

Coalition for Gun Control now cautiously optimistic gun registry will be saved

Toronto, September 14, 2010- News today that NDP leader Jack Layton has enough support in his caucus to save Canada's gun registry, was welcomed by gun control supporters. The Coalition for Gun Control congratulated Jack Layton, the party leader for his hard work in persuading his caucus to kill private member's Bill C-391 at a critical vote Wednesday September 22. The bill would have ended the need to register 7 million firearms in Canada, including the powerful Ruger-Mini 14 used in the Montreal massacre.

"I know Mr. Layton has found it really difficult to navigate the politics on this issue given the intense feelings among some of his caucus members and his commitment to avoid whipping the vote. We are relieved that he has managed to get enough of them on side to defeat this dangerous legislation. Clearly he has listened to victims of gun violence, women's organizations, police and labour organizations as well as long time NDP members who believe the registry is important to the safety of Canadians. We know members of his caucus who are changing their position will be subjected to intense pressure by the gun lobby. The majority of Canadians support the registry but they must do everything they can do to support those who support the registry. Even with the additional NDP votes, the result is too close to call. A week is a long time in politics."

"Of course, it's not over until the vote is taken, and Harper's government will doubtlessly have other tricks up its sleeve, but we are much more optimistic that this dangerous bill will be defeated with Mr. Layton's help. We have been fighting an uphill battle. The Canadian gun lobby is being coached by the National Rifle Association, the most powerful lobby in the world, and supported by the conservative marketing machine. Critical information from the RCMP was suppressed before the last vote. We need to continue to work to ensure Canadians have the facts and understand what is at stake."

"Leaders of the Liberal Party and the NDP have proposed a number of measures that will accommodate concerns of rural people and gun owners without compromising public safety. We support waiving of registration fees and adding a third non-criminal charge for first time failure to register a firearm (provided criminal charges would remain an option for more serious offenses). Certainly there are aspects of the implementation of the law that can be improved to accommodate legitimate interests. But we cannot address these issues if Bill C-391, to scrap the gun registry, passes."

"At the end of the day we all want to make it harder not easier for dangerous people will get access to guns. We know without question that the firearms registry never killed anyone. Getting rid of it may. Given the terrible costs of gun violence and the suffering of the families that I have personally witnessed we simply cannot afford to take that risk. Stephen Harper claims to care about law and order, about suicide prevention and about the safer communities. But by catering to the gun lobby, he is putting Canadian lives at risk."

"The Coalition and other supporters of the registration of rifles and shotguns have argued that the costs of gun violence dwarf the costs of the registry. In spite of the focus on urban gang violence, a rifle or a shotgun in the wrong hands is as dangerous as a handgun. Licensing gun owners and registering guns does not prevent legitimate uses of firearms but reduces the risks that guns will fall into the hands of dangerous people."

The Coalition for Gun Control, founded in the wake of the Montreal massacre, is an alliance of more than 300 organizations including the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Public Health Association, Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, Canadian Paediatric Society, the YWCA of Canada, the Canadian Federation of University Women, Canadian Auto Workers, Canadian Labour Congress as organizations and community groups across the country. The alumni and families of the victims of the Montreal massacre along with other victims of gun violence played a pivotal role.

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For more information: Wendy Cukier, President, Coalition for Gun Control, 416-766-4804 or Sarah Hayward, Responsible Communications, 416-505-0523, Sarah@responsiblecommunications.ca.