holding the long-gun registry out as a protector of women is simply not valid. It is a lie. We must do better to protect women and the citizenry of our country by putting meaningful consequences in place for criminal offences and concentrate on stopping the flow of illegal gun traffic over our border into the hands of criminals.

A minimum sentence for gun crimes with minimum time served would serve as a far better solution than the long-gun registry. It is said that the abolishment of the two-for-one sentencing issue will increase incarceration and associated costs an additional \$2 billion, roughly what we've spent on the registry already. Having only registered six million to seven million, with an estimated 17 million total guns in Canada, if that is correct, I wonder how much more money that would cost us. I would rather put the \$2 billion towards keeping those criminals in jail and making sure they could not hurt anybody else.

Sgt Duane Rutledge
Glasgow NS Police Sergeant, as an individual

I'm a member of the Glasgow Police Service in Nova Scotia. I'm in my 30th year of service. I've been a police officer for two-thirds of my life. I have worked general duty, drugs, GIS, major crime, and undercover, and I'm a member of the emergency response team. Presently, I'm a dog handler. Since I was eight years of age, I've handled firearms in either a hunting or a work capacity.

We are here today to discuss the long-gun registry and why I feel that it has not achieved what it proposed to do. In my view, it is a failure both in protecting citizens and in assisting the police in their efforts to keep communities safe and criminals off the street.

I feel that to understand this we must go back to the start, to how it was presented to Canadians by the government of the day. How it was delivered to the public was one of the biggest issues: that it would make society safer by registering. It was rural against urban and non-owners against owners. Its astronomical cost turned even those who were not gun owners against it. Initially, it was looked at as a tax on gun owners. Mostly, it targeted rural Canadians.

It's an unreliable system. Some people registered their weapons in this country, some people registered a few weapons in this country, and a lot of people didn't register any. Now we have an underground economy as a result of that. Also, people who have licences to "possess only" have the ability to possess guns that are not registered to them, the guns of other people. There is no way of tracking that regardless of what system there is, because no one keeps track of those movements.

For the most part, the people this law was targeted at were hunters, sportsmen, collectors, and rural people – basically, honest Canadians, which is most of this country. In my experience, a large number of Canadians did not buy into it on the front end, which has caused the underground economy of weapons. Most importantly, in my experience, criminals will not even participate in the registry.

People who register a gun realize that this does not make it safe for them or for anyone else. Speaking in particular, it is an administrative function. It will not render a gun safe. As for recording the serial number, putting a serial number on it is not adequate to stop a knife or a bat from harming someone.

It's the person with the intent to cause harm who the police are most concerned about. And at the end of the day, in every homicide in this country, the common factor is another human being.

Safe handling and storage, along with education of the public, is the best way to attack this. The most powerful piece of legislation passed in this country in my lifetime was the one that locked up guns and separated ammunition from guns. Also, it was for safe

training and for handling the storage of firearms. In my belief, that's what has caused a drop in a lot of things.

On elimination of private ownership, which is on the minds of most gun owners, I don't believe that's the answer, because only the police, the military, and the criminals then would have guns. I recall my initial reaction back in 1996-97 when this proposed gun legislation became public. I admit that I was a little upset at the onset. I was not positive towards it, and I thought that maybe I should speak to people before I came up here because my views have been fairly steady all along.

So I took the time to speak to colleagues in my policing community, both those on the federal side – for some of them it has been tried to muzzle them – and local police officers. I've talked to the prosecution service. I've talked to a judge. I've talked to the lady who runs our local transition house. I've talked to people who have criminal records to get a view of how they looked at the system.

I knew how I looked at it and I thought that maybe I was missing something. After my conversation with them, it's very clear. Very few of them believe that it has protected the public. There are a few in those numbers who did believe it was helping. The majority of people I spoke to did not believe that.

In my over 30 years of experience, I've encountered numerous situations involving violence. There are far more involving knives and edged weapons than guns. Shotguns and hunting rifles are not a weapon of choice for most criminals because of their actual size; when they are used, they are cut down to become prohibited weapons.

In the 1930s, handguns were registered, and violence in handguns is still growing today. It seems to be one of the biggest rises in this country, the use of handguns in cities, gangs, and organized crime, and automatic weapons.

I have no hesitation in saying that in my opinion, the long-gun registry does not help police stop violence or make these communities safer from violence. And there's no evidence that it has ever saved a single life on its own merits.

I am disappointed that this issue has become so political in this country. I've heard the chiefs of police quoted here and also the Canadian association of professional police. To my knowledge, my members, where I'm at, were not polled by the Canadian Police Association for their viewpoint on this. Many people have been, in an attempt to muzzle them from giving their full views on this issue. It's something that's uncalled for in this country. As I said, everyone should have the ability to speak their opinion, regardless of which side you stand on, and when someone says they represent someone, they should represent those people by actually polling them and getting their full views. I know that on the police level that has not been done, regardless of what people have been told, and there has been a fair amount of political pressure put on people to be quiet about this.

My own chief was outspoken about this. He was scheduled to testify here, and now he's not testifying. I spoke to him personally, but as to why he's not here, you would have to speak to him. I know why he's not here. I came, myself, as an individual to represent the people who I've spoken to.

As I said, in my opinion it has not done what it was set out to do. Inflammatory remarks by members of those organizations referring to policemen who disagree with this as anonymous, donut-eating, sitting-in-the-coffee shop police officers is uncalled for, and there's no need for it, either at this level or at the level of representing the chiefs of police or the Canadian Police Association.

Mr. Mitch McCormick
Former detective, Winnipeg Police Service

I was a police officer with the Winnipeg Police Service for twenty-seven and a half years. During that time I worked in uniform, but the majority of my career was in specialty units as a detective. As a detective, I worked in the vice division, the break-and-enter squad, and the major crimes unit.

In addition to these duties, I was also a member, for 15 years, with the Winnipeg Police Service emergency response unit, the SWAT team. At the time I was a member, it was a part-time team that was called on to attend armed and barricaded incidents as well as to execute high-risk warrants where weapons, and in particular firearms, were suspected of being involved. Before I stepped down from the unit, I was a team leader in charge of the assault team. One of my responsibilities was to develop the entry plan into whatever place or location we were attending to.

Prior to retiring, I was a supervisor in the major crimes unit. The major crimes unit is responsible for investigations such as commercial robberies, serious assaults, attempted murders, kidnappings, and, on occasion, homicides. It also can be assigned to high-profile or sensitive investigations, as deemed by the chief or the executive.

