



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

SECU • NUMBER 018 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, May 13, 2010

—
Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

Thursday, May 13, 2010

• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

This is the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, meeting number 18, and today we are continuing our study of Bill C-391, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act, the repeal of the long-gun registry.

We have quite a number of witnesses before us today and rather than take a lot of time to introduce them right from the beginning, I'm just going to start on my left here and have you each give your presentation. I hope you understand that you're allowed approximately 10 minutes to give a presentation; after that we open it up for questions and comments.

Who would like to present first? Is it the Fédération des femmes du Québec?

Ms. Conradi, please go ahead. Welcome to the committee.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexa Conradi (President, Fédération des femmes du Québec): Thank you very much. Thank you for inviting us today to discuss this very important matter.

I am the president of the Fédération des femmes du Québec. I am accompanied by Manon Monastesse, who is the director of one of the federation's member groups. We wanted to make the presentation together.

The mandate of the Fédération des femmes du Québec is to defend the rights of women in all areas of social and political activity. We represent 175 organizations in all regions of Quebec, including the rural regions. We also have 600 individual members.

Several years ago now, the December 6th Victims Foundation Against Violence—the foundation established by the families of the victims of the École polytechnique tragedy—gave us the mandate to make sure that December 6th was commemorated. Events happen all across Canada, but the foundation gave us the mandate to organize events in commemoration. For us, commemoration is not simply remembering the women who were gunned down by that killer 20 years ago, but also remembering the issues and the debates that ensued and led to a firearms registry. In a way, the registry is a response to a major campaign spearheaded by friends of the victims of December 6th.

Our appearance before the committee today is therefore to urge that the Canadian Firearms Registry be kept as a testimony to and a

legacy from those friends and the December 6th Victims Foundation Against Violence.

You can imagine how, as women's groups, we are particularly concerned by matters that relate to domestic violence and the registration of firearms.

So, without further delay, I will give the floor to Manon Monastesse, who works at a federation whose specific purpose is to assist women who are victims of domestic violence.

Ms. Manon Monastesse (Director, Fédération de ressources d'hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté du Québec, Fédération des femmes du Québec): Good afternoon.

My federation operates 41 shelters in Quebec for women who are victims of domestic violence and in distress. This is about half of all such shelters in Quebec. We take in around 10,000 women and children per year. Domestic homicide, more specifically homicide committed by a spouse or ex-spouse where the victims are wives and children, is a major issue. It is the key issue in our involvement with clients at our shelters, whether from the standpoint of safety or prevention.

The Firearms Act has made possible significant progress, especially in reducing the number of armed assaults in situations of domestic or family violence. Rifles and shotguns are the weapons most commonly used in spousal homicide for the simple reason that long guns are the most common in Quebec homes, and therefore the most easily accessible.

Please understand that, in the opinion of those of us who have signed the brief that has been tabled, Bill C-391 sends a dangerous message. If there is no need to register long guns, is that saying that they do not present a real danger? Too many examples prove the opposite, such as the case of Marie-Josée Desmeules, killed by her husband with his shotgun in Saguenay in December 2009. Rifles and shot guns do not just increase the number of victims, they increase the deadliness of the assaults. Like all firearms, rifles and shotguns pose a serious threat.

Let us be clear that, in Quebec, since 1995, the policy called Prévenir, Dépister, Contrer la violence conjugale [Prevent, detect and stop domestic violence] requires police officers to ensure that victims and their loved ones are safe and protected. If possible, firearms are seized as soon as an arrest takes place or, if not, bail conditions are arranged so that they are handed over to peace officers without delay. That is what police officers do in Quebec. The first thing that they do when they get to a domestic violence scene is to check whether a spouse or ex-spouse has firearms.

No less a person than Christine St-Pierre, the Quebec Minister of Culture, Communications and the Status of Women, said in an interview that, if Ottawa decided to dismantle the national registry, the lives of Quebec police officers and of victims of domestic violence would be put into danger unnecessarily. For us, the direct consequence of eliminating the registry or making it ineffective is to deprive the police of an essential tool of investigation and prevention and to endanger the safety of the women and children who come to our shelters.

In conclusion, we would like to remind you of the importance of the present system of gun control in the context of our ability to assist victims of domestic violence. We ask you to reject this bill, specifically because of the dangerous consequences that it would have for public safety and, most importantly, for the safety of the women and children to whom we provide shelter.

• (1535)

Ms. Alexa Conradi: In that light, registering each weapon gives us an indication of the number and the type of the weapons in the possession of a potential attacker in domestic violence cases. Unfortunately, domestic violence also exists in the homes of people with no criminal past. Protecting women from violence is a social and political responsibility. It is even included in international agreements that the Government of Canada has signed. This responsibility is clearly more significant than any inconvenience that may be caused by filling out a few forms.

A Quebec registry, for example, would not be effective in dealing with weapons moving around Canada. That is why we do not want the Canadian registry to be dismantled. Almost half the firearms used in criminal acts are long guns. They are not just used for hunting. In 85% of the murders involving a firearm, the weapon used is a long gun. The registry is working and it is important to keep it. Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now go over to the president of the Canadian Police Association, Mr. Charles Momy.

Mr. Charles Momy (President, Canadian Police Association): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. How are you today?

Thank you, committee members, for allowing us to speak here today.

My name is Charles Momy. I am president of the Canadian Police Association. I would also like to introduce, to my right, Detective Constable Nadine Teeft, a member of the organized crime enforcement gun and gang task force of the Toronto Police Service as well as a member of the Canadian Police Association. I will provide my remarks, which should take, Mr. Chair, about five or six minutes, and Nadine will finish up for about three minutes.

The CPA welcomes the opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security with regard to Bill C-391. By way of background, the Canadian Police Association is the national voice for 41,000 front-line police personnel serving across Canada. In our more than 150 member associations, the Canadian Police Association membership includes police personnel serving in police services from Canada's smallest towns and villages

as well as those working in our largest municipal cities. They include provincial police services, the RCMP, railway police, and first nations police associations.

Our goal is to work with elected officials from all parties to bring about meaningful reforms to enhance the safety and security of all Canadians, including those sworn to protect our communities. For decades police associations have been advocating reforms to our justice system in Canada. The CPA has worked very positively with the current government, providing input and support on several pieces of legislation. In fact, this past week I attended a round table discussion organized by Public Safety Canada on the review of the DNA act, yet another tool assisting police in bringing criminals to justice. However, when it comes to the long-gun registry, we respectfully have a difference of opinion.

I'm not here today to inundate the committee with statistical information. Much of that information has already been provided by the RCMP Canadian firearms program, but that type of information is also contained in our brief, which we have circulated to the committee.

In 2007 the RCMP Canadian firearms program surveyed our front-line officers with regard to online queries of the Canadian firearms registry. In total, 56 police services were surveyed from across Canada. There were 408 police officers surveyed in total; 262 of them were general duty patrol officers, 64 were criminal investigators, and 82 were police officer supervisors.

The survey results were as follows: 92% of police officers have used the Canadian firearms registry online system, 65% responding that they use CFRO in day-to-day functions; 73% use CFRO in responding to calls for service; 69% report CFRO influences how they respond to calls for service; and finally, 74% indicate use of CFRO aids in their investigations and operations in policing.

We have continuously stated that law enforcement uses the Canadian firearms registry. Does every single police officer in this country use the system? Of course not. Do thousands? Very possibly. What we do know for sure is this: in 2009 there were four million CFRO queries, of which 45% were autolinked when using CPIC. The other 55% were specific requests usually related to domestic incidents.

The Canadian firearms registry is about keeping our communities safe, period. I'm here to state that the long-gun registry represents one of many tools available to police. Other examples are the DNA data bank and the sex offender registry. Does every single police officer use those tools, the sex offender registry or the DNA data bank? Most likely not. The gun registry is a valuable tool that has significant preventive and investigational value and is used towards keeping our community safer. Will it solve every gun crime? Will it solve or prevent every firearm death? Of course not, just as the Criminal Code does not prevent murders or sexual assaults.

Because rifles and shotguns are the firearms most often in people's homes, they are the firearms police most often face when they are called to investigate domestic violence and disturbances. Last week retired Winnipeg police officers were testifying at this committee—and we agree with them—that most real criminals—gang members and organized crime groups—do not register their guns.

● (1540)

There are many examples of the use of the registry by law enforcement, and I'll give you a few. For example, it was evidence from the registry that assisted in the arrest and conviction of two men as accessories for their involvement in the 2005 murder of four RCMP officers in Mayerthorpe, Alberta, specifically through a registered unrestricted rifle found at the scene of the crime. This information was yet another piece of evidence in their ultimate convictions.

Did the registry save the lives of these four Mounties? No, it did not, but it did bring these individuals to justice.

In a second example, NWEST provided support to an RCMP detachment after a suspect was stopped with four long guns in his vehicle. The suspect was evasive when questioned, leading investigators to believe the firearms had been stolen. NWEST conducted CFRO checks on the recovered firearms and determined that all four were registered to a local resident and not the person who was in possession of these rifles.

The registered owner, who was working out of town, was contacted by police and said that as far as he was aware, all his firearms were safely stored at his residence. Police attended the owner's residence and discovered evidence confirming that his residence had been broken into and that all 16 of his long guns had been stolen. Subsequent investigation resulted in the recovery of the remaining 12 long guns from the suspect.

Where would these guns have ended up if we hadn't stopped this individual? Possibly in the hands of real criminals. What would they have planned to do with these particular firearms? I'll allow you to come to your own conclusion with regard to that. I could go on and on with regard to how police use the firearms registry, but let me present you with some facts.

