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Cottage Country Now

NDP urges MPs to keep gun registry

(Editor's note: This is a copy of a letter sent to federal MPs and forwarded to the Almaguin News with a request it be published.)

As the federal NDP candidate for Parry Sound-Muskoka, I am writing to urge you to vote against Private Member's Bill C-391, which would eliminate the registration of long guns and the records it currently holds.

The Firearms Act distinguishes Canada from our neighbour to the south. It reflects a disposition toward the public good. It is supported by millions of Canadians and dozens of organizations, including the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, as I'm sure you know.

As a former ER nurse, I can certainly attest to the suffering and death caused by firearms. And I can appreciate the assistance a registry provides to frontline staff dealing with mental illness and violence, domestic or otherwise. All of this is well documented.

Nevertheless, I cannot be unaware of the opposition in Northern Ontario to the long-gun registry. Owners of firearms complain that the process is cumbersome, that they feel targeted, even criminalized, by the requirements both to obtain a license and to register all guns in their possession. During the 2008 election, I spoke with self-described NDP supporters in Nipissing-Timiskaming who planned to vote Conservative based on the gun registry issue and no other.

But dismantling the gun registry is not the way to address their concerns. Nor is allowing the matter to be defined as urban vs. rural, as if all the violence is in the cities or caused by handguns. In fact, studies conclude that Northern Ontario communities have higher rates of long gun ownership and gun-related injuries than the provincial average (CAEP presentation, May 13, 2010).

The gun registry is a socially responsible, if imperfect, creation that has contributed to improved public safety by reducing gun-related suicides and homicides since its inception.

That seems to be the perception of the majority. Please don't let a small but vocal minority government undo a fundamentally positive direction for Canada.

Dianna Allen
Federal NDP Candidate, Parry Sound-Muskoka