

## **Gunning for truth Viewpoint: Waterloo Region Record**

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THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

The federal Conservatives have some explaining to do about the way they apparently hid a 2008 report on the gun registry until after a key vote in the House of Commons.

Now, this strategy seems to have backfired on the government.

However, recently released documents show that William Elliott, the head of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, sent a copy of the report to the minister on Sept. 16, which would mean the minister was supposed to have released the report by Oct. 22.

That would have given the parliamentarians a lot of time to review the report's contents.

The report certainly makes interesting reading, and it would also have given the Conservatives reason to want to hide it.

It says police use of the gun registry increased by almost 900,000 queries in 2008 to reach a record high 3.4 million queries.

That is a phenomenal increase and good evidence to explain why police departments favour having the gun registry.

This revelation is embarrassing to the Conservatives because they pride themselves on being in support of law and order, yet the party has traditionally opposed the gun registry started by former prime minister Jean Chretien's government in 1995.

The act that set up the registry requires owners of shotguns and rifles to have licences, and to register their firearms.

Perhaps if the government had not kept the report under wraps, the vote on abolishing the registry would have been closer.

Perhaps some of the Liberals and New Democrats who voted with the Conservatives would have voted differently. The vote was 164-137 in favour of scrapping the registry.

Fortunately, that vote was only second reading. The Commons is expected to hold a final vote later this year.

There is no question that the gun registry is not popular in some rural areas of Canada.

The arguments against it are weak, however.

The administrative problems that plagued the registry in its early years appear to have been solved.

The price tag for operating the registry is now under control.

Speaking as head of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Toronto police Chief Bill Blair called the registry "efficiently run." He added, "They operate the entire long-gun registry for about \$4 million a year."

That seems like a good deal, the type of deal that the Conservatives should be supporting. The gun registry may not be perfect, but, at the very least, it provides information that is helpful to police officers who are trying to protect our society.

Surely the Conservatives can see some value in that.