The gun registry is now in place. It's not in the planning phases and it's not in the beginning phases; it's in the operational phases. It's working today. Voting in favour of Bill C-391 will not bring back any of the money originally invested in the creation of the program. We have heard repeatedly that eliminating the long-gun registry would save Canadians approximately \$4 million per year.

As police officers, we share the front-line responsibility of keeping our communities safe. The safety of children, women, and men across Canada is paramount to everything we do. In addition, I also have a responsibility to ensure the safety of our members. To the Canadian Police Association, community and police officer safety is the basis of our opposition to Bill C-391. There has been a great deal of misinformation surrounding this issue, and it has been very confusing to Canadians, including politicians and even our own members on occasion.

Allow me to make one final point as I come to the end of my presentation. Like many of you, I have a driver's licence. It allows

me to operate a vehicle, but my vehicle is also registered. To give you a quick example, if I were to stop Chair Breitreuz for speeding after this committee hearing today, I would suggest to you that Mr. Breitreuz would provide a driver's licence and I would suggest to you that his vehicle would also be registered.

What that does for me as a police officer is that it allows me to confirm that the vehicle Mr. Breitreuz is driving is his own, or is a stolen vehicle, or is being used for some other purpose, or has been involved in some other criminal activity. That is how I provide the examples of licensing and registration, whether it impacts or deals with vehicles in this country or whether it deals with firearms in this country.

Allow me to pass the floor to my colleague Nadine Teeft, who will be providing you with her viewpoints in the next couple of minutes.

● (1545)

The Chair: There's less than a minute left, but go ahead.

Det Nadine Teeft (Detective Constable, Organized Crime Enforcement, Gun and Gang Task Force, Toronto Police Services, Canadian Police Association): Thank you very much.

My name is Nadine Teeft and I've been a member of the Toronto Police Services for almost 20 years. Currently I'm assigned to the integrated gun and gang task force.

When I look at the annual crime gun seizure totals for all firearm types within the Toronto Police Service for 2007, 2008, and 2009, I can see consistently that almost half the firearms that could be sourced were from lawful Canadian origins before they were diverted to the illicit firearm market and ultimately used in a criminal act.

A consistent 50% over the past three years is a shocking statistic. In order to curb this trend, the registry proves to be a useful tool in enforcement initiatives to ensure compliance. Domestic crime guns, which began in the hands of legal gun owners, have served as the primary rationale for creating and maintaining the firearm registry in Canada.

The belief was that licensing firearm owners would increase the accountability of individual firearm owners. It was believed that owners would comply with the safe storage regulations. They would be more likely to recognize the risks and responsibilities of firearm ownership, and because they are known to the authorities, they would be dissuaded from passing their legally owned firearms to the possession of an unauthorized individual.

As a front-line officer, I use the registry on a daily basis. I've been successful and involved in the seizure of close to 1,600 firearms over the past year and a half. All these firearms were in the possession of persons who were unauthorized to possess them, and a portion of these firearms were seized from persons who had their firearms stored unsafely. These firearms included assault-style rifles and firearms that were classified as non-restricted firearms, or long guns.

The registry is a useful and necessary tool proving that licensing alone is not adequate. I have been involved in drafting public safety warrants that used the registry to source information received in order to have the warrant authorized. Several firearms were removed from homes in order to prevent firearm violence.

I've also been involved in the seizure of firearms from persons on various firearm prohibitions and licence revocations as a result of mental health issues and criminal charges. A search of the registry was the only way of determining if any firearms were associated with those persons.

In the city of Toronto, long guns may not be the firearm of choice when it comes to the front-page gang violence we read about. However, do not be misinformed; people in the city of Toronto may not all be dying as a result of gunshots from long guns, but they are definitely being victimized by criminals toting long guns as their firearm of choice. Over the past year and a half in Toronto, hundreds of people have been victims of retail armed robberies in which long guns have been used.

Rifles and shotguns—

• (1550)

The Chair: How much time do you have left? You're way over time.

Mr. Charles Momy: We have 45 seconds.

Det Nadine Teeft: Rifles and shotguns account for a portion of the crime firearms seized. Every sawed-off shotgun begins as a non-restricted firearm. While firearms, including shotguns and rifles, may be used for legitimate purposes, they can be misused and often are.

No matter what the reasons for their choice, it cannot be ignored that violent crime is being committed with long guns, and for the same exact reason that the registry exists for restricted and prohibited firearms, it should exist for non-restricted firearms.

We currently have one national firearm registry, which is inclusive of all firearms. A barrelled weapon can kill. A firearm, regardless of its class, is just that, a firearm, and until we can say for certain that long guns do not pose a threat to the community we serve, it is imperative that all classes of firearms be registered to licensed persons, with no exceptions.

I grew up in a hunting family and married into a sport shooting one. I understand the passion, I'm not opposed to legitimate firearm ownership, and I'm not looking to make criminals out of individuals who legally possess firearms.

Every firearm owner has the legal responsibility to comply with the requirements set out in the Firearms Act to ensure that firearms are properly licensed and stored securely against theft and misuse. The only way to ensure compliance is through enforcement.

The criminal use of firearms is a serious concern. It has a devastating impact on the lives of victims, families, and communities across the country. Firearm-related incidents have become almost a daily occurrence.

I'm grateful to have been provided with great training and tools to do my job effectively and protect the community that I serve. I'm thankful every day that I get to go home to my family. Police officers' safety and the safety of all Canadians will be compromised in the event the firearm registry ceases to include all firearm information associated to licence-holders.

Please do not take away a valuable tool that I, as an active front-line police officer, use on a daily basis. Let's not open up the illicit firearm market to allow people to sell or give their firearms to anyone, knowing the firearm will never be traced back to them.

Thank you.

The Chair: Next we have, representing the government of the Yukon, the Honourable John Edzerza, member of the Legislative Assembly and Minister of Environment.

Go ahead, sir.

Hon. John Edzerza (Member of the Legislative Assembly, McIntyre-Takhini, and Minister of Environment, Government of Yukon): Thank you for inviting me here today.

Mr. Chair and members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, it is an honour to be here today to speak as a witness before the committee in support of Bill C-391. It is my understanding that I am the first aboriginal person to come before this committee, which is very disappointing.

Mr. Chair, there has been a long history of opposition to the long-gun registry in the Yukon, and indeed across the entire north, ever since the introduction of the registry in 1993. The registry was set out in Bill C-68, an act respecting firearms and other weapons. This bill was given royal assent in 1995.

I want to read into the record a motion presented to the Yukon Legislative Assembly on December 14, 1994, by the late Johnny Abel, the former MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin. The motion read as follows:

That it is the opinion of this House that the proposed amendments to the federal government's firearms legislation to be presented to the Parliament of Canada in February, 1995, do not accommodate the needs of northern Canadians and their lifestyle; and

That the Yukon Legislative Assembly urges the federal Minister of Justice, the Hon. Allan Rock, not to proceed with the proposed firearms amendments until such time as the needs of northern Canadians are met.

The motion passed unanimously. The words of Mr. Abel at that time are still relevant today. He said:

The people in Toronto do not go ratting, nor do they need to hunt caribou like the people of Old Crow do. When they want food, they just go down to the nearest grocery store. The grocery store for the people of Old Crow is the land itself, our traditional territory: Old Crow Flats.

To my constituents, a firearm is a tool. We need a rifle to hunt and to live off the land. A carpenter needs tools, such as a hammer and a saw, to do his or her job. A mechanic needs tools, such as wrenches and screwdrivers, to do his or her job.

My constituents are hunters. We need to use firearms to do our job.

Mr. Chair, over the years since MLA Johnny Abel's motion in 1994, other motions have been presented in the Yukon Legislative Assembly opposing the long-gun registry, but all to no avail. The Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut—Canada's entire north—are unified in their position in calling for the revocation of the long-gun registry. As I speak here today, the three northern premiers are meeting in Whitehorse, and I am sure that the revocation of the long-gun registry will be a topic of their discussion.

Mr. Chair, I stand before you today to speak on behalf of Yukoners to ensure that the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry comes to an end. The registry forces law-abiding citizens to register their tools, which are used in many cases to fulfill their responsibilities in their everyday lives. The registry targets people who live off the land—first nation citizens, ranchers, farmers, hunters, and outfitters—not the intended criminals. Registration is only for those who respect the law. People who plan to commit a crime using a weapon will not register the gun.

The legislation that created the registry hoped to reduce violent crime. Usually handguns and other smuggled firearms are used in organized crime and drug deals, not hunting rifles. Domestic violence and violence against women is a problem in our society. Registering hunting rifles, unfortunately, will not change this dysfunction. Most violence against women is usually as a result of physical force.

In Canada, most murders are committed with a sharp-edged weapon. In 2008, a knife was used against 6% of all victims of violent crime. In comparison, 3% of violent crimes were committed with a blunt club or blunt instrument, and 2% with a firearm. These data are from a Statistics Canada article, "Knives and violent crime in Canada, 2008".

I'm here to talk to you today about life in Canada's north and how long guns are a part of everyday life for many Yukoners. In rural Yukon, carrying a rifle may be the only defence against attack from many predators. The rifle is a tool to be used by rural citizens to safeguard their lives when going about supporting their families, prospecting, fishing, and gathering other food sources. To many Yukoners, a rifle is a means to feed their children, elders, and, in some cases, their community.

• (1555)

For some, registration and the cost involved with registration will cause hardship. These law-abiding citizens have had these rifles safely for all of their lives.

