

## **Open Letter from Hayder Kadhim - Survivor of the Dawson College shooting of September 13, 2006**

MONTREAL, April 2 /CNW Telbec/

<< In view of the Conservative Government's attempt to repeal the gun registry by introducing a Senate Bill, I can stay silent no longer. I am not a politician, nor am I a political expert. I am a university student, who lives in Canada, a country I am proud to belong to. Nowadays, the economic crisis is the most prominent issue in North America, if not the world, but we also live in an age where violence, in any form, is not acceptable.

I don't understand when people say guns don't kill people, people kill people. Someone without a gun has a far lesser chance to kill in the same numbers than someone with a gun can.

On September 13th, 2006, I myself was a victim of the violent acts of a crazed gunman who opened fire at Dawson College. I repeat, he was a gunman. Without his gun, his intentions to inflict pain and destruction would have been almost insignificant.

Unfortunately, the screening process was not sufficient to prevent him from acquiring three guns, a semi-automatic Berretta Storm, a 12-gauge shotgun and a handgun. That said, he shot me three times with his semi-automatic, along with 17 other people. We, as victims and students witnessing the tragedy, have all suffered and continue to suffer physically or psychologically.

My body received a bullet that passed through my left calf muscle, the dark scar it left still reminds me of what happened that day. I still have pain in my neck where a bullet remains lodged. Doctors could not remove it because of the proximity of it to my vertebral column. I also have fragments of bullets lodged in my skull.

Clearly, there is a God. And with His will, I survived. But as we all know by now, a good friend of mine, Anastasia de Sousa, did not. It's not with ease that I say this as it hurts me to lose someone whose memory still reminds me of good times and the joy she brought to our lives.

But what hurts even more is the position taken by the federal government to weaken gun laws in our country and dismantle the long gun registry. Whatever problems the gun registry encountered in the beginning, it is generally accepted that today, it runs well.

Why destroy something that was put in place as a result of the shooting at Polytechnique in 1989, which left 14 women dead? Do the MPs sitting in our Parliament not have kids and families that they want to raise in a safe and secure country?

At a time when many people have lost their jobs, is this really the time for the government to propose a bill in Parliament that would weaken our gun laws? In my view, this is disrespectful to all victims, survivors and their families of every violent gun crime to have to witness what this government is proposing to do to our gun laws.

After the shooting in 2006, I wrote a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper to rethink his party's plans regarding gun control. He ignored my call. His message was clear. Clearly, there is no use in communicating with our government. So we started talking to opposition parties, hoping to have a unanimous vote against any bill that would propose weakening gun laws and

dismantling the registry. Back then, the opposition parties pledged their support to us. The talk out there now seems to be saying something else.

I call upon all opposition parties to honour their commitment to us. And one more time, I ask Mr. Harper and his fellow Conservatives to imagine for a moment that someone close to them was a victim of gun violence.

Would they feel the same way about weakening gun laws? As always, I am open to hearing the answer from our Prime Minister directly.