

City police oppose dismantling gun registry

Posted By GORD YOUNG, THE NORTH BAY NUGGET

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Police will lose a valuable tool if the federal long-gun registry is dismantled, says the city's deputy police chief.

The gun registry is a very important tool for us," Al Williams said Thursday, a day after MPs put a bullet in the much-maligned long-gun registry, voting 164-137 in favour of scrapping the system.

The vote means the bill has been approved in principle. It will go to committee for further study before a third vote, then sent to the Senate for final approval.

Williams said city police officers use the registry on a daily basis, querying the system to determine if guns may be in a home where violence is expected or may be taking place.

He said the registry is also used to trace the origins of firearms that may have been seized or used in a crime.

It's an issue of public safety," said Williams, noting information provided by the registry helps protect officers and the community.

He said there are more than 10,000 daily queries to the registry by police across the country. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police will advocate the merits of the registry on behalf the local service, Williams said.

This is about public safety. The registry has made Canada a safer country," said the association in a release this week. The registry has saved lives. We lose it at our peril."

The federal requirement to register shotguns and hunting rifles, initiated by the Liberals in 1995, has been criticized as a wasteful exercise that does not reduce firearms-related crime.

The bill to abolish the 14-year-old registry, C-391, passed with the support of 21 Liberal, NDP and independent MPs, including Nipissing-Timiskaming MP Anthony Rota.

Rota said scrapping the registry addresses the issue of criminal liability for owners of unregistered hunting rifles or shotguns -- something he has never supported.