I would now like to share with you some of my experience with long-gun life in the Yukon Territory.

I was taught the value of a rifle at a very young age, whether it was a .22 calibre or a .30-06. I was taught how to respect a gun and

honour it. I shot rabbits and grouse at age 9, and I shot my first moose at the age of 13.

Mr. Chair, first nations people have been under the thumb of federal governments for hundreds of years—only first nations. What other race of people are subject to an act like the Indian Act?

We are guaranteed inherent rights to hunt and put food on our tables to feed our families. Would one believe this registry system has diminished those rights? As a first nations elder, I believe it will and it has. It will be hard for first nations persons to own a gun. I know of one elder in Teslin, Yukon who had his rifle taken away, and it took two years of court cases to get it back. It was taken away because it wasn't registered. That's unbelievable. What's next?

Mr. Chair, this long-gun registry even affects our traditional ceremonies in a negative way. For example, when someone passes away we have a headstone potlatch one year after, and in this ceremony we give gifts to members of the opposite clan. The most honourable gift one could give at this ceremony is a rifle. We can not, and do not, do this any more, and it hurts our spirit. It's just another law put on us to strip us of our pride.

Members of the standing committee, I must ask why no one consults with first nations on important issues such as this. Does anyone in Ottawa really know how much this affects first nations people right across Canada? It's another put-down to us, almost as though we aren't important and we have no voice in the matter.

Speaking of voice, Mr. Chair, I also heard the Liberal leader in Ottawa say that all his members have to vote to save the gun registry. If this is the case, then not only the first nations will lose their voice, but the majority of Yukon citizens will. We have only one voice in Parliament, and he belongs to the Liberal Party. One has to question whatever happened to democracy.

I could possibly talk for days on this topic, but time does not allow me to do so. However, I will summarize in this way. First, to first nations and others in the Yukon, a rifle has one of the highest values, so valuable that it is a necessity for living on the land, more precious than diamonds or gold. Second, first nations were not consulted on how this law would affect our aboriginal rights and traditional ceremonies. Third, we don't know how much money was spent to date on this law. We have heard it was billions. Our only response is that we sure could have used this money to upgrade our homes.

We feel this law was written for the big cities in the south, and no thought was given to those who live off the land. In first nations families, guns are passed down to others through death. I was given one of my dad's rifles when he died. We are unable to do this any more.

Our only vote in the Yukon is being jeopardized by a whipped vote by the Liberals. I say this with respect for Larry, because I sincerely believe he would support his constituents and vote in favour of Bill C-391.

Members of the committee, I thank you for your time today. I thank you for giving me a chance to be heard. It took a lot of courage to come here today, because I don't know you and you are much more powerful than I, but I had to. A friend of mine said to me at a potlatch ceremony two days ago, and I quote, "When you go to Ottawa, tell those people guns don't kill. It's the stupid bastard who points a loaded gun at someone and pulls the trigger."

I respectfully ask all of you members, from every party, to support Bill C-391, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act.

I thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I had documents to table, but they were not translated into French. The committee members will receive them in a few days. Thank you.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir. I appreciate your coming.

We'll now go over to our representative from the Abbotsford Police Department, Chief Constable Bob Rich.

Welcome, sir.

Chief Bob Rich (Chief Constable, Abbotsford Police Department): Thank you. I appreciate being here. It's pretty cool to be a Canadian and to be part of how democracy functions. I think that's a pretty wonderful opportunity in my life, so thanks for letting me be here today.

I want to talk a little bit about the situation that I and my fellow police officers in my community find ourselves in. Abbotsford is a city of 135,000 people, with 210 police officers. We're 70 kilometres east of Vancouver. We're the first community that's not really a suburb of Vancouver, and we are situated in the middle of the Fraser Valley. Abbotsford is actually the biggest geographical city in British Columbia in that it's 140 square miles, much of which is active farming land.

In terms of this issue, in 2008 there were 58 murders in the Fraser Valley and the Lower Mainland, and in 2009 there were 56. In both of those years, we were in the midst of active gang wars. Abbotsford has found itself actually at the very centre of those gang wars. What happened, I suppose—and I'm still trying to figure this out—is that Vancouver successfully pushed some of its grow ops out into the valley, where the farmlands have better places for hiding huge grow ops in the outbuildings, and we ended up with hundreds of them. Young men grew up in this industry and made a lot of money in Abbotsford, and the gangs flourished. I joined the Abbotsford Police Department as its chief two years ago and I'm still trying to

understand how this farming community ended up being the focal point that it is.

However, in 2008 and again in 2009, as soon as it gets declared by Statistics Canada, Abbotsford was and is the murder capital of Canada. We had 11 murders last year in a small community of 135,000 people. Two of those aren't technically ours because they're 50 metres into a reserve that is actually policed by the RCMP, but they were two young boys from one of our high schools who were murdered, ages 18 and 17. They are our murders and they are part of the 11. Eight of those murders are gang- and drug-related murders.

So it's our number one issue. I guess that's kind of a "duh", but it's a thing that we are facing. We have just created a gang squad. I spend lots of my time in the schools talking to young people. We are doing all kinds of preventive things, but we are in trouble. I've just finished a count. We have 130 gang members living in or working their trade in the Abbotsford area. We have put them on a list to go after.

One of the things that happened is that the Bacon brothers grew up in and live in Abbotsford. You may have heard their names. They were the heads of the Red Scorpion gang, which became the gang that the other gangs wanted to kill, so a lot of the violence ended up being on our turf, even though it was a larger battle.

About 90% of the guns used in shootings are either handguns or assault rifles, and they're brought illegally across the border from Washington. Abbotsford is one of those places that has a long unprotected border. There is lots of backpacking through the mountains, if you will, and across what we call "zero avenue". Cocaine and marijuana and handguns are the commodities that people trudge across with. Our problem is primarily in relation to those kinds of weapons, and I want to bring that thought to this committee around what it is that we're really facing, at least in our part of Canada.

This is a dynamic problem that's a growing problem. It's not a static situation, and I believe that what's going on with guns in Canada is a reason this gang war has been so very violent.

I grew up in policing, and my wife never worried about me as a police officer. My young son is a police officer in Vancouver, and my wife asks me almost every other week if our son is safe. I don't have a great answer to that question anymore, because he's encountering far more handguns than I ever did.

What can be done? With the greatest of respect, I understand the focus around the long-gun issue and I will talk about that in a moment, but I believe we need to actually step back and develop a comprehensive program around all gun control issues in Canada. I think it's time to have a look at what's going on. I think we're in trouble. It has a lot to do with our American neighbours. It has a lot to do with the drug issues that we struggle with.

I take the view that we have taken the wrong approach to handguns. I have a handgun that I wear. It is only designed for one purpose, and that is to shoot another human being. I do not believe any person should have that gun who is not essentially required to use such a device in their profession to protect the public. I believe it should be prohibited in all cases. On this target-shooting idea by private holders of handguns, I think Canada has taken the wrong approach.

● (1605)

Assault rifles should never be in the hands of any private person. There's just no reason for that. If we want to create special systems for them to be in gun ranges, that's fine, but I don't think they should be in any private person's home, ever.

I believe we should be working on simplified powers for police in order to be more effective in our search and seizure, both in the warrant powers that exist under the Criminal Code, which are overly complex in comparison to any other developed nation—our warrant powers are unbelievably complex in all areas—and in warrantless search powers as well.

I am concerned about domestic violence. It is a huge issue. It's one of the six priorities we have in our community. It's something we are focused on. It's a real problem. One of the things we should be doing about that is doing a much better job around who holds a possession and acquisition licence. We should be doing way more.

I have a friend who wanted a possession and acquisition licence, or PAL. I got a phone call as part of his background screening and was asked horrible, closed-ended questions by this clerk on the other end of the phone about whether this person should or should not have a PAL. If one of my interrogators ever asked those kinds of questions, I would want that person fired. They simply said, "Is this person prone to violence? Will he kill people if he has a gun?" Of course, I knew the right answers that I was supposed to give in order for my friend to get a licence.

That's not how you conduct an interview. That's not how you find out what the issues are with somebody.

Let's invest more money and expertise into who has one of these PALs. Let's do way more open-source checking on the Internet with social networks. Let's put more money into that part of the system, please.

It was interesting to hear the detective from Toronto talk about the great work done in that city around gun control and investigatively going out after guns. It was after a young girl was murdered that this great investment started to take place in Toronto. I would love to have that money invested in British Columbia and the rest of Canada without a horrific incident like that to spark it. I see a need for that.

We are being inundated with high-quality American firearms and we're not being able to stop it. It's difficult. I know we have an open border, but we need to do something about that and go after it from an investigative perspective.

We have 909,000 registered guns in British Columbia, and 76,000 of those are possessed by people with lapsed PALs. We aren't going after the system that's designed to look after this. Why is that?

I believe the registry exists for the right reasons, but there are two significant issues with the registry.

One, it's my firm belief that the registry is horrifically inaccurate. I talk to my investigators and I talk to my gun expert, and in story after story, whenever they've tried to use it, the information in it is wrong. I believe the reason we haven't gone after these people with lapsed PALs in my province is that when we went out to do it, we found that the information about even which ones were lapsed and what guns existed at that residence was wrong. That's a problem. I have no confidence in the current system.

I also believe, in talking to my own experts—and this is one of those tough ones, like how many grow ops exist in Abbotsford right now—there are well over a million long guns, easily, in Canada that aren't registered in any way, shape, or form. The system has not been successful.