In 2005, while I was in the major crimes unit, I was assigned to such a file as one of the supervisors. It was a half a million dollar break-in at one of the banks in our city, and the suspect had been identified by the original investigators as being a male by the name of Gerald Blanchard. Much has been written about this individual. There have been numerous articles in magazines. CBC's *fifth estate* did a documentary about our investigation. He was successfully prosecuted and convicted for participating in a criminal organization and break-ins to banks in Ontario, Winnipeg, Alberta, and British Columbia.

I mention this individual because early on in our investigation we learned that in 1995 he had been arrested in the United States for stealing a police officer's handgun and a police car. He was subsequently convicted of possession of a firearm by a felon, theft, and escaped custody. He received five years in a Nebraska prison. Upon his release, he was

deported back to Canada, as he was a Canadian citizen. Subsequently, in 2003 he applied for and received a firearms licence. In 2004 he was able to register three semi-automatic rifles and two shotguns.

In 2007, at the completion of our investigation and our wiretap, we arrested Mr. Blanchard and a number of his associates. We also executed warrants in British Columbia, where he had five residences and one storage locker. He had storage lockers in both Alberta and Ontario, which he had rented under one of his more than 32 aliases. In one of the residences and in each of the storage lockers we found firearms and ammunition that he had not registered.

Mr. Blanchard had been provided a firearms licence and was allowed to register firearms. None of the firearms we seized, to my knowledge, were the ones he had registered. His record in the U.S. did not appear to have been discovered. Although he had a minor record for property-related offences here in Canada, he was allowed to register firearms, as I mentioned before.

I would agree if anyone was to say that Mr. Blanchard was not your typical criminal. In particular, he differs from most criminals because he is the rare exception who actually registered a gun. Most criminals never register guns.

This investigation and the details I've told you about are just some of the reasons that some, maybe not all, police officers do not and cannot rely on the registry. The fact that he may have firearms is certainly beneficial when trying to determine the individual you are against, but this information was available prior to the long-gun registry coming into effect.

I would dare say that Mr. Blanchard, had he applied for a firearms acquisition certificate through the old system, would have never been allowed to in fact obtain a licence. He would have had to deal with a police officer who would have done a more in-depth background check, and that does not appear to have been done in this case.

Whether Gerald Blanchard had a firearms licence or had weapons registered to him would not have changed the way in which we went about arresting him or executing the numerous search warrants around the country, as the background that we did on him showed he had the potential to have firearms.

It is the background on the individual, not the number of reports or how many guns a person has, that determines how we do our job.

As a constable, detective sergeant, the sergeant of detectives, and a team leader of an emergency response unit, I can tell you that I never once used the long-gun registry, nor do I know anyone who worked with me or for me who has.

In order to do our job effectively and safely, we do not take anything for granted. Every person I arrested and every building I entered, I suspected there was a person inside who

might be armed with a firearm or a weapon that could harm me. The background on the person was the information I relied on the most. I would never rely on any type of registry to confirm or deny there was a weapon, or numerous weapons, inside. Just knowing a person has a firearm is indication enough for me. Knowing about the person more than knowing how many guns may or may not be at the address, as I said, was what I relied on to formulate my plan.

The truth of the matter is that far more people are killed by knives than by long guns. Just as registering every knife would do nothing to stop violent assaults or murders, neither would registering long guns stop people from committing violent acts.

I'm sure this committee has heard before, and I must say it again: guns don't kill people; people kill people. The long-gun registry, although enacted with good intentions, will not stop gun-related violence.

The Canadian firearms program does have some good educational points, like enabling and promoting responsible firearms use and storage. However, by and large, the registry is ineffective, inaccurate, and could be dangerous if a false sense of security occurs.

Target the person, not the weapon. Do a proper background on people before they get access to guns. We can save lives proactively with police resources effectively targeting criminals.

Chief Bob Rich
Chief Constable, Abbotsford Police Department

It's my firm belief that the registry is horrifically inaccurate.

I talk to my investigators and I talk to my gun expert, and in story after story, whenever they've tried to use it, the information in it is wrong. I believe the reason we haven't gone after these people with lapsed PALs in my province is that when we went out to do it, we found that the information about even which ones were lapsed and what guns existed at that residence was wrong. That's a problem. I have no confidence in the current system.

I also believe, in talking to my own experts – and this is one of those tough ones, like how many grow ops exist in Abbotsford right now – there are well over a million long guns, easily, in Canada that aren't registered in any way, shape, or form. The system has not been successful.

So I find my investigators actually don't rely on the registry. They are obligated to check the system when there's a domestic violence situation, because we should use everything we have, but I think a flawed system is worse than any system. If we can't fix it, with the greatest of respect, the long-gun registry should be scrapped.

Mr. Tony Bernardo
Executive Director
Canadian Institute of Legislative Action

I would like to focus on the current and future costs of the long-gun registry. First, it's important to establish a few basic facts. In 1998 the Canada Firearms Centre (CFC) polling figures showed that there were 3.3 million firearms owners in Canada. When program results indicated poor compliance with the new laws, the CFC manufactured their consent for the new legislation with their fall 2000 survey. They indicated that gun ownership in Canada had declined since 1998 to only 2.3 million gun owners.

Over one million Canadians became instant criminals on January 1, 2001. This was done by asking the poll question, "Does anyone in your household own a functioning firearm?" the nuance – "functioning" – not being understood.

To accept this reduced number, one must also accept, without any evidence at all, that one million firearms owners and 2.87 million firearms vanished in two years. This would surely have been noticed either by used firearms sales or by police turn-ins. That is a sufficient volume of firearms to bury every police station in Canada to a depth of 32 feet.

In 1976 Liberal justice minister Ron Basford tabled a 19-page document in Parliament, showing 11.2 million firearms in Canada, based on import-export, manufacturing, and RCMP data. Using the same methodology, we can make a reasonable estimate of the number of firearms presently in the country, while allowing for lost, destroyed, and misreported firearms. This calculation results in the net figure of about 13.8 million firearms in Canada in the hands of some 3.4 million persons.

Why is this important? Because the Canada firearms program currently reports a total of 7,493,033 firearms registered in the hands of 1,835,319 owners – or approximately half of that estimate. The above numbers of 13.8 million firearms possessed by some 3.4 million are now close to the 3.3 million firearms owners reported in the Canada Firearm Centre's initial 1998 study, each now known to possess four firearms each, for some 13.2 million firearms.

