

Bill would 'dismantle gun control,' critics fear

By BRENDA BRANSWELL, The Gazette
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A private member's bill before the House of Commons that calls for scrapping the long-gun registry would effectively gut gun control in Canada, a lobby group warned yesterday.

"This bill is (about) much more than eliminating the requirement to register rifles and shotguns," said Wendy Cukier, co-founder and president of the Coalition for Gun Control.

"It basically dismantles gun control in Canada," she said.

When his bill was tabled last month, Saskatchewan MP Garry Breitkreuz said in a statement that it was time to pull the plug on "this useless money pit" because the registry hadn't saved a single life since it was introduced.

"I believe Canadians would rather see their tax dollars keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and gangs, instead of trying to control law-abiding citizens," said Breitkreuz, who also noted the cost of the registry had spiraled out of control.

The coalition argues that rifles and shotguns account for a significant proportion of guns seized in crimes even in large urban centres. It also contends that the bill relaxes controls on restricted and prohibited weapons. And it objects to extending gun licences to 10-12 years from the current five-year duration.

Cukier also noted that the Ruger Mini-14 used by gunman Marc Lépine during the Polytechnique massacre would no longer have to be registered if the bill is passed.

Breitkreuz could not be reached for comment yesterday.

"As it's written right now I certainly couldn't support it," said Liberal MP Mark Holland, the party's public safety and national security critic, who also contends the bill would gut the registry.

The bill is expected to go to second reading this spring when MPs vote whether to send it to committee for study.

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