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On November 4, 2009 Jack Layton and Michael Ignatieff are Poised to Help the Conservatives Dismantle the Gun Registry and Turn back the Clock on Gun Control

On November 4 the House of Commons will vote on Conservative Candice Hooppner's Private Member's Bill C-391 **to eliminate the registration of more than 7 million rifles and shotguns.** This is the third bill introduced by the Conservatives since February 2009, one government bill is still in front of the Senate. **As the 20th anniversary of the Montreal massacre approaches it seems that the Conservatives will pass the law with the support of Liberal and NDP members.**

While the Bloc Quebecois has promised to oppose the Bill, it was reported on the National Rifle Association's on-line television show, September 29 that the Conservatives will have enough support from Liberal and NDP backbenchers to pass the law. The Conservatives need, at the most, 9 votes total from the opposition to send this bill to committee. At least 5 NDP members and one Liberal have already endorsed this Bill, another Liberal voted against gun control in the past.

This Conservative Bill has the support of the Prime Minister's Office and a media campaign costing hundreds of thousands of dollars behind it. It is for all intents and purposes a Government Bill. (See http://www.conservative.ca/?section_id=5439§ion_copy_id=111084&language_id=0) NDP members have been saying that this is just a vote to "study the Bill" but in Parliamentary process that a vote at second reading is a vote to support in principle.

In spite of their previous support for the victims of gun violence, Jack Layton, founder of the White Ribbon Campaign, has said that as it is a private members bill, he cannot impose party discipline. Ignatieff's staffs have said the same. *Karl Belanger, spokesman for NDP Leader Jack Layton, said their caucus will be free to vote how they want. "This is a vote to send a back-bencher's bill to committee for further study and will not be whipped," he said, slamming the ads as proof the Conservatives are taking a "divisive" approach. Jill Fairbrother, spokesman for Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff, said private member's bills are traditionally free votes and she does not expect this one will be any different.* (Kathleen Harris, Registry vote picking up steam, The Kingston Whig-Standard, Mon Oct 26 2009) Just a few months ago, both the NDP and Liberals voted for the Bloc's motion **to support the registry** (April 22, 2009). Ignatieff and Layton attended a screening of the film Polytechnique on April 21, 2009 where they made speeches **reiterating their support for gun control.**

Why Register Guns?

Fundamentally: Rifles and shotguns are the guns most likely to be used in domestic violence, accidents, and suicide, particularly among youth. They are the guns most often used to kill police officers.

- In smaller communities such as York Region, Ottawa and Surrey, long guns outnumber handguns 2 to 1 in firearms recovered in crime.
- Rifles and shotguns were half the crime guns reported to RCMP's Firearms Operations and Enforcement Support (FOES). From January through September 2009, a total of 2194 were reported, 1006 non-restricted firearms (46%), 514 restricted firearms (23%) and 674 prohibited firearms (31%).
- The notion that handguns are dangerous and rifles and shotguns are just tools is false. Toronto Police Chief Blair has shown that even in Toronto a substantial number of guns recovered in crime are rifles and shotguns.
- The powerful Ruger Mini 14 used to shoot 28 people on December 6, 1989, killing 14 young women, is still sold as an unrestricted long-gun.
- Stronger gun control laws have resulted in a substantial decline in firearm death and injury.

In spite of perceptions that guns are urban problems, where there are more guns, there is more opposition to gun control but there are also higher rates of firearm death and injury.

- Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta all have firearm death rates higher than the Canadian average. (See appendix 1)
- RCMP in rural Alberta noted an increase in the number of gun-related calls in 2008. Marty Cheliak, Director General of the RCMP Canadian Firearms program, was quoted in a Northern News Service article as saying that the gun registry is a crucial policing tool, "*particularly in the North where there are limited police resources over a vast area*" (October 5, 2009).
- Guns in the home represent a particular threat to women and are one of the leading risk factors for murders of women in domestic homicide. Women's groups across the country including the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, the Calgary Action Committee Against Violence, the Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre, the Edmonton Women's Shelter, the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Prince Albert Emergency Shelter for Women, the YWCA of Calgary, Victoria, Toronto and Canada, oppose efforts to water down the law.