The long-gun registry is by no means complete. It's been stated often that the registry is virtually useless unless all or most of the firearms in it are properly registered. But there's a major discrepancy here between what is and what should be. It seems that numerous Canadians have withdrawn their consent to be governed through a mistrust of the motives of government and authority.

The firearms registry has exceeded the \$2-billion mark, and now supporters of the registry vow it will cost a mere \$4.1 million per year to maintain it and track down and bring the other six million firearms and their owners into the system.

If the total cost is not accounted for, what are we maintaining? A registry of half the guns in Canada, many improperly registered, so a police officer can be assured of maybe a 50-50 chance that the registry's right.

For the registry to achieve its creators' goals, the remaining six million firearms and their owners must be brought into the system. But is that possible? When the registry was created, we warned of unintended consequences. Many experts warned how enforcement of repressive legislation would lead to a breakdown of trust between government, law enforcement, and the firearms community. And now, in economic hard times, untold millions of dollars are contemplated being spent on an error-ridden registry, on registering an unknown number of firearms, into the hands of an unknown number of Canadians.

Two weeks ago, the Canadian Shooting Sports Association conducted an anonymous survey of 2,018 random legal gun owners from across Canada, with the results only being published in this presentation and not before. The survey is accurate to 2.2%, 19 times out of 20. The survey dealt with the respondents' opinions of the relationship between law enforcement and firearms owners, and asked the following questions and recorded the following answers:

1. As a legal firearms owner, who are you more afraid of, police or criminals? The answer: police, 63.93%
2. Since the implementation of the Firearms Act, do you still trust Canada's police? The answer: no, 74.28%
3. Do you believe police associations represent their members' views regarding firearms issues? The answer: no, 94.49%
4. Do you believe police associations are misrepresenting the facts regarding Canada's long-gun registry? The answer: yes, 96.73%
5. Do you believe police associations should be involved in the creation of law? The answer: no, 87.87%
6. Do you believe police target firearms owners? The answer: yes, 83.26%
7. Do you personally know someone unjustly charged with a firearms offence? The answer: yes, 46.29%.

These numbers are shocking. How did people, the most supportive people of the law enforcement community, return these results? How did this serious unintended consequence come about?

Well, after hearing Chief Blair on his preference for the registry over additional personnel, the survey results may take on more meaning.

The spectre of confiscation has never disappeared, and truthfully, why should it? When the Canada Firearms Act was enacted, 585,000 registered firearms were instantly put on

the prohibited list. Recently the RCMP moved two types of registered firearms to the prohibited list, with no explanations to their owners, demanding their surrender or else.

In short, the firearms community has much to fear regarding confiscations. When firearms owners come into your constituency offices and complain about aggressive law enforcement, apparently they're telling the truth: 46% say they personally know someone charged.

How will the remaining millions of unregistered firearms and their owners ever get brought into the system? It's clearly going to require huge commitments of financial and human resources. When one begins with the premise that guns are bad, that legal gun owners are potential criminals, that firearms ownership is, of itself, a questionable activity, the system is doomed to fail. Experts have warned you about this repeatedly.

The long-gun registry is a hugely divisive issue, a decade-long tear in the social fabric of the Dominion. The passage of Bill C-391 is a demonstration of faith in lawful, trustworthy Canadian firearms owners, and would go a long way towards healing this gaping wound in our society.

We are definitely overwhelmingly responsible citizens. That's how we got firearms licences in the first place; half the people out there who don't have them probably couldn't get them.

However, to say that the registration encourages or forces owners to be more responsible is airy-fairy, wishful thinking. You can't take a piece of paper, put it beside a firearm inside the closed doors of one's own domicile, and expect that to have any kind of an effect.

In terms of tracing lost or stolen firearms, it is a federal offence right now to not report a lost or stolen firearm. You must do that whether the gun is registered or not. Very few of those guns traced actually make it back to their owners in spite of the fact that we've had judges issue court orders repeatedly to police services to return the firearms, and they aren't returned.

Canada Firearms Centre (webmaster) John Hicks...says that a 13-year-old with an Internet connection and half an hour can get into the national firearms database; it's that simple. Now that it's been moved under CPIC, well, that's great, but I also have two RCMP access to information requests showing 306 breaches of CPIC between the years 1995 and 2003. If you can get into CPIC, you can get into the gun registry. That's 306 breaches, according to the RCMP. Secure? No, absolutely not. And worse, the information that you can get out of that computer could get somebody killed. There are people out there, bad people, who will kill you for your guns.

Half of the guns aren't in the registry; they're only halfway there. The second half will be harder to get than the first half. If you want the second half – and if you're going to make

this thing work, I think that has to happen – be prepared to spend more than the \$2 billion you spent the first time, because people won't come forward anymore.

A firearms owner is somebody who has never been in trouble with the law before; otherwise they wouldn't have a firearms licence. But when they get into court, they are put through the entire court system like they're John Dillinger. They have a crown attorney pounding on the opposite table, saying, "We want two years of jail time", or three years, or four years. This is someone who has never even been in a courtroom before. They are terrified. They spend \$8,000 or \$9,000 out of their pocket to get acquitted on something like an unsafe storage charge.

They're also given a firearms prohibition immediately. We've even had firearms prohibitions given out to our members for things that were totally unrelated to guns. We had a guy get a dangerous driving conviction and they gave him a firearms prohibition for ten years, which is the equivalent of a lifetime prohibition.

This stuff is happening in courtrooms right throughout Canada. We started out, at the beginning of the Firearms Act, with no such thing in Canada as a firearms lawyer. There are now six of them working full time.

Mr. Greg Farrant
Manager, Government Relations and Communications
Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (has) 100,000 members and 670 member clubs across Ontario.

Going back a few years, Bill C-68 was born out of tragedy and was directly attributable to public concerns in the aftermath of the horrific shooting of 14 women at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal. No right-thinking person should ever underestimate the impact an event of that magnitude must have had on the families of the victims, nor can anyone state with confidence, unless they have walked in their shoes, the emotional costs to family members of other shooting victims, and what impact that has made on their lives.

OFAH supports effective firearms control, much like the former FAC system, that does not unfairly or unnecessarily target legal, law-abiding firearms owners. I must say that the establishment of public policy based strictly upon emotion, not fact, is flawed. In the aftermath of the Lépine shooting, the Coalition for Gun Control convinced the government that more gun control would make us safer. Unfortunately, over the years other instances, like the shootings at Dawson College, Mayerthorpe, and others, have demonstrated the folly of the original belief that the registry of long guns would prevent crime and enhance public safety.