So I find my investigators actually don't rely on the registry. They are obligated to check the system when there's a domestic violence situation, because we should use everything we have, but I think a flawed system is worse than any system. If we can't fix it, with the greatest of respect, the long-gun registry should be scrapped.

The other thing I'll say—and I wouldn't have necessarily known this before it happened—is that the use of criminal law to ensure compliance has utterly failed. We now have literally hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are committing a criminal offence because they either have not registered the weapon or have lapsed PALs. That's a horrific way to undermine a very important system in our country, so if we're going to continue, we need to change that system as well.

My real point is this: on the issue of the long-gun registry as one part of the whole system of dealing with this gun control problem, which we really do have, we ought to retain this registry only if we can fix it. We've had it for a long time, but if we're not going to ensure that we have an accurate long-gun registry in this country, I don't believe it should be part of our arsenal to deal with this issue.

● (1610)

I would only rely on CPIC if I believed it worked and I would only rely on this registry if I believed it worked.

Thank you.

The Chair: You were right on 10 minutes. Thank you.

We will now go to Mr. Rahilly from the Dawson College Community Committee for Gun Control. Welcome to our committee, sir. Go ahead and give us your presentation.

Mr. Brian Rahilly (Spokesperson, Dawson College Committee for Gun Control): Thank you very much for the opportunity to come here and represent Dawson College on gun control. Our committee was formed a few days after the attack that took place at Dawson College on September 13, 2006.

Before I get into that, though, I would like to say something to the honourable member sitting beside Chief Bob Rich. I listened to his comments about the concerns he has as a representative of the indigenous people of the north, and I have a lot of sympathy for what he explained to everyone today. I will say, though, that I find what he said indicative of the sense of victimization the northern peoples and the hunters and farmers have.

I think if we take a good look at the sense of victimization, it's something that has been encouraged a lot by government spokesmen who have been repeating comments time and time again about the waste of money and the billions of dollars, yet the registry has been examined by the Auditor General and by other people.

Yes, there were extraordinary costs when the registry was put together. That's a problem we should leave to others, who can dig into the history and perhaps find out who to blame, but the system exists now. Perhaps the system has some faults in how it's been put together or in the financing, and it certainly doesn't have enough financing.

Chief Bob Rich says he can't support it if it can't be fixed. Certainly the system can be fixed. If we put together an incredible house but went way over budget, who in their right mind would say that since the house is not functioning properly—the plumbing is wrong, the electronics aren't very good, there's a leak in the roof—we should get rid of the house? Who would use that kind of logic?

I am very sad to hear this talk about victimization. If the registry is that difficult, then something has to be changed in the registry. I have a colleague who told me it took him months to get one of his rifles registered. That's a difficulty. I hope the government is not starving the registry of finances and personnel to the extent that people will continue to feel they are being victimized.

Now I will speak about Dawson College. Many of you know of this terrible incident that took place in 2006. I was there that day and I got to take a look at some of these faces you can see in this photograph. Dawson College has about 7,500 day students, faculty, and staff. Students fled the building, gunshots were heard, and police arrived. Guns were being waved everywhere. It is a terrible thing to see these looks on the faces of kids. This is something that should never happen.

It was a very tragic day. Nineteen people were injured, and unfortunately one of them died. I know the parents of the girl who's in this casket. If you could have met them and seen their faces, as I'm sure many of the professionals on this board have seen, these are faces you don't want to see. They're the faces that are beyond words.

The despair and the anguish are a living nightmare, yet these people supported our committee, became members of our committee, were active, and came to Ottawa in November of 2006 to participate in a national press conference.

Why did they come? The registry did not prevent the death of their daughter, but their loss and the violence that ensued that day made them realize how important it is that Canadians have a reduced risk of being the victims of gun violence. This is what's important.

• (1615)

Three days after this incident the Prime Minister said on CBC radio that the gun registry didn't stop the attack at Dawson College. I'm sorry. It's a ridiculous statement to make. I cannot believe that the Prime Minister could have said such a thing.

After I heard him say it, I, with students and faculty, put together our committee. We looked into the problem of gun control in Canada. We listened to professionals who had something to say about it. I contacted the former head of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. I contacted chief firearms officers.

All of these people sitting here, who have some incredible amount of experience in this field, are not saying we should get rid of the registry. I think Chief Bob Rich is not saying we should get rid of the registry; he's saying fix it or get rid of it. It's overwhelming to think that a government would consider doing this. It's a regulation of eight million weapons in Canada that have paperwork, and we want to get rid of it?

We all know what has happened with deregulation in recent years. Remember the financial meltdown of the United States? That was deregulation. Remember the big oil spill in the gulf? That was deregulation. Now we're talking about deregulating firearms.

These are not garden tools. These are not a mechanic's tools. These are weapons designed to fire a projectile at a high speed at a target. Many of them are meant to kill people, such as this one. This is a picture of a Beretta Cx4 Storm. It is the firearm that was used to wreak havoc at Dawson College.

When Stockwell Day, then Minister of Public Safety, came to Dawson College, he told our committee that this gun has no business being in the hands of civilians. That was in 2006. We asked the minister about putting this gun on the prohibited list. He said he'd check it out. That was four years ago. It's not on the list. Neither is the Ruger Mini-14 that was used in the assassinations at École Polytechnique.

I think the government has shown a great deal of irresponsibility in dealing with gun control in Canada. One of the things that happened shortly after my meeting with Stockwell Day was that he sent me a letter, because I asked him for some information. In the very first paragraph he mentioned Gary Mauser. Gary Mauser is the grey eminence behind the Conservative move to scrap the registry.

This is a picture of Gary Mauser. Gary Mauser is a professor. He does a lot of research into guns. Stockwell Day sent me a lot of the research written by this man. This is not the man who should be deciding Conservative policy on the registry of long guns in Canada. This man wants Canadians to have the right to carry concealed weapons, just as they can in the United States. Is that what Canadians want? If we get rid of the registry, maybe that's next. Maybe that will be another Conservative policy. Maybe citizens who are qualified should be able to carry a concealed weapon on them.

I have a last picture here. Some people refer to this as a little bit of paradise. It's Honolulu, Hawaii. Why am I bringing this picture here? Curiously enough, it is one of the states in the United States that has a very admirable record on gun control. In all of the United States, they have a very low rate of gun violence and homicides in which a firearm is implicated. In Hawaii you have to register all guns, including rifles and shotguns. That's something.

But even Hawaii's record is not as good as Canada's. We have a pretty good system here. It's not too bad. The registry is not the best part of the system, and it's only a small part, but it's a small part that's necessary. Everything has to be included.

• (1620)

I encourage the government to let this thing go. It's just too much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

Last but not least, we have, from the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, Dr. Alan Drummond and Dr. Carolyn Snider. Which one of you is going to do the presentation?

Dr. Alan Drummond (Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians): I will, sir.

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, I would like to thank you and the committee for inviting us and allowing us to bring what we think is a different perspective to this debate. By way of introduction, Dr. Carolyn Snider is an emergency physician and trauma team leader at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and a researcher in injury prevention.

We probably represent a bit of a dichotomy with respect to emergency services. I'm a rural family physician who runs a small-town emergency department. I don't think Carolyn owns guns, but I do, so it'll be an interesting one-two, I think, in terms of how we view emergency medicine and gun control in Canada.

CAEP is the national specialty society for emergency medicine. It represents in excess of 1,800 physicians nationwide who have an interest or a practice in emergency medicine. We have evolved as a specialty since our recognition three decades ago. Initially we focused solely on the evaluation of the acutely ill or injured, but increasingly we've been placing increasing emphasis on such things as system design, research, and injury prevention. Injury continues to be a major issue for our association, but underlying this persistent concern is the realization that our collective ability to treat injury as health care providers in the economy that we're in has largely been maximized, and therefore prevention assumes greater importance for us.

Our membership continues to have concerns with respect to firearm-related injury and death, even since our initial support for

Bill C-68 back in 1994-1995, and they have insisted that their professional association, which we represent, vigorously support efforts to reduce the tragic human toll associated with firearm misuse. We have been leaders in the call for mandatory reporting of gunshot wounds in Canada and continue to vigorously support the provisions of the gun control bill as a sensible package of regulations to minimize the risk of gun-related injury and death in Canada.

Injury is a major public health issue. It is the leading cause of death for people between one and 44 years of age, and most deaths from injuries occur before we ever have an opportunity to intervene. They occur in the home and on the roadside. There is a large economic burden to injury as well, not just from the direct medical costs but also from the costs of rehabilitation and in terms of the human toll of suffering.

Canada's emergency physicians and nurses, as well as trauma surgeons, have been active in promoting an awareness among legislators with respect to their role in injury prevention. We believe strongly that these educational efforts, coupled with socially conscious legislation, lead to positive societal change, injuries prevented, and lives saved.

We urge you to consider the provisions of the Firearms Act as it now stands, not as elements of a crime control bill but rather more importantly as key elements of a socially responsible public health and safety bill. There has been a reduction in firearm-related mortality in Canada since the introduction of firearms regulations both in 1991 and 1995, and we see actually no compelling reason—none whatsoever, actually, from a public health perspective—to dramatically alter such effective legislation.

In front of you are our brief and our background paper. I think we're all familiar with the level of gun ownership in Canada. It is important to realize that rural areas have high rates of gun ownership, and, more particularly, that rural areas, including the territories and the communities in the north, are overrepresented with respect to firearm-related death, usually by the long gun.