Polling shows that a slight majority of gun owners oppose the existing gun control law. However 77% of people living with gun owners support the gun control law (Envionics, December 2003). The latest available poll highlighted that 56% of Canadians believe the gun registry should not be dismantled, while more than 50% of Ontarians and Quebecois want the registry to remain intact. (Ipsos-Reid, May 2006)

Licensing and screening all gun owners, as well as registering all firearms, are essential. Without information about who owns guns, and the guns they own, it is almost impossible to prevent dangerous individuals from having access to these guns. The diversion of legal guns into illegal markets is a significant source of crime guns. Almost 3000 guns are stolen annually in Canada, by definition ending up in the hands of criminals. Strong controls reduce the risks that legal guns will be misused or diverted. It is for these reasons that we find it necessary to reinforce the message of the recent *Report on the Illegal Movement of Firearms in British Columbia* - that strong controls on legal gun owners as well as the registration of all firearms are essential to combating the issue of gun violence.

Firearm registration is a one-time only procedure that:

- makes gun owners accountable for their firearms, and enforces the licensing provisions of the law. Furthermore, registration makes it more difficult for straw purchases to occur, as well as illegal sales by legal gun owners.
- is an essential tool used by police when taking preventive action, and enforcing prohibition orders. It is the system police use to ensure that all firearms are removed from an individual's possession when the situation warrants it.
- helps police investigations. Two men were identified and convicted as accessories to the murder of 4 RCMP officers in Mayerthorpe, Alberta, in part because a registered gun was left at the scene of the crime.
- allows police to differentiate between legal and illegal firearms. Without information about who owns firearms legally and the firearms they own, police cannot charge individuals with illegal possession.
- allows police to trace firearms easily, thus facilitating further investigations into smuggling.
- reduces the chances that legal guns will be diverted into illegal markets.

The evidence shows that stronger gun laws have helped reduce gun related death, injury, violence and suicide:

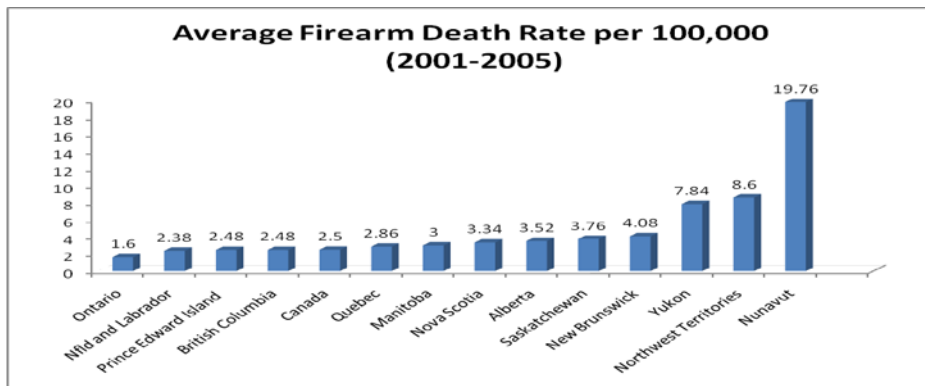
- When controls on rifles and shotguns were strengthened in 1991, 1441 Canadians were killed with guns; in 2005, the number was 818.
- Murders with rifles and shotguns have decreased dramatically, from 107 in 1991 to 32 in 2008, in part because of the stronger controls on firearms.
- The number of women murdered with firearms fell from 85 in 1991 to 32 in 2005. In contrast murders of women without firearms declined only slightly during the same period of time.
- The gun registry is consulted by police 10,000 times a day and has helped in efforts to take preventive actions and in several investigations.

Most of the cost of the firearms program is associated with licensing and screening of risk factors. The RCMP estimates, that if the registration of rifles and shotguns were discontinued, it would save only \$3 million per year. CBC reported on October 5, 2009 that the Conservative government's decision to waive licensing and registration fees will cost more than \$15 million in 2009. With successive amnesties the data in the firearms registry is becoming less accurate putting the lives of Canadians at stake.