Bill C-68 included a licensing component and a provision for mandatory sentences for the criminal use of a firearm, something that has been ignored, bargained away, traded, and generally abused during sentencing deals for offenders, including consideration of time served and two-for-one deals. It also established a new process for the licensing of firearms owners that uses a series of checks and balances, like a mandatory waiting period, criminal and mental health background checks, and spousal consultation, which, if done correctly, affords the public with a fair degree of certainty that the applicant is safe to own and use firearms. Unfortunately, these checks and balances are not always done.

From the start, many experts both inside and outside of government advised that the long-gun registry would be prohibitively expensive and turn out to be nothing more than hollow political symbolism. In fact, according to Dr. John Dixon, who at the time was senior advisor to the deputy minister of justice, the short answer arrived at by every study of the idea to create a universal registration of firearms by the Department of Justice was that it would be ruinously expensive and could actually yield a negative public security result.

At that time, the president of the Coalition for Gun Control told the CBC that the argument for gun control had never been based on individual cases; it was always based on the general principle that if you have adequate control of all guns, you reduce the chances that dangerous people would gain access to them. You don't eliminate them. At best, that statement is disingenuous.

The entire debate over gun control in this country and the creation of a long-gun registry under Bill C-68 was a direct result of the misguided actions of one lone individual. Prior to that, gun control was not a major public policy issue, and the creation of a regime to regulate legal firearms – in this particular case, long guns – as a means of protecting the public from individuals with a grudge was flawed.

Equally wrong are current suggestions that by simply tweaking the registry to make it work better, it will make us safer and justify its creation. Even a well-run registry won't prevent random violent crime. Believing this ignores the glaring fact that criminals don't register firearms and, worse still, that Bill C-68 did not include a provision under the Firearms Act for the tracking of prohibited offenders, those most likely to commit gun crime.

Over the years, much has been made of the cost of the long-gun registry and the suggestion that the system has cost taxpayers over \$1 billion. In fact, the Auditor General has commented extensively on this aspect of the system. Alarming as these cost overruns have been, perhaps most damning in the Auditor General's reports of both 2002 and 2006 were her comments that the Canada Firearms Centre was unable or unwilling to provide her department with information to substantiate the need for the long-gun registry as a public safety tool. I quote: "The Centre does not show how these activities help minimize risks to public safety with evidence-based outcomes such as reduced deaths, injuries, and threats from firearms."

During recent debates and public statements on Bill C-391, defenders of the long-gun registry have suggested that while the costs over the years have been exorbitant, they are now in the area of \$4 million to \$8 million per year and this is “a tolerable amount.” As a taxpayer as well as a long-gun owner, I find that assumption is breathtaking in its arrogance. We can think of past examples where government misspending of lesser amounts has resulted in the calling of public inquiries. Yet in the case of the long-gun registry, which has experienced a budgetary excess on a monumental scale, some proponents of the system have ignored the financial mismanagement from the start by suggesting that the spending is now under control.

This myopic view also ignores the fundamental precept that if a system does not work, no amount of money spent on it is acceptable. It also ignores the fact that on two occasions a cost-benefit analysis of the registry was completed by the former government, one by former MP Shaughnessy Cohen and the other by current MP and then-minister Albina Guarnieri. Neither review has seen the light of day. Because of this, we are left to conclude that if those reviews had demonstrated the system was providing good return on investment, they would have been trotted out to great acclaim instead of being hidden behind a veil of cabinet confidentiality. In the case of Ms. Guarnieri’s report, which was commissioned by former Prime Minister Martin after he admitted the system was flawed and placed the entire program under review, the recommendations in her report were rejected outright by her cabinet colleagues.

A fundamental flaw with the registry is that the number of firearms and firearms owners in Canada is in dispute, and no accurate assessment of how many guns are actually out there exists. Without knowing that a significant majority of firearms are registered, when so many may remain unaccounted for, how can anyone claim that it works? Since program spending estimates are determined based upon the potential number of firearms in the country, if the numbers are off, costs will fluctuate accordingly.

I think the most interesting comment comes from the former commissioner, Bill Baker, who told the House of Commons justice committee on October 23, 2003, “I don’t think anybody in the country knows exactly how many guns are out there.”

For years, the long-gun registry has been a source of concern in terms of the protection of privacy. The former privacy commissioner expressed concerns over the lack of information security and protections in the system. Both the Auditor General and the RCMP have admitted that the speed of compilation and accuracy of the registry are questionable.

The Coalition for Gun Control scoffed at the suggestion that the system is unsafe and suggested it’s as safe as CPIC, the main law enforcement database used by police across this country. However, according to information provided by the RCMP in response to an access to information request in 2003, there had been at that time 1,495 breaches of the CPIC system, of which 427 were confirmed. Given this, assurances about the efficacy of the system run cold.

Over the last few years, public support for the registry has slipped. Canadians have grown increasingly agitated by the excessive cost of the system and skeptical about the ability of the system to prevent crime and protect the public safety.

I'll speak to a couple of the recommendations we make in our report. We make eight in total, but I'm going to speak to only two of them today. I hope you'll take the opportunity to read the full submission.

The first recommendation is that we need to eliminate the registry for all non-restricted firearms, first and foremost. The passage of an unamended Bill C-391 and the subsequent repeal of the long-gun registry would reduce the burdens on the system. Passage of Bill C-391 will not affect the registration of restricted and prohibited firearms, which will continue. Licensing will continue, as will mandatory background checks. Safe storage, safe transportation, and mandatory firearms training will all continue. The passage of Bill C-391 will impact only on the long-gun registry, nothing more, nothing less.

The second recommendation is the creation of a prohibited offenders registry to track prohibited offenders previously convicted of gun crimes. We should not have a registry in this country of individuals who are allowed to own firearms. We should have a registry of those too dangerous to own firearms. This would be similar to the systems used by police in New York, Baltimore, and Virginia, which have proven to be extremely effective and have resulted in a reduction in the number of firearms-related crimes.

Dr. Gary Mauser
Professor Emeritus
Simon Fraser University, as an individual

I'm a professor emeritus at Simon Fraser University. I am here as an individual criminologist to present facts, not myths; facts, not emotion.

