

Gun control advocates fight 'misinformation'

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[CBC News](#)

Twenty years after the École Polytechnique massacre in Montreal, survivors, victims' families, police officers and others are fighting what they are calling a campaign of misinformation about the federal long-gun registry.

The groups, which also included advocates working on suicide prevention, appealed to the public to support the existing registry in a news conference in Montreal Tuesday.

A private member's bill that would eliminate the requirement to register rifles and shotguns passed first reading in the House of Commons on Nov. 4.

The minority Conservative government was able to get Bill C-391 approved thanks to the support of some Liberal and NDP back-benchers.

Those opposition MPs were swayed by a misleading campaign promoting the bill, says Wendy Cukier, president of the Coalition for Gun Control.

"I think if you are in Quebec, it is hard to understand what is going on in the other provinces," said Cukier. "There is a highly motivated and well-resourced gun lobby getting a lot of advice and support from the National Rifle Association in the United States."

The Conservative Party has also invested in a publicity campaign that has put pressure on opposition MPs to support the bill, Cukier said.

"People keep talking about the 'billion-dollar registry' — which implies to many Canadians that if we eliminate the registration of rifles and shotguns, we'll somehow save billions of dollars," she said. "As the police have said, getting rid of the ... [registry] will save at most \$3 million a year."

Useful to police

The registry is a good tool for police officers and is used on average 11,000 times a day, said Denis Côté, president of the Quebec Federation of Municipal Police Officers.

Côté said he can't understand the logic of those fighting for its abolition.

"I go hunting," he said. "But people that go hunting, they have driver's licences; they do have to register their ATV; you need a permit to drive a boat. So, how come when it comes to [registering] your firearm, it is so complicated?"

"It is a privilege to own a firearm."

Sylvie Haviernick's sister, Maud, was killed in the Dec. 6, 1989, massacre at the École Polytechnique. That day Marc Lépine walked into a classroom at the engineering school and used a .223-calibre Sturm, Ruger rifle to shoot 14 women before turning it on himself.

Haviernick said Tuesday that she doesn't think many Canadians were aware of Bill C-391 until it was adopted.

"I was shocked ... when I saw the results of the vote," she said. "But I think that maybe the results forced people to move."

Haviernick said she is hopeful the bill will help reignite the calls for gun control that led to the creation of the gun registry in the wake of the Polytechnique shooting.

"It was not a question of [political parties]. It was a question of national consensus," Haviernick said. "I truly believe that, again, the answer will come from us ... the people."

"What we need to do is ... show what we gained over time and what we risk in the future [by losing the registry]."

Bill C-391 now heads to a House of Commons committee for review.