For instance, in the province of Ontario in 2004-2005, the rate per 100,000 emergency visits resulting from firearm injury was 8.7 per 100,000 in northern communities, contrasting considerably higher than the provincial average of 5.3 per 100,000 in more southern Ontario.

Firearms are an important cause of injury and death in Canada. In 2005, 818 Canadians were killed by the use of firearms, and despite a general media focus on crime, 72% of these firearm injuries were caused by suicide, so for us this is largely a suicide prevention issue.

Despite the impressive reductions in mortality associated with provisions of the Firearms Act, as will be discussed briefly, there remains much to be done to reduce this tragic societal toll and unacceptable financial waste. This is not the time, in our view, to consider reducing efforts at better gun control.

Suicide is the second most common cause of death in Canada for those aged 10 to 34, the flower of our youth, and the ninth leading cause of death overall. In 2005 firearm deaths accounted for 15% of all suicides, and, as previously mentioned, 72% of all firearm-related deaths are in fact associated with suicide.

• (1625)

The majority of suicides are not, in fact, premeditated acts; rather, they are impulsive in nature. Access to firearms facilitates the completion of a suicide attempt. If you put a gun to your head and pull the trigger, you stand about a 96% chance of dying. If you take an overdose of medications, that is substantially reduced to less than 5%. Suicide attempts using guns are particularly lethal.

We have noticed in our review of the literature, which led to the CAEP gun control position, that firearm-related suicides in Canada have decreased by 46% since the introduction of Kim Campbell's bill in 1991 and by 35% since the introduction of the Firearms Act in 1995, so we believe there has been some strong evidence that gun control in Canada, in its various forms, has led to a cumulative expression of reduced suicides by firearms in this country.

I will skip a little bit. With respect to intimate partner homicide, a gun in the home is a recognized risk factor for spousal homicide. We know the spousal homicide rate is five times higher against women than men. Rifles and shotguns were used in 62% of these homicidal acts. We also note that firearm use in spousal homicide has decreased by 36% since the passage of the Firearms Act, down from 25 victims in 1995 to 9 in 2008.

We know nothing about crime control. We'll defer to our friends from various police associations, but we do note with interest that with respect to homicides, despite the fact of increased gang violence in Toronto and Abbotsford, in fact the homicide rate by firearm in Canadian society has decreased by a significant percentage since the introduction of Bill C-68.

I'm going to skip unintentional injury, as well as the paradigm of injury prevention. Suffice it to say that we believe the legislators of our country have a role to play in public health bills.

Am I doing okay for time?

• (1630)

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes.

Dr. Alan Drummond: That's all I need.

The question is, what is the role of the registry? It's not a philosophical thing for us, but a practical matter.

We, as emergency physicians, be it in rural Perth or in downtown Toronto, commonly encounter people who are brought to the

emergency department with ideation or a threat of suicide. They are commonly brought by the police. It's a tough call to decide who is at risk for suicide and who isn't. It really is a tough act, and there's a lot of clinical weight on our responsibility. We don't want to be wrong.

It is very comforting for us to know whether there is a gun in the home in terms of assessing degree of risk for the lethality of the method, so using the police force to reassure us that a gun in a home may have been removed makes it a little easier call for us if we're thinking about release.

Similarly, with respect to domestic partner violence, women are brought to our emergency departments, often by the police, and again the issue is the safety of this person. Should we return her back to her home? Police access to the registry with knowledge of whether guns are registered to the homeowner is an important point.

It has practical concerns for us. It's not a philosophical discussion.

Our association has been very clear for the last 10 or 15 years. It has been unwavering in its support for effective gun control, and more particularly, unwavering in support for Bill C-68. It's hard to tease out the various provisions of that bill in terms of what has had the positive effect, but the cumulative expression has been positive.

We urge you not to repeal the registration. We believe it is an important tool to ensure the public health and safety of all Canadians.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to questions and comments. We will begin with Mr. Holland, from the official opposition.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for appearing today.

Mr. Momy, perhaps I could start with you. Thank you very much for your work, and through you I say thanks to the more than 41,000 officers you represent. Thank you for their service to the community and country.

One of the things that I think the committee has been wrestling with—and we heard from three very decent retired detectives from Winnipeg—is whether there is a great division in the policing community. It's one of the things that those who are opposed to the registry try to paint.

In representing the policing community, specifically police officers, can you address that question? With any position, you have some people who agree and some who disagree, but there is a legitimate question as to whether that's an outlier in terms of a position or whether the policing community is divided.

Mr. Charles Momy: I'll speak specifically to our membership. We have, across Canada, approximately 75,000 police officers. That includes the RCMP, and as you know, Mr. Holland, we represent a very small group of those members of the RCMP.

I have been very open and blunt about this particular issue. Certainly we do have small pockets of members of the Canadian Police Association who have varying views on this particular issue. When I say, "small pockets", we represent approximately 156 member associations across this country. It comes as no surprise to any of you around this table that the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers has been open with regard to its reservations with this piece of legislation.

I do want to say, though, that just recently in Ottawa, when we were in fact on the Hill lobbying government a couple of weeks ago, we heard from different experts in regard to the gun registry and what it does and doesn't do, and we heard more factual information about the gun registry. What I can tell you is that at the end of this particular month, the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers will have their annual general meeting in Estevan, Saskatchewan, which I will be attending. They will be doing some reconsidering as a result of new information that's come out in the last several months, but more particularly in the last several years, because the gun registry has significantly changed in this country in the last few years since the RCMP has taken over the actual management of the Canadian firearms program. That said, I will state clearly right here, right now, that the views of the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers today are in opposition to the views of the Canadian Police Association as a whole.

•(1635)

Mr. Mark Holland: I'm really tight on time, so maybe I'll just run through a few questions, and we can have brief answers.

Of the 150-plus associations, there is one association that is currently opposed, and it is reconsidering its position. Is that correct?

Mr. Charles Momy: There is one association that represents six smaller associations in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Mark Holland: So it's six associations.

Detective Constable Teeft, you said in your presentation that domestically sourced firearms are a problem. Can you expand on that? How big an issue are guns coming from domestic sources that end up in the hands of criminals? May I have a brief answer?

Det Nadine Teeft: In Toronto for the last three years, the statistics show that 50% of all our crime guns, all firearms, were domestically sourced. Domestically sourced usually means the majority of those guns are from residential entries, not necessarily from Toronto but from across Canada. Those guns have been sourced back to Canada, and they are a problem. It has been 50%, give or take 3%, over the last three years, so it has remained consistent at 50%. The registry is assisting with regard to enforcement to ensure compliance.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Rich, you've heard from the Canadian Police Association, you've heard from the detective constable, and I'm sure you've heard the position of the Canadian Chiefs of Police, who say this is an extremely important tool—one of many—in public safety.

Given that the Auditor General and the RCMP have told us that this program costs \$4.1 million a year, and given the position of such an overwhelming preponderance of your colleagues—in fact, of over 430 chiefs of police, you're one of three, I believe, who have come out against the registry—would you then not agree that if so many people think it's so vital to do their job and it costs \$4.1 million a year, we should be focusing on trying to make the system better? Do you favour scrapping the system or fixing it? Can you clarify that for me?

Chief Bob Rich: I always struggle a bit with the way we say that all the police are supporting it. I sent an email to my colleagues in the province and got some quiet emails back from some RCMP leaders who wouldn't want their comments about their concerns with the registry repeated, so people in my world are asked to line up as well. There are, at various levels, people struggling with their support of it.

Mr. Mark Holland: I don't mean to interrupt, but I'm tight on time. Could I just ask you whether you favour scrapping it or fixing it? It's just a quick question, because I have to go on.

If the overwhelming number of people who represent these associations at the very least say they need it, for \$4.1 million does it make sense to scrap it, or should we be focusing instead on your comments about the need to improve it?

Chief Bob Rich: You won't fix it for \$4.1 million. Yes, I'm in favour of Canadians trying to fix it before we scrap it, but it's going to cost more than that.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Drummond, I'm going to quote you. This is something you said recently:

As a rural emergency physician and coroner, I can safely say that I've never seen a handgun injury. I have, however, seen my share of injuries and deaths inflicted by rifles and shotguns... Gun-related injury is not just a Toronto problem that involves gangs. It has occurred in my small idyllic rural community and involved people that would otherwise seem quite normal. Registration of firearms is important to ensure accountability and compliance with safe storage.

Can you expand on that? As somebody coming from a rural community, do you yourself, Dr. Drummond, also have a firearms licence?

Dr. Alan Drummond: Yes, I do. I have a .22 and a 12 gauge shotgun. I live on about 12 acres on the water, and it's largely used for critter control, although the critters have nothing to fear from me. My son is a bowhunter, so that's not really an issue.

I can tell you that I grew up in Montreal, spent time in Vancouver, and was in the Canadian army; I saw far more firearm-related injuries in my life in agricultural Perth over the years. Certainly shotguns and rifles were a predominant weapon. They were the weapon. I've never seen a handgun injury in my 30 years in medicine.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Ms. Mourani, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Thank you all for being here.

Mr. Rahilly, I wanted to congratulate you on your speech, which I feel was very focused and brought us back to the real issues.

But my question goes to Mr. Rich.

Mr. Rich, you want improvements to the registry. You say that it is going to cost more, but you want the improvements. You do not seem to want to toss the register in the garbage. You would rather try to improve it.

If I understood correctly, you talked about decriminalizing law-abiding hunters. You say that more and more people are considered criminals because they have not registered their guns. You mentioned a million people with unregistered long guns.

How old is that figure of a million people? Can we say before or after 2006? Before the amnesty? After the amnesty?