In this presentation I will briefly show how claims made by the opponents of Bill C-391 are blatantly false or misleading. For more details, see my submission on the web at the Social Science Research Network (SSRN).

Suggestions that the long-gun registry is vital to police because authorities consult it 10,000 times a day or more are false. This claim confuses the long-gun registry with the Canadian Firearms Registry On-Line, the CFRO. The Honourable Peter Van Loan, then public safety minister, in November 2009 analyzed the police data and reported that 97% of the time when authorities check the CFRO, they want information about the owner, not the firearm. This concerns licensing, not registration.

Bill C-391 proposes no changes in licensing. The long-gun registry only includes information about the firearm. Contrary to some people who have testified here, it contains nothing about the location of that firearm, nor the owner.

The key question we have to look at is the effectiveness of the registry, not whether guns are dangerous. Focusing on guns is myopic. It ignores the problem of substitution. Murderers are opportunistic. This is particularly true for spousal murderers.

It is disingenuous to claim that the best approach to saving lives was to invent a new bureaucracy for \$2 billion merely to track long guns, and then waste more millions every year to maintain the illusion that we are doing something when demonstrably we are not. There is no convincing evidence supporting the claim that the long-gun registry has had any effect on homicide, suicide, or domestic violence rates. On the other hand, screening and training firearms owners, which we have done since the 1970s, has been shown to be effective.

The long-gun registry was not introduced until 2001 – not in 1995, as some have led you to believe. Since 2001, homicide rates have been essentially flat, even though homicide rates had been plummeting since the early 1990s. The long-gun registry has not saved any lives.

Few guns involved in violent crime have been stolen. Studies differ, but the numbers are as low as 1% and as high as 17%. This is not the bulk of guns used in crime. Almost all of the guns involved in criminal violence have been smuggled. Smuggling is a problem in Canada, Australia, and the U.K. That is the source of crime guns, not your citizens.

Suicide rates have slowly declined over two decades. Firearm suicides have declined as well, but suicides by hanging have soared. Some call this a success. In 1991, 3,500 people took their own life; in 2005, 3,700. The long-gun registry has not saved any lives. Sixteen percent of suicides involve firearms. Almost half of suicides involve hanging. You wouldn't know this from some of the opponents' testimony. Hanging, carbon monoxide poisoning, drowning, and shooting all have nearly identical fatality rates. Eliminate one and the rest remain. But oh, we could have a \$2 billion bureaucracy for each of those.

Some suggest that the costs of the long-gun registry are minimal, but \$4 million a year is a gross underestimate. That would make a massive contribution to programs that are more effective: suicide prevention efforts, community clinics for abused spouses, treatment programs for those with addiction problems. It is disappointing that women's groups, even medical groups, ignore real problems to flog firearm fears.

No jurisdiction anywhere in the world can show that the introduction of new gun laws has been linked to a reduction in murder, suicide, or aggravated assault. See my Harvard paper, which I did with criminologist Don Kates, also available on the web at SSRN. Research by both the National Academy of Sciences and the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta back up my claim.

It is difficult to understand why the chiefs of police support the long-gun registry. The CFRO has so many errors that relying upon it puts the lives of rank-and-file police

members at risk. This is a classic database problem: garbage in, gospel out. The police should know better.

Millions of entries are incorrect or missing. Most striking, less than half of all long guns in Canada are in the registry. The long-gun registry does worse; it misdirects the police. People who have registered their firearms are less likely to be violent than Canadians who don't even own firearms. They should be. Gun owners have been screened by the police since 1979. We are told that 15% of the guns used in homicides are long guns. What is not said is that virtually none were registered. How does the gun registry help?

When I spoke at the Ontario Police College, one of the instructors told me privately that trusting the registry was a way to get good police officers killed. Consider the four RCMP rookies who were gunned down by James Roszko in Mayerthorpe, Alberta. His firearms were not in the registry. Trusting the registry lulled these young people into a sense of safety. The registry showed no guns present: so there must not be any. When they went to his home they were killed. Poor training contributed to the deaths of these rookies. Experienced front line police officers know that when attending to potentially violent situations, they must always assume a weapon could be present. The registry is no help.

Similarly, when enforcing court orders to confiscate firearms, the registry cannot be relied upon to identify firearms at a residence. The RCMP have testified in court they cannot trust the registry. The registry is no help.

Opponents to Bill C-391 argue that the long-gun registry is important because rifles and shotguns can be used in domestic homicide. This is a red herring. The problem is the murder of family members, not the means of killing. Almost all firearms used by abusive spouses to kill their wives are possessed illegally. They are not in the registry.

It has been illegal since 1992 for a person with a violent record to own a firearm. They are not even in the CFRO. There is no empirical support for the claim that the long-gun registry has reduced spousal murders. Knives are used in almost one-third of domestic homicide. Rifles and shotguns, much less often – 18% or so. Why aren't opponents of Bill C-391 concerned about women being killed with other weapons?

Opponents of Bill C-391 claim that spousal murder with guns have fallen threefold since the law was passed, while spousal murders without guns have remained the same. This is false. Spousal murders with and without guns have been slowly declining since the mid-seventies. The long-gun registry, I repeat, was not started until 2001.

Bill C-391 does not change licensing or screening requirements. It only concerns the long-gun registry. Neither the long-gun registry nor licensing is typically useful to police in solving spousal homicides. In almost all cases the accused is immediately identified.

The focus on the long-gun registry is a red herring. It distracts attention from serious problems such as gang crimes. Gang-related homicides have been increasing since the

early nineties. In 2008 about one in four homicides was gang-related. Almost all of these were committed with illegally possessed handguns.

I support gun laws that are based on what has been shown to work, not those based on perceptions or fears. When a government program isn't working, it should be shut down rather than being permitted to drain funds for no good reason except employment.

The claims of the opponents of Bill C-391 are blatantly false or misleading.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner

Member of Parliament who sponsored Bill C-391 (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):

Although I am not a gun owner, I grew up in a loving and peaceful home where there were long guns present. I had no reason to fear guns or view them as bad. I respected their potential to cause a dangerous situation, just as I respected and knew that the sharpness of a knife, the heat from an oven, or the speed of a car could cause harm and even death if not respected and treated accordingly. Some in this room may find that hard to believe. Doesn't everyone fear guns? Aren't all guns dangerous and to be feared? I don't believe so, and I have no doubt that is because I grew up in rural Canada. In rural Canada we view firearms very, very differently than some would in urban Canada.

