

Tory MP keeps mum at pro-gun bash Breitkreuz shows up for lobby group's dinner after speech and weapon raffle are called off

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Conservative MP Garry Breitkreuz attended a gun-lobby dinner last night in Mississauga where a Beretta handgun was the advertised raffle prize – despite misgivings from the Prime Minister's Office and gun-control advocates.

The pro-gun Saskatchewan MP was originally scheduled to be the keynote speaker at the annual general meeting and dinner for the Canadian Shooting Sports Association, but the invitation was withdrawn last month after Breitkreuz faced harsh criticism. Breitkreuz declined to comment last night, but organizers told the Star he was attending as a private member of the association.

The association's executive director, Tony Bernardo, added the handgun would not be a raffle prize.

"You can always buy them legally, of course," he said. "We're having a private conference that discusses association issues. Those issues are the same as every other not-for-profit association faces."

Last month, a spokesperson said Prime Minister Stephen Harper did not endorse the idea of an MP being a keynote speaker at an event where a handgun was the prize. Wendy Cukier, president of the Coalition for Gun Control, said she wasn't surprised Breitkreuz showed up at the event.

"The link between Breitkreuz and the Canadian gun lobby is no secret. What's more surprising is the PMO trying to distance itself from the gun lobby and raffle after working so closely with them for so many years," Cukier said.