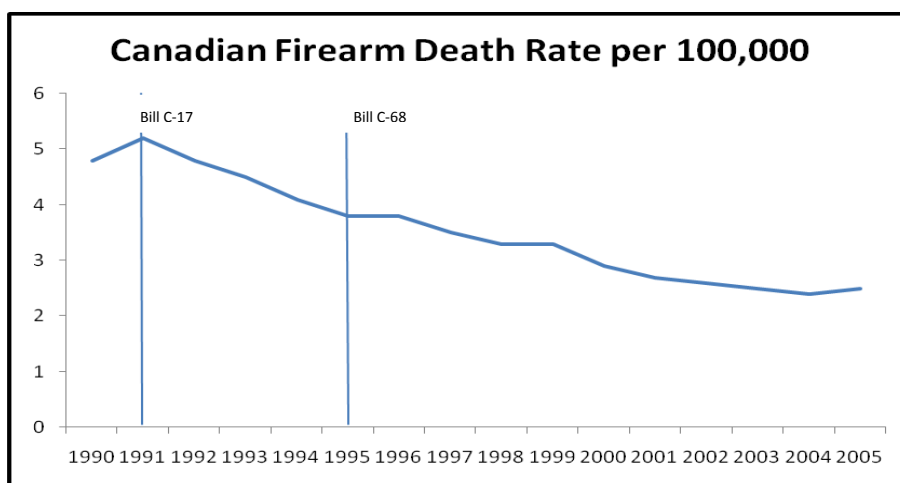
The Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that there is no "right" to own guns in Canada. June 2000 unanimous Supreme Court of Canada decision stated: "*The registration provisions cannot be severed from the rest of the Act. (...) These portions of the Firearms Act are both tightly linked to Parliament's goal of promoting safety by reducing the misuse of any and all firearms. Both portions are integral and necessary to the operation of the scheme.*" Canada's current laws are consistent with international norms. Most countries license gun owners and register firearms and the European Union's recent Directive 2008/51/EC establishes that as standard.

Appendix 1- Comparative Data

| Year | 1991 | 1995 | Latest |
|---|--------|--------|-------------|
| Total Firearms Death | | | 2005 |
| Number | 1444 | 1125 | 818 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 5.2 | 3.8 | 2.45 |
| Total Homicide | | | 2008 |
| Number | 756 | 586 | 611 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 2.7 | 2.01 | 1.83 |
| Homicide with firearms | | | 2008 |
| Number | 271 | 176 | 200 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 0.97 | 0.6 | 0.59 |
| Homicide with rifles and shotguns | | | 2008 |
| Number | 103 | 61 | 34 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 0.37 | 0.21 | 0.1 |
| Homicide with handguns | | | 2008 |
| Number | 135 | 95 | 121 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 0.48 | 0.32 | 0.36 |
| Homicide without firearms | | | 2008 |
| Number | 485 | 410 | 411 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 1.73 | 1.4 | 1.23 |
| Homicide of women with firearms | | | 2005 |
| Number | 85 | 43 | 32 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.09 |
| Homicide of women without firearms | | | 2005 |
| Number | 185 | 152 | 115 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.34 |
| Total Robbery | | | 2008 |
| Number | 33,225 | 30,332 | 32,281 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 119 | 104 | 97 |
| Robbery with firearm | | | 2008 |
| Number | 8995 | 6692 | 4,536 |
| Rate per 100,000 | 32 | 23 | 14 |

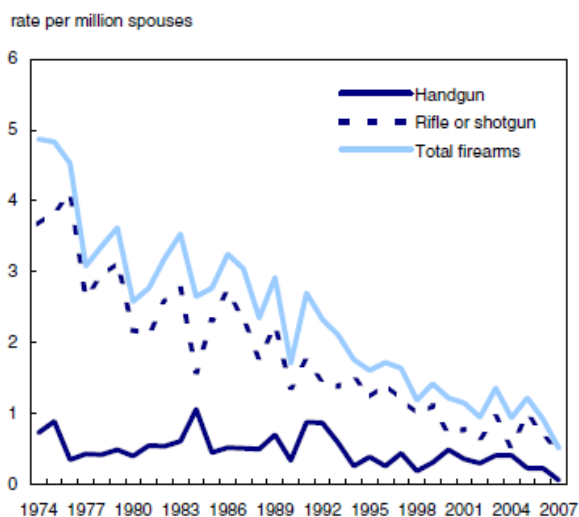


Source: Statistics Canada, "Mortality, Summary List of Causes", 2001-2005.