I will tell you I am very much afraid of guns if they are in the wrong hands. If I were to walk on to any farmyard in my riding and the farmer walked out of his barn holding a rifle in each hand, I would not be the least bit worried or concerned. However, if I were walking home today to my condo in the city of Ottawa and I saw someone walking around waving a gun, I would be very, very concerned. The difference is who is in possession of the firearm.

I introduced this bill because I don't believe firearms are inherently bad. I believe people can be, and in the wrong hands firearms do become weapons. We need to focus on the person, not the firearm. Licensing is the place where real gun control happens. I believe it's vital because it is the only way to help ensure that guns don't get into the wrong hands. That's why my bill does not touch licensing at all.

However, the long-gun registry does not provide any such function. The long-gun registry is not gun control. Clearly the sole result of a long-gun registry has been that it has created an inventory list of long guns in Canada. It only works and it is only complete if all firearms owners comply with it. Of course, we know that hasn't happened, and it never will, because criminals don't register their guns.

Even as a partial inventory list, its only functional purpose has been reduced to being a partial investigative tool. Even as a partial investigative tool, police officers know they cannot rely on the information provided in the long-gun registry portion of the data. Police will all agree, whether they support the long-gun registry or not, that much of the data is inaccurate and out of date. Because of that, and because of their police training,

their tactics when approaching a potentially dangerous situation are not dependent on what the long-gun registry may tell them.

The long-gun registry at best is a minimal and unreliable investigative tool for some police, and at worst it's an expensive and faulty system that does absolutely nothing to make sure that guns do not get into the wrong hands. It's also an extra burden on police who have to enforce compliance with it. The long-gun registry focuses on the long gun, rather than the person, and that's why I believe it needs to end.

Mr. Kevin Gaudet
Federal Director
Canadian Taxpayers Federation

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (is) a national, non-profit, non-partisan organization with more than 74,000 supporters nationwide. We have offices in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Toronto, and Ottawa, and soon to be Atlantic Canada. The mandate of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation is to advocate for lower taxes, less waste, and more accountable government. We've been doing this for a long time, celebrating our 20th anniversary this year. We don't take government money or issue tax receipts.

I'm pleased to speak against the wasteful long-gun registry and for its appropriate elimination, thanks to Ms. Hoepfner's Bill C-391.

All the members of the committee and their parties are to be commended for the open free vote that allowed this bill to come before the committee. Free votes are a key element to a fully functioning democracy. If it wasn't for the support of MPs from the NDP and the Liberal Party, joining the Conservatives in support of this bill at second reading, we wouldn't even be here today having this reasoned discussion. All of these MPs should be applauded for their courage and conviction on this issue.

That same open and free approach, we submit, should be continued in the House when this bill comes up again for vote after third reading. This has been a long-standing privilege that MPs have enjoyed for decades. It is a practice that ought to be followed without exception, after third reading on this bill.

Given the sensitivity of this debate, many have been calling for a compromise on this issue, and I agree. I suggest that Ms. Hoepfner's bill does just that. It provides a reasonable compromise for responsible and trustworthy gun owners, and we support it. This bill is a compromise because many responsible and trustworthy gun owners would have preferred to see more changes regarding hand guns, licensing, and other restrictions. It became clear that a bill with such changes was not going to get majority support from the House, so Bill S-5 was introduced in the Senate. It was deeply flawed, with the possibility of creating a new gun registry in every province. Thankfully, it too would not gain majority support.

As a result, this bill was created. Ms. Hoepfner's bill provides a compromise, having stripped away all other changes save for this one: the elimination of the wasteful long-gun registry. The long-gun registry has been an extremely wasteful and burdensome placebo that provides false impressions of improving public safety. Most importantly, the long-gun registry has been a substantial financial boondoggle since its creation in 1995 by then Minister of Justice Allan Rock. It has cost well beyond \$2 billion, and the final figure is still yet unclear.

Some would like to argue that annual operating costs associated with the registry run at only \$3 million. This is false. This figure does not reflect true fully-loaded direct costing, nor does it factor in indirect costing. In fact, the registry costs taxpayers more than \$106 million per year, and a final figure cannot be known. As the Auditor General has pointed out, not once but twice, for a program that does little to nothing to keep Canadians safe, this is and has been a huge waste of taxpayer money. And all of this wasted spending originates due to misleading information having been given to Parliament when Bill C-68 was passed.

Related, of course, is that Canadians don't even know if the \$2 billion is a complete figure. In 2002, we in the Canadian Taxpayers Federation presented Auditor General Sheila Fraser with a petition of over 14,000 signatures, requesting that her office audit the program. She did so and found astonishing waste.

In the second audit of the program, in 2006, Ms. Fraser found that whenever costs ballooned beyond what Parliament had authorized, or above what the government had publicly promised, the true amounts were hidden from legislators and the public. The Auditor General concludes that hiding these costs broke the law and violated the government's own accounting practices. It also meant that Parliament's constitutional power to decide how taxpayers' dollars are spent was usurped by bureaucrats. This is where the committee ought to be focusing its time more appropriately.

In 2006 my predecessor delivered to then public safety minister Day another petition, this time with over 28,000 petitions, calling for the elimination of the wasteful long-gun registry.

To quote from the Auditor General's report from December 2002, "From the start, insufficient financial information was provided to Parliament." The Auditor General says that Parliament was misled in 1995 to believe that the program would cost a net of only \$2 million. Canadians may never know the full and true cost of this program. We know, thanks to the Auditor General and the CBC, that it has cost over \$2 billion. The program has been disastrously managed. According to the Auditor General, 70% of all money approved by Parliament for the creation and management of this program came from supplementary estimates. As you parliamentarians are aware, this is a clear indication of just how out of control the program has been, as this spending had not been budgeted.

The Auditor General's report is scathing. It outlines waste and mismanagement of immense scale. An important excerpt from the audit reads: "In our view, the financial information provided for audit by the Department does not fairly present the cost of the Program to the government. Our initial review found significant shortcomings in the information the Department provided. Consequently we stopped our audit of this information...."

The Auditor General notes that costs exceeded \$1 billion, according to the department. And she noted that the cost was importantly incomplete.

The auditor also highlights that the program's focus had changed from high-risk firearms owners to excessive regulation and enforcement of controls over all owners and their firearms. The department concluded that, as a result, the program had become overly complex and very costly to deliver, and that it had become difficult for owners to comply with the program. Importantly, the Auditor General notes, "The Department also did not report to Parliament the wider costs of the Program as required by the government's regulatory policy."

