

## Firearms registry saved my life, says domestic violence survivor

**For immediate release- Wednesday September 15, 2010:** At a press conference of victims and survivors of gun violence, Heather Imming stated "The *firearms registry saved my life*". The registry was used to remove guns from her violent, estranged husband. She survived a final beating that left her savagely beaten but firmly believes that the fact that the registry was used to remove his guns "*Is why I am here today.*"

Imming was one of several survivors of gun violence who spoke in support of the Canadian Association of Police Board's Day of Action to save the gun registry. The press conference, organized by victims advocate Priscilla deVilliers included the stories of gun victims showing the devastation that a gun in the wrong hands can wreak.

Priscilla deVilliers, whose daughter Nina was abducted from a Burlington tennis court and killed with a legally owned unrestricted rifle (in spite of the fact the killer was out on bail on violence offenses with that gun) In 1991 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. 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*" she said.

Louise Russo, shot with a stolen semi-automatic rifle on April 2004 that left her a paraplegic, tearfully described her months in hospital and the devastation her injuries caused not just her but her entire family. "*Instead of focusing on the costs of gun control, politicians should focus on the costs of gun violence and the price paid by victims. I am unable to care for my severely handicapped daughter*" she said. "*I am so worried about the impact on my younger daughter who witnessed my shooting. It has affected her profoundly.*"

Elaine Lumley, from Toronto told how her son Aiden was killed outside a bar in Montreal. The killer and the handgun were never found. "*I grew up in northern Ontario. I know that all guns, handguns, rifles, shotguns, are potentially dangerous. We want to make it harder not easier for dangerous people to get access to guns. Canadians must stand up for the firearms registry*".

Bob and Dianne Pajkowski also spoke out. In April 1999, their daughter Melissa Pajkowski, 21, was killed by an abusive ex-boyfriend who had access to his father's gun collection despite a history of depression and repeated suicide attempts. Mr. Pajkowski emphasized the need to keep guns away from people with mental health problems, the failures in the system and the need to register all firearms. "*There is a vast difference between imagining the worst thing that can happen to your family and experiencing it*".

Brian Vallee, Author of "Life with Billy" and "The War on Women" added his perspective on the role of guns in violence against women. He challenged the myth that gun violence is an urban problem. He said "*The research shows that a firearm in the home increases the risk women will be killed. I have travelled the country and hear horrifying stories of abuse from women terrorized by men with legally owned rifles and shotguns in rural communities*".

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**For more information contact Sarah Hayward [Sarah@responsiblecommunications.ca](mailto:Sarah@responsiblecommunications.ca) and 416-505-0523. Or Priscilla de Villiers 416 660 8911 (cell)**