[English]

Chief Bob Rich: It's one of those figures people can pull out of the air, and I suppose nobody can ever criticize, but when I ask my own experts how many unregistered long guns there are today across Canada, they say it's—very conservatively—a million long guns. That's what they believe currently exists in Canada.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Is that before the amnesty? Has it been like that for a long time?

[English]

Chief Bob Rich: That's today. It's now. They continue to not be registered.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Do you have the figures for 2004, 2005, 2003?

[English]

Chief Bob Rich: No.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Can you get them?

[English]

Chief Bob Rich: No, because as I said in my comments, this is similar to estimating how many grow ops you have in your community. You really are only guessing, and I'm not trying to say that my statement about a million is anything more than an estimate.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I understand. As you say, the figures are kind of pulled out of a hat. That is what I understood from the translation.

[English]

Chief Bob Rich: I would say it's a figure drawn from a person who has a tremendous amount of understanding about guns in Canada, and it's as good a guess as anybody else's.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Are you talking about Mr. Mauser, the person whose photo Mr. Rahilly showed us? Was he the one who came up with the figure, or was it someone else? I saw his gun. It was pretty big.

[English]

Chief Bob Rich: I'm asking my own experts, not that professor. Thank you.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Okay. If I am not mistaken, Mr. Rich, you were talking about decriminalization. I have to tell you that it has been a while since I have heard the word “decriminalization” at this committee. I was trying to understand what you meant by it and I confess I still do not understand.

On June 15, 2000, the Supreme Court rendered a decision and I am going to read you an excerpt from it.

Guns cannot be divided neatly into two categories – those that are dangerous and those that are not dangerous. All guns are capable of being used in crime. All guns are capable of killing and maiming. It follows that all guns pose a threat to public safety...their control falls within the criminal law power.

That means that their control falls under federal jurisdiction. I am trying to understand. If the intent is to decriminalize, this is saying that sections 91 and 92 of the Criminal Code no longer exist. So not registering a gun, intentionally or not, is no longer a crime. Nothing is a crime any more and the management reverts to the provinces. Am I wrong?

[English]

Chief Bob Rich: I actually did go to law school, but that was 30 years ago, so you're asking a lot of me.

In the province, for example—I know that you know this—obviously we run registration systems for cars and drivers' licences. It's not a criminal system. The federal government can run registration systems that use law other than criminal law. You can have regulatory powers. We have regulatory laws from the federal government against catching lobsters inappropriately, so the federal government could, when it comes to the issue of registration, use non-criminal regulatory laws, or—and I'm not an expert on this—I suspect that a province could handle registration of firearms as opposed to the criminalization of possession.

•(1645)

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Let us go back to the car example. Mr. Momy could perhaps enlighten us on this as well. Car registration comes under provincial jurisdiction, not federal. So, when we say that we want to decriminalize registration, it is saying that we want to delegate a power to the provinces. Because if it is criminal, it comes under the Criminal Code, specifically sections 91 and 92. I do not understand how it can be decriminalized without turning the registration over to the provinces. I do not know whether you can answer that for me, Mr. Momy.

[English]

The Chair: There's one minute left.

[Translation]

Mr. Charles Momy: I agree. It would have to become a provincial responsibility, be administered by the provinces and no longer be in the hands of the federal government. That would be the only way to do it, and I can tell you that we are completely against that idea.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Okay. My understanding is that to decriminalize the offence of not registering a firearm, intentionally or not, we must deregulate registration and tell the provinces to handle the offence themselves. Otherwise, it remains a crime.

Mr. Charles Momy: Absolutely.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, I understand it better now.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Comartin is not here, but he's made an agreement with Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for appearing.

Mr. Momy, we've heard that you represent 156 police associations and some 75,000 member police officers. We've also heard you reference the use your rank-and-file officers make of the gun registry: 92% use it, 65% use it day to day, and 73% use it in response to calls, so it seems to show tremendous usage.

We also have some other numbers here showing that not only is the percentage of usage and take-up significant, but the number of queries has increased from 2,087 in 2004 to 11,085 last year. That's an increase in usage of more than 531% over a period of five years.

Now if the registry was not doing its job, wouldn't the usage decrease? I find it hard to follow the logic here. We have an increase in usage. We have a high percentage of usage. That seems to indicate that police officers use it because it's working.

Mr. Charles Momy: In regard to the reference material and statistical information I provided, in 2007 the RCMP Canadian firearms program was the one that instituted a survey of our members across this country, so that is one.

A significant portion of the information you are highlighting comes from the RCMP itself. All of the data that we have requested,

for the most part, come from the Canadian firearms program, from the RCMP itself.

What I can say is the following: I agree with you that we have seen a significant increase in the usage of the gun registry itself, which, again, is just one component of the Canadian firearms program. My take on this is that we have seen a significant change in the way the Canadian firearms program is being managed. We all know that it was taken over by the RCMP in, I believe, 2006-2007. We have seen significant increases in its usage by front-line members in those particular years.

As I indicated, I won't dispute the fact there are autolinks connected to police computers across this country, specifically in Toronto and B.C. that we know of, but even if we take those numbers out, it's still 50%.

•(1650)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Great. Thank you.

It seems there's a high take-up of the registry among police officers: 92% of them use it, and they use it often and at increasing rates. That seems to indicate that it is a useful police tool. In fact, you gave us examples of some of Canada's worst crimes. In Mayerthorpe, where we lost four of our officers, it helped in solving that particular crime.

Do you personally believe that this registry has saved the lives of front-line police officers?

Mr. Charles Momy: That's a tough question to answer. I'll tell you why.

I'll go to what Dr. Drummond was talking about in regard to the registry. It would take me quite a few minutes to explain this in regard to the saving of a life. Can I point to one incident and say that the registry has saved the life of this particular individual? No, I can't say that, but what I can say is that when—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I was talking more about your gut feeling, because it's difficult to lay out empirical evidence that would say this is the case. It's not the nature of the tool.

Mr. Charles Momy: Right. In my own police experience and from my own gut feeling there are certainly many cases, if we were to start digging through all of them, in which it saved people's lives, and more specifically in the areas that Dr. Drummond speaks of in regard to suicides.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Thank you. I'd like to address another issue.

We heard reference to three retired police officers from the Winnipeg Police Service. One in particular, a Mr. Tinsley, made some allegations that I found quite disturbing.

Before I address those, are your police associations democratically elected? Are you democratically elected?

Mr. Charles Momy: They are. In each of the 156 associations, the president and the executive are elected.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: These aren't appointed positions, but elected positions, and you represent the rank-and-file officers.

Mr. Charles Momy: Correct.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I asked because we heard allegations that the police had been “effectively silenced”, meaning that your rank-and-file members have been effectively silenced. That is one quote. Furthermore, it's been alleged that police officers have been intimidated and were told “not to attend here”.

I find a strange disconnect between hearing these conspiracy theories propagated and the point that this is not really the view of the police. We hear that the democratically elected representatives of rank-and-file police in 150 of 156 police associations say they support this. Then, of course, there will be people with different views, but then we hear—

The Chair: You have less than a minute.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: —a report that it's a conspiracy. There's a conspiracy theory.

Since I have little time left, I'd like to go to Mr. Rahilly. If we could once again see the weapon that was used at Dawson College, you drew a parallel between that weapon and the one that was used at École Polytechnique, the Ruger Mini-14. It was a weapon that killed 14 women and injured another 13 women in less than 30 minutes.

Is it correct or not correct that without the gun registry, that weapon—the Ruger Mini-14—would no longer be registered in Canada?

Mr. Brian Rahilly: No. Well, if the registry is gone—no, I'm sorry; I'll just be clear about it. This—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: The long-gun registry—

Mr. Brian Rahilly: Yes, the restricted weapon... In fact, the people to my right could answer that question better than I can. Semi-automatic—

The Chair: We're going to have to end it there. We're way over time.

Mr. Brian Rahilly: Yes, semi-automatic rifles would be wiped off the record.

• (1655)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: You mean weapons similar to these. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Rathgeber, please.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for your appearance here today. It's good to see you again, Mr. Momy, and I have a number of questions for you.

Chief Rich testified that he believes the gun registry to be “horribly inaccurate”. Bearing in mind there has been an amnesty since 2006, would you agree with Chief Rich on that point?

Mr. Charles Momy: I would not, and the only reason, Mr. Rathgeber, that I would say not is again because of the information in the annual report provided by the Canadian firearms program last year, produced by the RCMP, in regard to consistent use. You would think that if it's so inundated with problems, that—

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: I'm very short on time here. There's an amnesty for registration, so you accept the proposition that many owners do not register their rifles?

Mr. Charles Momy: Absolutely.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Therefore, you'll have to agree with the chief that the registry is not accurate. People aren't registering.

Mr. Charles Momy: With the continued amnesties that have been occurring, absolutely. Many are not.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Then you agree that the registry's not accurate, currently, today.

Mr. Charles Momy: With the continued amnesties—

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

In 2004, your association passed a resolution that said:

The Canadian Professional Police Association...supports a firearm registry system that provides accurate information on all firearms and is accessible to police officers in a timely manner to improve the safety of all police officers and community members in Canada.

So that resolution is no longer valid. You just told me you don't believe the registry is accurate.

Mr. Charles Momy: In fact, in that document you'll also notice that we continue to improve the firearms program, or the firearms registry. As I indicated, the continued amnesties are certainly not assisting in the registration of firearms.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Certainly the 2004 resolution didn't contemplate an inaccurate registry.

