

Missing the mark

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THE federal government's push to kill the long gun registry is irrational.

The private member's bill to abolish the controversial database, widely supported by Conservatives and by a handful of opposition MPs, will achieve nothing beyond buying a few rural votes.

As its critics are quick to point out, the registry -- basically an electronic list -- cost taxpayers a mind-boggling \$1 billion to create. True, this is as inexcusable as it is incomprehensible, but it is not by itself a reason to end the project. At this point, the registry costs just \$3-4 million annually to maintain -- peanuts by federal standards. Its death will save that relatively small sum, but it will not recoup the initial outlay. It will just mean that, rather than a billion-dollar database, that initial outlay will have bought us nothing.

Police in B.C. have made it clear they want the registry to stay. Officers here search it close to 3,000 times daily in the course of their work. Surely, as the frontline workers most likely to come face to face with a gun on the job, they are best positioned to judge the registry's value -- and in their estimation it's worthwhile.

The only people who adamantly oppose the database are gun owners themselves or the ideologues who support them. Registering a gun is no more onerous or unfair than registering a vehicle -- some people just don't want to do it. The registry is being killed for no other reason than to appease this group. There is nothing in it for the rest of us except an erosion of public safety.

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