

For Immediate Release:

Families and Small Communities Pay A Terrible Price for Gun Violence: "Save the Firearms Registry," say Donna French, Karen Vanscoy, Margaret Pinard and Priscilla de Villiers

St. Catharines, Ontario, September 17, 2010 –

Victims of violence are calling on politicians to save the firearms registry.

"The recent suggestion that the support for the registry is driven by 'Toronto elites' should not be dignified with a response," said founder of Canadians Against Violence (CAVEAT), Priscilla de Villiers. "Rates of firearm death and injury are higher in rural areas because guns are more readily available. Women and police officers are more likely to be killed with firearms in smaller communities. Rates of suicide and accidents are also much higher."

On Sept. 22, 2010, Opposition Members of Parliament will try to save the firearms registry by killing Private Member's Bill C-391 that would end the registration of seven million rifles and shotguns. Policing and public safety experts across the country claim lives are at stake if the registration of rifles and shotguns is ended. Recently, Welland Member of Parliament Malcolm Allen pledged to stand up for safety and support the registry reversing his previous position that supported the Conservative Private Member's Bill. However, other MPs in the Niagara Region will vote to end the registration of rifles and shotguns in spite of the support of local victims, police and women's groups.

Margaret Pinard, formerly of Welland, Ontario, whose daughter **Carrie Lynn Pinard** was killed by a shotgun in Toronto on August 10, 1992 said, "Carrie was in the right place at the wrong time. Shots were fired in the hallway of her apartment building, shattering through her apartment door. Carrie was killed and our lives, our family, our future changed forever. It still feels like yesterday. The shotgun used in this murder was never found. Please ensure that all gun owners are licensed and all guns are registered. We must do everything we can to stop gun violence." The Carrie Lynn Pinard Community Centre in Welland was named in her memory.

Karen Vanscoy's 14-year-old daughter Jasmine was shot and killed by an acquaintance using a stolen gun in St. Catharines, ON, on Sept. 24, 1996. "Rather than catering to the opponents of the law, who will never be satisfied until gun control is dismantled, we need political leaders who are prepared to address the myths head on, state the simple facts: the registry works," Vanscoy said. "It is a good investment. Virtually every major public safety organization in the country has maintained that the registry helps reduce the chances dangerous people will get guns by holding gun owners accountable. Jasmine was killed with a handgun but all guns are potentially dangerous and all guns should be registered."

Priscilla de Villiers, whose daughter **Nina** was abducted from a Burlington tennis court and killed with a legally owned unrestricted rifle in 1991. The killer was out on bail on violence offenses for sexual assault on a stranger at gunpoint using the same gun. She noted that the inquest into the killing recommended licensing all gun owners and the registration of all guns. "During this whole debate, there has been virtual silence on the victims' perspective," she said. "People talk about gun owner rights. What about our rights and the rights of our children to be safe. Every group concerned about crime prevention and public safety supports the registry. We are calling on Canadians to make their voices heard."

Victims rights advocate from St. Catharines, **Donna French's daughter Kristen** was abducted and murdered in 1991. Said French, "My daughter Kristen was not killed with a firearm but I know the agony of losing a child and I stand with the victims of gun violence to defend the registry. We want to make it harder, not easier, for dangerous people to get guns. Politicians should put the priority on public safety. The costs of maintaining the registry are modest, the risks of eliminating are enormous."

For more information and interviews in St. Catharines contact Sarah Hayward, sarah@responsiblecommunications.ca, 416-505-0523 or Priscilla de Villiers, 416 660 8911 (cell)

Background:

Bill C-391 passed second reading in February when eight Liberals and 12 NDP members voted with the Conservatives. Since then, Liberal and Bloc Québécois leaders have promised that their MPs will vote to defeat this Bill. NDP leader Jack Layton is allowing his MPs to vote for or against the Bill, although the number of NDP MPs who are pledging to defeat Bill C-391 has grown. However, the numbers remain too close to call and the gun lobby still claims it still has enough votes to move Bill C-391 forward. The Conservative party, the gun lobby and groups like the Canadian Taxpayers Federation are investing millions in advertising and billboard campaigns against the registry even though a recent RCMP report shows that it is working and that the registration of rifles and shotguns costs less than \$4 million per year.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Police Association, the Canadian Association of Police Boards, the Canadian Public Health Associations, Canadian Paediatric Association, Canadian Auto Workers Association, Canadian Labour Congress and major groups focused on suicide and injury prevention groups from across the country support the registry.

On May 26, 2010, Ms. de Villiers presented her brief, **The Costs of Gun Violence and the Impact on Victims**, which was supported by several victims organizations and victims from across the country including:

Groups

- Arlene Gaudrault, President of the Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes, Montreal, Quebec
- Audette Shephard, mother of Justin, shot and killed in June 2001, and Founding Member of United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere, Toronto, Ontario
- Louise Russo, accidentally shot and paralyzed by a stray bullet in April 2004, founder of Louise Russo W.A.V.E (Walk Against Violence Everywhere), Toronto, Ontario
- Joe Wamback, President and Founder of Canadian Crime Victim Foundation, Newmarket, Ontario
- Heidi Illingworth, Executive Director of Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, Ottawa, Ontario

Individuals

- Sandra Black, mother of Vikki Ferrando, shot and killed in BC by her common-law spouse with his father's rifle, "borrowed" after heavily drinking in 1999
- Carol Denomy, daughter of William and Helene Regier, killed by a stolen farmer's gun from a neighbouring barn by a man wanted for murder in Huron County, Ontario, in July 2007
- Bob and Dianne Pajkowski, parents of Melissa, abducted in her pyjamas from her home and murdered in April of 1999 with a legally acquired, but not registered, handgun by her ex-boyfriend who had an extensive history of suicide ideation (starting at age 7) as well as multiple unsuccessful suicide attempts
- Bob and Marg Pinard, parents of 18-year-old Carrie, shot and killed in 1992 in her apartment by young offenders armed with a sawed off shotgun after a gang related fight broke out in the hallway. Shots were fired that missed the intended target, instead shattering through the door of her apartment. Where did the gun come from? No one knows. Where did the gun end up? No one knows. It was never found
- Karen Vanscoy, mother of Jasmine, 14, shot and killed in St. Catharines, Ontario, by a 17-year-old family acquaintance with a stolen handgun in September 1996
- Jean-François Larivée, husband of Maryse Laganière, shot and killed at Montreal's École Polytechnique in December 1989 by a Ruger Mini 14
- Sylvie Haviernick, sister of Maud, shot and killed at Montreal's École Polytechnique in December 1989 by a Ruger Mini 14
- Susanne Jessop, mother of Lee Matasi, shot and killed in Vancouver, British Columbia, in December 2005
- Elaine Lumley, mother of Aidan who was shot and killed while visiting Montreal, Quebec, in November 2005