

Police need gun registry: St-Pierre

Keeps officials, victims safer, minister says

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The federal gun registry has improved security for police and victims of conjugal violence and should be maintained, Quebec's minister for the status of women said yesterday.

Christine St-Pierre said that before responding to 911 conjugal violence calls, police use the registry to check if there are firearms in the home and, if so, what kind.

If Ottawa does away with the national registry, the lives of Quebec police and domestic violence victims will be unnecessarily put at risk, St-Pierre said.

The minister made the comments at a Montreal news conference where she unveiled the latest phase of Quebec's public awareness campaign against conjugal violence.

The provincial government has spent \$4.2 million over the past three years on multimedia initiatives and other programs aimed at educating the public about domestic violence and how to stop it.

Over the next month, the campaign will include television and radio spots in French and radio advertisements in English in which men speak out against conjugal violence.

New features will be added to the government website

www.violenceconjugale.gouv.qc.ca and posters are slated to go up in washrooms in bars and restaurants across the province.

Last year, there were 17,321 criminal offences in Quebec that occurred in a conjugal violence setting, including 11 murders and 27 attempted murders.

After the news conference, St-Pierre focused on the fate of the gun registry, set up in the wake of the massacre of 14 women at École Polytechnique on Dec. 6, 1989.

Since a private member's bill calling for its abolishment was passed in the House of Commons earlier this month, Quebec police, victims'-rights groups and other stakeholders have voiced their opposition.

The National Assembly passed a unanimous motion reiterating its support for the registry.

Yesterday, St-Pierre initially said Quebec Public Security Minister Jacques Dupuis had requested that Ottawa transfer the money it uses to manage the registry in Quebec so that Quebec could maintain the registry itself.

However, she later retracted that statement through an aide, who said the minister meant to say Quebec wants Ottawa to maintain the gun registry.