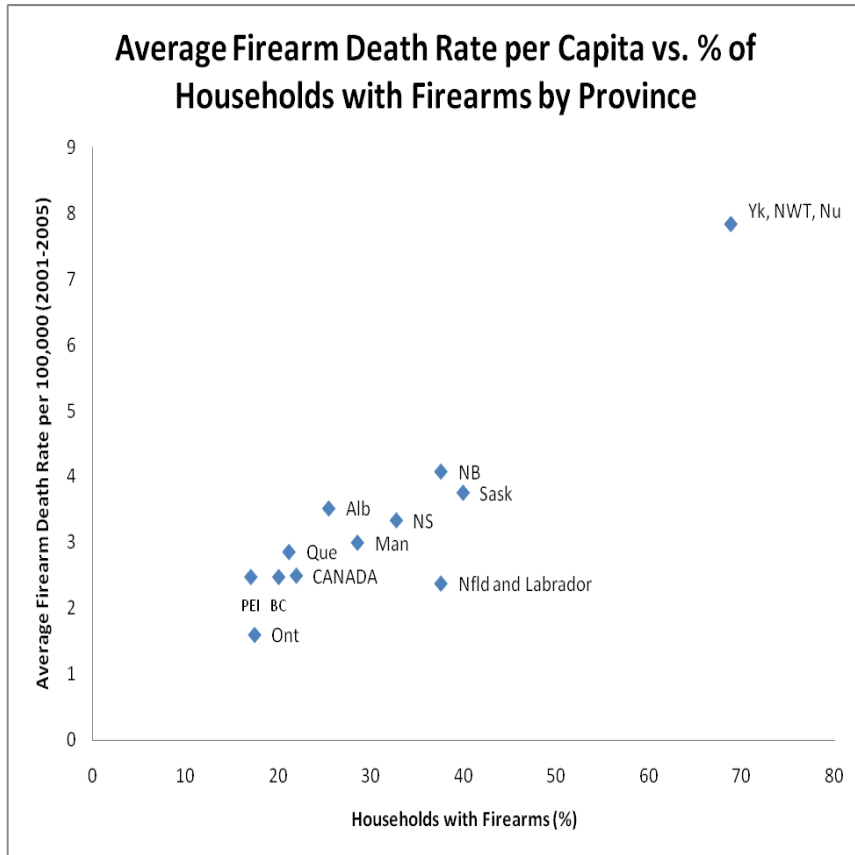


Source: Kwing Hung, "Firearms Statistics Updated Tables," January 2006; Statistics Canada, "Mortality, Summary List of Causes", 2000-2005.

Spousal Homicide with Firearms 1974-2007



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.



Source: Updated from Miller, T. and Cohen, M. "Costs of Gunshot and Cut/Stab Wounds in the United States, with some Canadian Comparisons. " *Accid Anal Prev* 1997; 29 (3): 329-41 with data from Statistics Canada, "Mortality, Summary List of Causes", 2001-2005; Canada Firearms Center, Facts and Figures, January 8, 2009.

Appendix 2- What did they say about the Gun Registry

All major public safety groups in the country including the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Police Association, Canadian Public Health Association, women's groups, and victims of gun violence continue to support the gun registry.

"Registration of firearms is essential to the licensing process. When gun owners are held accountable for their firearms, they are less likely to sell or give them to unlicensed individuals. Registration assists police in knowing what firearms to look for when enforcing prohibition orders. Information about registered firearms found at the scene of a crime supports criminal investigations and convictions."

-Steven Chabot, Past President of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Edmonton Journal (April 13, 2009)

"We ... consider the licensing of firearms owners and the registration of firearms to be a valuable public safety tool for front-line police officers."

-Charles Momy, President Canadian Police Association, Letter to Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff reprinted on Yahoo Canada News (April 20, 2009)

"Access to firearms is one of the top five risk factors in domestic homicide. Rifles and shotguns figure prominently in domestic violence in rural communities. And while the gun control law is not perfect, there is clear evidence that it is working to help keep women in abusive relationships safer. No one wants to penalize law abiding gun owners. What we want to do is to protect women and children from being threatened with and killed with guns."

-Jan Reimer, Provincial Coordinator of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, Press release (June 17, 2009).

"Rifles and shotguns are the firearms most often used to kill women and children in domestic violence. 88% of Canadian women killed with guns are killed with a shotgun or rifle, the very guns that supporters of Bill C-391 say are not the cause of gun violence. The Canadian Federation of University Women believes that gun control is an important measure to help prevent public violence and especially domestic violence against women and children. The CFUW calls upon Members of Parliament of all parties to vote against Bill C-391 to reduce violence in Canadian families and communities." **-Canadian Federation of University Women**, Press release (September 28, 2009).

"As an emergency physician I have witnessed too many tragedies of patients injured or killed by firearms. All of these were preventable. As advocates for our patients, we must oppose the weakening of gun control laws. Gun control protects citizens and saves lives" **-Dr. Carolyn Snider, Member of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians**, Press release (January 15, 2009).

"We victims of gun violence, want more than tears and kind words, we want action. The semi-automatic Ruger Mini 14 used at Polytechnique in Montreal is still sold as an unrestricted hunting rifle to rural folks. Long guns kill like handguns. In 1995, along with the families of Polytechnique, we fought with all our might to prevent the Conservatives from forcing amendments that would have removed all the teeth from the law, much like they are doing now with their repeated amnesties."

-Suzanne Laplante-Edward, mother of Anne-Marie killed on December 6, 1989.