Mr. Charles Momy: It contemplated, certainly, problems in any type of registry.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Okay. I'm going to change gears slightly.

You talked about a survey. Mr. Wrzesnewskyj talked about it at some length, and he said something that I think you need to correct. He said you represent 75,000 members, and your brief indicates that you represent 41,000 members.

Mr. Charles Momy: Yes. When I mentioned 75,000, I talked about all front-line police officers across this country, which included the RCMP, but for us it's only 41,000.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: You have 41,000 members in your association.

Mr. Charles Momy: Correct.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: I understand only 408 responded to that survey. You said that.

Mr. Charles Momy: Yes. This survey was actually compiled by the RCMP Canadian firearms program in 2007.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: You appreciate that less than 1% of your members responded to that survey.

Mr. Charles Momy: We all know how surveys work, but yes, it's a small—

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: This isn't a random survey. This is a survey that every member has the opportunity to respond to.

Mr. Charles Momy: Correct.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: But more than 99% chose not to, correct? You have 408 who responded and you have 41,000 members.

Mr. Charles Momy: Again, I can't explain how the actual survey was provided because we weren't involved. The Canadian Police Association was not involved in this particular survey. It was a survey that was compiled by the RCMP in 2007, so it had nothing to do with us.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Nonetheless, 92% of less than 1% have used the registry, based on your own survey.

Mr. Charles Momy: This is not our survey.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Based on the survey that you presented in your opening statement.

Mr. Charles Momy: Right.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

I want to talk about these 11,000 inquiries a day. I think you're right that 45% of them are automatically generated by CPIC, and I appreciate that, but I want to talk about the other 55%, which you indicated are normally in response to a domestic situation. Those are the ones I want to talk about.

Here's my scenario. Your officers are responding to a domestic situation. You run a search, and it comes back that there are no weapons at that residence. Are you telling me that your officers, or the members of your association, rely on that search and go into that house thinking that there are no weapons?

Mr. Charles Momy: Absolutely not.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

Here's the second scenario. They run the same search, either by name or by residence. It doesn't matter. The registry comes back that there's one weapon. Your officers go in. They neutralize the weapon. They take it out of play. At that point, do they assume that they have a safe crime scene, or are they operating under the assumption that there might be more weapons?

Mr. Charles Momy: You always assume there are more weapons.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Okay. You've given me two answers and I agree with them both.

You did two searches. One's positive and one's negative. Your officers didn't rely on either one of their registry searches. In both situations they did not rely on that information. Is that correct?

• (1700)

Mr. Charles Momy: The reality is that when you attend as a police officer at a residence and you have access to the registry, it makes a significant difference whether the residence has one weapon or 15 weapons or 30 weapons.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: I understand that, but in my two situations they wouldn't rely on the registry either time, would they?

Mr. Charles Momy: No, they wouldn't.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

I was visited by three of your members, very fine officers from Edmonton, two to three weeks ago during the police association day on the Hill, and they had three things on their mind. They wanted to talk about a bargaining unit for the RCMP, they wanted to talk about more money for front-line policing, and they wanted to talk about a fund for the families of fallen brethren.

If this is such a burning issue for the CPA, why was it not on the agenda of what they were dispatched to talk to me about?

Mr. Charles Momy: The gun registry issue is one of the many issues that we have as one of our priorities—

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Is it not in the top three?

Mr. Charles Momy: It was not one of the top three.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Okay. In fact, you did a survey in 2010. You surveyed your members, and you do that every year, right?

Mr. Charles Momy: No.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Your website talks about a 2010 membership survey. You're not familiar with that?

Mr. Charles Momy: Yes, okay.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Would you agree with me that there were no questions about the long-gun registry on that survey?

Mr. Charles Momy: It wasn't a survey dealing with our priorities.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: What was it a survey of? You asked your members their thoughts about the Young Offenders Act. You asked about parole and penalties, but not long-gun control, not firearms control?

Mr. Charles Momy: No. That survey basically came from last year's strategic planning sessions, which didn't include—

The Chair: There are 30 seconds left.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Since you didn't survey them last year and it wasn't even in your survey in 2004, how can you tell this committee that you represent the opinions of 41,000 front-line officers?

Mr. Charles Momy: We have 29 board members around the board table. Those active police officers all represent different groups right across Canada, from Vancouver to Winnipeg to Toronto to Halifax.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: So you represent the opinions of the presidents of the associations, not of the front-line members?

Mr. Charles Momy: Those presidents in turn—and I believe there was a question from Mr. Holland earlier—are elected by their members at large.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Did any of them survey their members, except in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Charles Momy: It's not my business to do that.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Kania, please.

Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Drummond, the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians opposes Bill C-391 and supports the gun registry. Your organization is just one of many medical and health organizations that also oppose it. Can you tell me what other organizations oppose it?

Dr. Alan Drummond: Sure, fair enough.

As you know, last week a broad group of health professionals presented an open letter to members of Parliament in support of the gun registry. That group included 28 medical and nursing associations, as well as some fairly pre-eminent health professionals.

We're front-line workers. We see this stuff. When we hear of the whole crime control thing, it just doesn't make a lot of sense to us as health professionals. We see this actually as a health prevention bill, a health safety bill.

Besides the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, I know that the Trauma Association of Canada and the National Emergency Nurses Affiliation have some support, and we promote injury prevention and the gun control bill. Many organizations—suicide prevention agencies, nurses' unions, public health associations, front-line emergency workers—have come together in support of this particular position.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Would it be fair to say that essentially all health care providers and organizations support the gun registry?

Dr. Alan Drummond: No, I don't think that would be fair to say. I don't believe, for instance, that the Canadian Medical Association has a position on the gun registry whatsoever. Even within an individual association you're going to hear people who have differing views.

However, Carolyn and I represent the board of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians and our 1,800 members. We are historically unified in our support for better gun control in Canada to reduce the human toll of firearms deaths in our emergency departments.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Are there any mental health or health organizations that you're aware of that have formally come out in favour of eliminating the gun registry?

• (1705)

Dr. Alan Drummond: I believe there's a suicide prevention agency in Quebec that's been firmly in support of this.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Do you mean in support of ending it?

Dr. Alan Drummond: No, not of—

Mr. Andrew Kania: That was the question.

Dr. Alan Drummond: I'm not a good listener. Just ask my wife.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Have any mental health or health organizations come out saying that the gun registry should be ended?

Dr. Alan Drummond: Personally, I'm not aware of any having done so.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Mr. Momy, do you know which government put in place the amnesty that my friend across the table was speaking of?

Mr. Charles Momy: Was it the the Conservative government?

Mr. Andrew Kania: Right.

Now, I want to give you some examples—and I did this last day as well—of how I believe the registry assists. I would like you to go through these with me.

Let's take court orders. If a judge makes a court order that police officers are to go into a residence and remove firearms and the registry indicates that there are—and I'll use the same example as last time—13 firearms in the home, is it not helpful to the police officers, if they have found 10, to know that there should be at least three others and that they should keep looking?

Mr. Charles Momy: It's the same as with any other evidence. We're going to keep on looking, absolutely. We don't depend 100% on any tool that we have at our disposal. As a police officer, you make absolutely sure; in a case like the one you've just provided, you will continue to search, but it's a helpful tool that assists police in garnering the proper information to appear before a judge to get a warrant. In a prohibition scenario, we would certainly continue searching the house.

Mr. Andrew Kania: If there were no registry and you had no ability to know how many guns were supposedly in a house, you would search, you would do your best, and you would find what you would find, but if there is a registry, as there is now, and it says there are at least 13 guns and you have found only 10, you will positively know that you must keep looking. I know you're going to keep looking and do your very best—I agree—but you're going to keep looking for at least three more, because you know there are supposed to be three more, correct?

Mr. Charles Momy: Absolutely.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Let's take domestic violence. Long guns are used, as we know, predominantly in domestic violence situations. I'll give you the same concrete example. If a police officer goes in and there are threats, they know that they have to do something to protect the family members. If the registry shows them that there are 13 guns and they have found only 10, the same things apply: they will continue to keep looking in those circumstances to protect the family, because they know to look for at least three more. Isn't that right?

Mr. Charles Momy: Absolutely. In fact, there's one example I provided in the package to the committee as well. It's about a specific scenario such as the one you indicate. A family believed that the father, who was suicidal, only had 13 guns, but the reality was that he had 21 guns. It was only through the registry that police officers actually found that out. Again, once they found the 21 guns, they continued to search.

The Chair: Mr. MacKenzie is next, please.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Just for clarification—and perhaps, Chief Rich, you can confirm this—the amnesty does not eliminate the need for licensing. It only gives people the opportunity to register their guns without a fee being charged. Is that correct?

Chief Bob Rich: That's correct.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: So the amnesty is not a bad thing. As a matter of fact, it's intended to bring people into the system.

Chief Bob Rich: It's to bring them into the fold, absolutely; its intent is very good.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay. We've been registering handguns since the 1930s.

Chief Bob Rich: That's correct.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Your problem is handguns.

Chief Bob Rich: Yes, it is handguns and assault rifles that would be illegal in Canada.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: That's right.

My understanding is that the Beretta Cx4 Storm is actually a restricted weapon. Bill C-391 wouldn't apply to it because, being restricted, it would be in the registry of restricted firearms, if it is actually there.

Chief Bob Rich: Forgive me. I think it's simply a semi-automatic rifle that was legally registered and held by the gentleman who did the Dawson shooting.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Even if it is, it would be registered one way or another.