As a result, the CBC submitted a freedom of information request to attempt to gain better information on full costing. They ran a story in February 2004 reporting the full wasteful program costs at more than \$2 billion. Canadians likely will never know how much the wasteful program costs to date. Equally, we don't know fully how much it costs annually in direct and associated costs.

The RCMP reports it spends \$8.4 million a year on registration. Leave aside for a moment the credibility of this number. Simply add it to the \$98 million annual operating costs for other related programs, as outlined in the detailed research report from the Library of Parliament in 2003, and the total operating costs for the impact of this wasteful registry exceed \$106 million a year. Of course, we don't even know the real cost to the RCMP, as the ongoing registry's operating costs have been routinely, purposely misrepresented.

In her 2006 audit, the Auditor General points out repeated examples of improper accounting where spending was hidden from Parliament. One example is for \$17 million and another example is for \$22 million. She notes in 2006 that the managers intended to continue with this accounting practice of hiding costs.

Nor do we know the true feeling of the rank and file members of the (police) force. On May 5 of this year, Deputy Commissioner Killam issued an outrageous memo to all commanding officers regarding Ms. Hoepfner's bill, ordering the commanders and all their employees to keep their opinions to themselves and their mouths shut. With this kind of culture of chill in the RCMP, the true costs of managing the wasteful registry may never truly be known, nor may the true attitudes of the front line officers.

The only way to save taxpayers from this ongoing debacle is for this committee and Parliament to put an end to the wasteful long-gun registry.

Mr. Bernard Pelletier
Volunteer Master Instructor in Gun Safety, Security Nature
Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs)

We are resolutely in favour of abolishing the long gun registry. In our opinion, it is of no use. It is just about as useful as changing a flat tire when you run out of gas on the highway.

On the other hand, we are in favour of maintaining the firearms licence, because everyone wanting to obtain a firearms licence is subject to an investigation, and I know that people do a thorough job in that regard. We think that is very important.

As far as we are concerned, the registry ultimately does not target the right people – if you will allow me to make a comparison, it targets honest citizens, whereas criminals do not normally register their firearms.

Someone needs to explain to me, because I still do not understand – despite the sorrow people may feel with respect to the tragedies that have occurred, and believe me, I am personally very alive to that – how a firearms registry would have prevented the events that occurred at Polytechnique and Dawson. I would just remind you that the guns used at Dawson College were all registered. What prevented the incident at Dawson from being even more serious was the fact that there were well trained police officers on site, who responded quickly, based on what we are told.

So, the solution lies elsewhere. The registry will in no way improve public safety. If it is used systematically, it will, in some cases, criminalize honest citizens who will end up with a criminal record. If we are talking about a system that is bureaucratic, heavy handed, and inefficient, particularly in these times of budget cuts, one can only wonder why there would be a desire to maintain it.

One very interesting study was done by Ms. Samara McPhedran, Ms. Jeanine Baker and Ms. Pooja Singh, who compared Australia, Canada and New Zealand. That study found that New Zealand is the country which is achieving the best results when it comes to public safety. And, of the three countries, New Zealand is also the one with the fewest laws and with the least stringent gun control regulations. It does not have a gun registry, and a firearms licence is valid for 10 years, not for five years, as is the case in Canada. In terms of suicides and homicides, it is difficult, looking at the overall numbers, to actually measure the impact of the registry.

This quote is from a book entitled *Guns and Violence* written by Joyce Lee Malcolm. On page 125, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service says this: “Besides what would be gained by making such a register? The Burglar or thief who arms himself with a revolver...would certainly not take out a licence, and Public security against thieves would not be increased by any such modification of Licencing Act.” He said that in 1888. Back then, there may still have been some people with a little common sense.

I would like to move directly now to the Federation's recommendations. The first is obviously that the registry be abolished. The available funds could be recovered and used to fund social programming, particularly to help victims of criminal acts and support underprivileged youth. If adequate steps are taken, it is possible to reduce crime rates in disadvantaged areas, and not only gun crime. There is also a need to provide more financial support to organizations that help people with suicidal tendencies. We also have in mind the development of public education and awareness programs regarding the use of firearms. With respect to promoting safe storage, a study carried out by Professor Jean Caron says that what led to a decline in the suicide rate in my area, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, was the introduction of rules on the safe storage of firearms. We also want to mention the need to combat organized crime.

I would just like to close by mentioning the Small Arms Survey done in 2007. The director in charge of that committee clearly stated in his report that there is no clearly established link between increased numbers of guns and increased violence. As we see it, the firearms licence does what needs to be done. Let us not confuse licensing and registering the actual tool. As we see it, it is simply a matter of common sense.

Ms. Diana Cabrera
Canadian Shooting Sports Association

(I am a) former Canadian national shooting team member and currently on the Uruguay national shooting team. I am also a recipient of the 2009 athlete of the year award for Uruguay.

The Canadian Shooting Sports Association fully supports the proposed changes in this bill. I would like to focus on the effect of the long-gun registration on sports competitors and users.

There is no question that the long-gun registry has deterred individuals from entering the shooting sports. The inclusion of specialized air, target, and muzzle-loading firearms in the registry seems predetermined to achieve those goals. These firearms are virtually never used in crime just by the nature of their physical makeup and cost, yet they are treated to the same legislative zeal as more common firearms.

In Canada, unlike Britain and the United States, exemptions have been made in law for these types of firearms, as many are not even considered to be firearms. This situation often leads to an adult or a coach having to acquire a junior's competition firearm, being responsible for its possession and for the regulatory care of these firearms while in use.

The main issue for competitive participants is the fear of imminent criminality. We may easily find ourselves afoul of uninformed law enforcement or Canada Border Service Agency officers. Any paperwork error may lead to temporary detention, missed flights, missed matches, and confiscation of our property. There is a primal cringe every time I

am asked for my papers, knowing what could be next and fearing what could happen as officers apply personal interpretations to our confusing laws.

Law enforcement and media coverage of firearm issues have made the situation worse. We are treated to spectacular press coverage of very ordinary firearms described as an arsenal, and taking guns off the street when in fact these belong to ordinary firearm owners who had simply failed to renew some paperwork.

