

Don't Touch the Firearms Registry

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Mr. Stephen Harper,

As a centre for the prevention of suicide, our organization would like to inform you that we are absolutely against the parliamentary initiative C-301, put forward by your member Gary Breitkreuz, a proposal to scrap the long gun registry and to prolong the duration of gun licenses and to weaken control on restricted firearms (handguns and semiautomatics).

All firearms are potentially dangerous. The fact that there are more uncontrolled firearms in circulation is a real menace to public security, particularly so when this aggravates the situation increasing the risk of violence and suicide.

1) Abolition of the registry for rifles and shotguns.

Even though handguns are a special problem in urban situations, it is rifles and shotguns which are most used in killings in rural areas. It is also these types of firearms which are more often found in the home and are frequently used in cases of domestic violence, suicides and the murder of police officers.

2) Extending license renewal times.

Drivers licenses, health cards, passports and even dog licenses all have to be renewed periodically so that the data base is kept current. Updating information on gun owners contributes to the security of the population. Granting methods and license renewals are essential for the following reasons:

- Reduces the chance that firearms don't fall into the hands of individuals who are at risk to themselves and to the public (the present system requires spousal permission, reference checks and violence risk assessment).
- Insures that pertinent information recorded on the registry (name, address, etc.) is correct in order to avoid tragic consequences, such as the killing of Daniel Tessier, a Laval police officer.
- Reduces the risk of domestic violence and suicide, which can become aggravated in these times of economic turmoil and mounting difficulties (again underlining the importance of the granting and renewal of licenses).
- Recall that the 56,5 million it costs to run the granting and renewing of licenses accounts for a large segment of the firearms program, in part because the Conservative government abolished, or reimbursed, fees.

3) Relaxation of controls on the owners of handguns and semiautomatic firearms.

In spite of Canadians favouring a tightening of controls on handguns and semiautomatics, since 2005 we have seen the registration of more than 60,000 of these types of firearms. More and more military, or tactical type semiautomatic weapons, not for target shooting and banned in other countries, are being sold to Canadian civilians. Beyond wanting to eliminate many firearms control measures, the proposed law would soften those for these arms as well.

We cannot endorse such measures, especially if we wish to prevent the kinds of tragedies involving such weapons. Think about what happened in 1992 at the University of Concordia, the many cases of domestic violence such as what happened in Vernon British Columbia, at Dawson College in 2006 and on Young street in Toronto in January 2008.

The Canadian Firearms Act has saved lives. Everywhere in the country, the police, public health specialists, women's groups, violence prevention and victim's organizations support the Act as it is without modifications.

As Prime Minister, it is your duty to place the security of Canadians first and foremost.

Louise Lévesque

General Director JEV1 (Eastern Township (Qc) Suicide Prevention Center)