

## **Cost of long-gun registry a fraction of what Tories claim, report shows**

*Government was aware during House debate that scrapping program would produce only modest savings*

**By: Gloria Galloway, The Globe and Mail**

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An independent cost-benefit analysis of Conservative legislation to kill the federal long-gun registry has found the public savings could amount to just over \$1.5-million annually - and that there are only two good reasons to scrap the program.

One is a reduced burden on gun owners. The other is a lighter load for taxpayers.

But in contrast to the tens of millions of dollars in savings estimated by the Conservative government, the 2009 analysis for the RCMP by Peter Hall of the management consulting firm Pleiad Canada Inc., found that scrapping the long-gun registry would save between \$1,570,000 and \$4,025,000 a year.

Those numbers were first made public in August when they were inserted toward the end of a 70-page evaluation of firearms programs conducted by the RCMP. Mr. Hall's report, which was obtained by The Globe and Mail using Access to Information legislation, provides an explanation of how the savings were calculated.

While Mr. Hall could identify just two benefits to the legislation to kill the gun registry, he found 20 "costs," including increased risks to the public and police, less-efficient investigations and less accountability.

Opposition MPs said this week that Mr. Hall's analysis would have been useful had it been available in September when Parliament was in the middle of a heated debate in advance of a vote that ultimately defeated an attempt by Conservative backbencher Candice Hooppner to kill the registry.

The report says that in 2007-08, the cost of administering the Canadian Firearms Centre was \$61.72-million. The firearms-licensing program accounted for \$50.56-million of that, while the cost of registering all firearms, including restricted and prohibited weapons as well as long guns, was \$11.16-million.

"So those are the kinds of numbers from an independent agency that the Conservatives wouldn't want floating around because it puts the lie to the [claim of] hundreds of millions of dollars being spent on the long-gun registry as opposed to where most of the money is being spent, which is on licensing," said Joe Comartin, the NDP justice critic.

The Conservatives intended to continue the licensing program even if they had managed to kill the long-gun registry. And there would still have been costs entailed in registering restricted and prohibited weapons.

"The government held out a variety of figures in the \$70-million, \$80-million, I heard \$100-million range when, clearly, they had a report that said it was nothing like that," said Mark Holland, the Liberal public safety critic.

"They buried this so we didn't have it for the debate," he said. "They were trying to get the House to vote with blindfolds on."

The Conservatives, meanwhile, are standing by their assertion that the registry is both costly and useless.

"This September's very close vote is the furthest we have come to dismantling the \$2-billion wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry," said Christopher McCluskey, a spokesman for Public Safety Minister Vic Toews. "We will continue to work to scrap it."

Mr. Hall concluded that if legislation to scrap the long-gun registry were passed, and if staff were no longer required to classify guns to determine whether they are non-restricted, restricted or prohibited weapons, the firearms program could eliminate 63 full-time positions. That would save taxpayers \$3,360,000 in salaries and benefits, and there would be an additional savings of \$650,000 in information technology costs.

But if some of the people now employed to register long guns were still required to classify the weapons, said Mr. Hall, the savings would amount to just \$1,570,000 annually.

System enhancements that would be required in the first year after the program was scrapped would reduce those savings by \$375,000, the report said.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/cost-of-long-gun-registry-a-fraction-of-what-conservatives-claim-report-shows/article1807833/>