How do you think these things make legal firearms owners feel? Am I next? Did I somehow forget some nuance of my paperwork that will bring police to my door? Will my face wind up on the six o'clock news, vilifying me to my friends, my family, and co-workers? Will I be targeted at a traffic checkpoint by a CPIC verification? Firearm owners live with these fears every single day – all this to justify a failed system that never prevented a crime.

Hon. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu
Senator, Conservative Party of Canada

I come from Abitibi-Témiscamingue. For those from the Canadian west or from territories located even further away, Abitibi-Témiscamingue is located in northwestern Quebec, and it is known primarily for hunting and fishing.

You can understand that, very early in my youth, firearms and hunting were part of my family's daily activities – I come from a family of trappers. I am not prejudiced against hunters, far be it from that. That is why I want to clearly indicate to you, at the outset, my position with respect to hunting, among other things. I have never experienced, in my personal or family life, any traumatic events, with the exception of my daughter's murder, committed by a sexual predator, who strangled her to death.

Moreover, my position or the comments that I will be making this afternoon may appear somewhat contradictory, given that I am the founder of an association for persons who have been assassinated or disappeared, namely the Association of Families of Persons Assassinated or Disappeared. Today the association has more than 600 member families who have lost one of their own as a result of a death or murder caused, in particular, by a firearm.

What bothers me a bit in this firearm debate is that, right now, this is more a debate about opinions rather than one based on science. I noted this when, just two weeks ago, I received a group from the Coalition for Gun Control in my Senate office. I realized how difficult it was to discuss or even evaluate the program as such. Anyone who challenged certain aspects of the gun registry was automatically perceived as someone who was insensitive to violence against women, or someone who was almost in the enemy camp. It is unfortunate that, with this issue, you are either for or against, and no one has looked at the middle ground.

This is a very delicate topic of debate, particularly when we question certain aspects of it. As I said at the outset, I am not at all against the free circulation of firearms, far from that; I am in favour of some type of gun control, but not at any cost.

I am no expert, but I am someone who has already lived with firearms and has been with families who have had one of their members murdered. So I am speaking to you based on my experience in this matter.

I view the gun registry first and foremost as a work tool for police officers. This is a tool that is designed to protect them at work, and all of the police forces that have appeared before you have admitted this. This is primarily a tool that protects police officers. I believe that there is even a guideline obliging police officers to check the gun registry to determine whether or not there may be any firearms located on the premises they are to visit. When we hear that 10,000 checks are made daily, it is because the police officers have to do so to protect themselves.

I have some serious questions as to whether or not the gun registry can be viewed as an effective tool to prevent crime or murder. There is no clear scientific evidence demonstrating that the gun registry has had an impact on crime prevention.

The drop in the number of homicides and suicides in Canada started occurring in 1979. If we look at the homicide and suicide curve, we can see that it has declined since 1979. The registry came into effect in 1992 and it has not in any way triggered a sharper decline. The decline has been maintained at a constant level regardless of whether there was a registry or not. Hence, before we can claim that this tool has resulted in a drop in the crime rate, we need to be very cautious.

What I'm trying to do is trigger a debate or some thought on crime prevention. In Canada, the murder rate is dropping off sharply, as are gun-related homicides. However, the number of homicides committed using either a handgun or a knife increased by 35% since 2000. Missing persons cases rose by 40% over the past six years. I am wondering about the expenses incurred to maintain the Canadian Gun Registry. We are talking about millions of dollars here. Is this the most effective place to invest in order to prevent crime? Firearms represent only 2.4% of the weapons used in homicides.

We must stop exaggerating the importance of the Canadian Gun Registry when it comes to crime prevention. When we examine the declining curve of homicides and suicides, which has remained constant since 1979, we realize that the registry has not triggered an even quicker decline in these rates.

As a senator, I am asking myself the following question: if we need to invest tens of millions of dollars in crime prevention, would we not be better off investing this money somewhere else rather than in the registry, given that we have not been able to demonstrate that it has had an impact on crime prevention?

Hon. John Edzerza
Minister of Environment, Government of Yukon
Member of the Legislative Assembly (McIntyre-Takhini)

I speak on behalf of Yukoners to ensure that the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry comes to an end. The registry forces law-abiding citizens to register their tools, which are used in many cases to fulfill their responsibilities in their everyday lives.

The registry targets people who live off the land – first nation citizens, ranchers, farmers, hunters, and outfitters – not the intended criminals. Registration is only for those who respect the law. People who plan to commit a crime using a weapon will not register the gun.

The legislation that created the registry hoped to reduce violent crime. Usually handguns and other smuggled firearms are used in organized crime and drug deals, not hunting rifles. Domestic violence and violence against women is a problem in our society. Registering hunting rifles, unfortunately, will not change this dysfunction. Most violence against women is usually as a result of physical force.

In Canada, most murders are committed with a sharp-edged weapon. In 2008, a knife was used against 6% of all victims of violent crime. In comparison, 3% of violent crimes were committed with a blunt club or blunt instrument, and 2% with a firearm. These data are from a Statistics Canada article, “Knives and violent crime in Canada, 2008.”

I’m here to talk to you today about life in Canada’s north and how long guns are a part of everyday life for many Yukoners. In rural Yukon, carrying a rifle may be the only defence against attack from many predators. The rifle is a tool to be used by rural citizens to safeguard their lives when going about supporting their families, prospecting, fishing, and gathering other food sources. To many Yukoners, a rifle is a means to feed their children, elders, and, in some cases, their community.

Mr. Alain Cossette
Director General
Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs

Our organization represents hunters and fishers in Quebec, and I am Executive Director of the Federation. It also represents volunteers in the field. The Federation has a presence in every region of Quebec and represents more than 200 associations. Presidents in each of the 14 regions are appointed by their local associations, which ensures that there is appropriate feedback. There is also a board of directors composed of 21 members, the chair of the board being elected at the annual general meeting.

Our mission is to ensure that hunting and fishing will continue to be practised as traditional and heritage activities for generations to come. In terms of our engagement in the area of firearms, in 1968, the provincial government agreed to introduce a pilot

training program for a three-year period that would force hunters to take safety courses. We did that throughout the three years of the pilot program; the results were excellent and, since 1972, this has been mandatory in Quebec.

I would just like to point out here that we have always been in favour of firearms licensing. That is the key, in our opinion. People confuse firearms licences and firearms certificates. There are 500 volunteer instructors in the field, including 80 Aboriginals, and 16,000 new hunters are trained every year in Quebec. The number of hunters in Quebec is on the rise. Women represent 25% of those taking the courses.