Chief Bob Rich: I'm sorry; I believe so, but I'm not going to pretend I'm the expert.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: That's fair enough, but one of the problems is that we're trying to make a registry of unrestricted weapons into some form of gun control. I think that by and large, most people would agree that only 50% are in that registry.

Would that, plus or minus, fit what you're...?

• (1710)

Chief Bob Rich: That's exactly what I'm trying to say. I don't have the number. As I say, it's always difficult to come up with the number, but a huge percentage of long guns out there are not in our registry, and that's a significant problem.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: If it's going to cost us \$4.1 million a year for the 50% that are in there, there has to be some significant cost to trying to bring the other 50% into the registry, and it's a lot more than \$4.1 million.

Chief Bob Rich: Yes, and my guess is that if we were going to run a registry that was completely timely and accurate, it would be a lot more than \$4.1 million as well.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Are you familiar with Bill C-17, which was brought in to deal with safe handling, safe storage, and FACs?

Chief Bob Rich: Yes.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Not long before Bill C-68, Bill C-17 came into place. With the FACs, police officers interviewed people before licences were issued.

Chief Bob Rich: That's correct.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: That system has gone.

Chief Bob Rich: That's right. We have gone to a different background clearance system, I suppose.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I put it to you that when police officers did those background checks, people with dependency problems,

whether drugs or alcohol or mental health issues, did not get a licence.

Chief Bob Rich: That's right. My belief is that a properly trained investigator, whether a badge-carrying person or not, can do a much better job than the system we're currently using.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: In the current system, I think you explained that someone with a pal talked to someone on the telephone, and—

Chief Bob Rich: It felt as if I were trying to apply for a credit card or something.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Right. I appreciate that.

Dr. Drummond, I also come from a more rural community as a police officer, and I agree with you wholeheartedly in what you said about not seeing the handgun injuries; what you see are long-gun injuries. You don't suppose that has something to do with there not being as many handguns in rural areas as there are long guns to start with, do you?

Dr. Alan Drummond: Well...

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: What I'm saying is that handguns seem to be more of an urban issue sometimes, so what you see is what's naturally there.

Dr. Alan Drummond: I'd agree with that. Again, I'm not a criminologist; I just report what I see.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I mentioned Bill C-17, and I think perhaps you mentioned it. I have seen in my time that the beginning of the change in accidental deaths occurred when it became mandatory to practice safe handling and safe storage and separations of guns and ammunition. It made a tremendous difference in accidental deaths, particularly in the rural areas and with children.

Dr. Carolyn Snider (Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians): Do you mind if I answer that?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Please do.

Dr. Carolyn Snider: Thank you; I'll answer that.

We definitely did see a decline after the 1991 bill, but there's been some strong work done out of Quebec. They were able to do a time series analysis in which they looked at firearm deaths and were able to tease out downward trends and the putting into place of legislation. This was done by Gagné in 2008. They looked at Bill C-51, which was from 1977; Bill C-17, from 1991, and Bill C-68, from 1995—

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: My point would be that it's cumulative from Bill C-17, and Bill C-68 gets credit for much of Bill C-17's benefits.

Dr. Carolyn Snider: No. What's interesting is that she was able to tease out that regulation and actually see a much bigger decrease in both homicide deaths and suicide deaths based on that.

I would also suggest that we see that decline specifically in suicides.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay.

Dr. Drummond, I think you used some statistics with female deaths. The Statistics Canada data for 2008 are as follows: 51 women murdered by stabbing, 34 by strangulation, and 25 by firearms. I believe that of that 25, 11 women were killed with long guns. Would that fit the statistics?

I think Dr. Drummond used some statistics earlier that were certainly larger numbers than those, but these are from Statistics Canada. I'm just wondering—

The Chair: We'll have to end it there.

If you come across it, please just let us know, and we'll go on to it. We're out of time.

Go ahead, Monsieur Desnoyers, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, everyone. Your contribution today is important for what we are trying to accomplish in controlling firearms, which, in my opinion, is extremely important.

I want to address the violence issue some more, including domestic violence and the way the police can use this registry in domestic violence and suicide cases. As you said, there is a downward trend right now. That said, we are not saying that it is only because of the registry, but rather that there are a number of tools, of which the registry is one of the most important in terms of prevention. The prevention component, which we often forget about, is built on that, and all those who have to use the registry benefit from it.

If the registry is not quite up to date, I could ask myself whether it is because of the Conservatives and the amnesty they came up with, which prevents people from registering their guns. But, with time, if we manage to keep the registry and get rid of the amnesty, we could control all those guns, especially the long guns.

In fact, we can save lives in domestic violence cases. When it is a matter of suicide, we can go and look for the guns. In domestic violence cases, the job of the police officers is to figure out how to react when they know that there are guns in the house.

So could you expand on the issues of suicide, then domestic violence and finally, the police?

• (1715)

[*English*]

Dr. Carolyn Snider: I'd like to suggest that there are two ways we use this registry on a daily basis as emergency physicians.

Starting with domestic violence, anywhere from 2% to 12% of women in our emergency department are currently being victimized by their intimate partners. In fact, in some studies out of the States—unfortunately we don't know this yet in Canada—one-fifth of women who have been killed by their partner were seen in an emergency department in the prior year.

I want to put that into the context of how many women I see every week with domestic violence. Every single one of them I ask about access to a firearm, because we know that there is an incredible risk of death due to a firearm in the home of an intimate partner in violence. Additionally, we strongly encourage them to contact the police if the police aren't already there. One of my main concerns is to get that gun out of the home. Often the police are involved and often that is one of the ramifications of their being involved, as well as being a very strong support for women who are being victimized.

In terms of suicide, it's the same thing. When a cop brings in a patient, which is actually quite common for patients who are severely depressed—often the police are involved in bringing them into our emergency departments—again I ask the question, “Is there a gun registered in this home?” If there is a gun registered in this home, I want to know that it's been taken out, and if they haven't been able to find it, that changes my safety assessment significantly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Does the Fédération des femmes du Québec have anything to add?

Ms. Alexa Conradi: I will answer some of the questions that were raised and will then turn the floor over to Ms. Monastesse.

In Quebec, for example, we see that 15 out of 100,000 people in regions like Montreal, are killed with firearms, whereas in northern Quebec, in the rural areas, where Inuit communities live, 78 people out of 100 are killed with firearms.

Just this morning, I met with some women's groups, Pauktuutit in particular, a group of Inuit women who say that their greatest priority is to combat violence against women in the north. We know that having firearms in the house is a major risk factor in cases of domestic violence.

I have already been in the north and have spent some time there. I have enormous respect for Inuit hunting culture. I feel that it is extremely important that Inuit culture is able to continue to exist, and that Inuit are able to have access to hunting, the water and the land to get their food. That said, all the international conventions say that no customs or traditions can justify ignoring ways to combat violence against women.

So, with all respect for that culture, there are women from the YWCA in Yukon who tell us that the crux of the violence against women issue is not only that they might die but also that it is used as a threat in cases of domestic violence.

Manon, do you have anything to add?

• (1720)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. I'm sorry; we're out of time. There may be time in the next round.

Go ahead, Mr. McColeman, please.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Thank you, and thank you as well to all the witnesses for being here today. It's really appreciated.

I'd like to go down the first nations road with you, Minister Edzerza, and gather some of your comments. One of my reasons is that I represent the single largest first nation in Canada in my riding of Brant, including the City of Brantford, the Six Nations of the Grand River, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit. That's approximately 12,500 people.

I totally agree with you about the disappointment in being the only first nations person to be able to come as a witness. As a result of an agenda that was put forward in a very tight way by people across the table, we weren't able to hear as many witnesses as we'd like.

That aside, during your comments you mentioned your member of Parliament from the Yukon. I believe you used his first name, "Larry". I would take that to be Larry Bagnell. He is the voice of Yukoners and, in particular, in your case, of aboriginals in the Yukon. Is that correct?

Are you aware that your MP, Larry Bagnell, has been saying that he's doing everything he can to fight the 13-year long-gun registry?

Hon. John Edzerza: No, I'm not aware of it.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Well, I'll read you a quote: "People in the territory pretty well know how hard I've been fighting this over the years," Bagnell said Monday..." This comes from an article written by a Jason Unrau on May 5. I'm using it as the basis for this.

Have you talked to your MP as to whether he is fighting this?

Hon. John Edzerza: The last comment I heard from our member of Parliament was that his hands are tied.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Okay. What you're saying, then, is that his leader, Mr. Michael Ignatieff, is saying he must vote a certain way.

Hon. John Edzerza: Yes.

Mr. Phil McColeman: What you're saying here today, just to be sure, is that he's not representing the first nations people of the Yukon.

Hon. John Edzerza: Well, I'll put it to you this way: if tomorrow morning he was going to face an election in our community, and it was based on his getting re-elected, and he was voting no, he wouldn't be down here in Ottawa.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I appreciate your saying that.

I don't know, Mr. Chair, whether it's appropriate that this go into the record or not, but here is a letter from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. Some 71 aboriginal leaders within Saskatchewan have signed this letter, sent to their member of Parliament and also copied to the Prime Minister of the country, wishing to see the current system of long-gun registry abolished for something that could be possibly better than this system.

Are you aware of this letter from the first nations people of Saskatchewan?

Hon. John Edzerza: Actually, I was just made aware of it today.

I could tell you probably with great certainty that if we were to go to every chief in the Yukon, the answer would be to abolish this.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I'll just point out too that I live in an area of the country, southwestern Ontario, which is fairly significantly populated, yet the opinion of my chief, the elected band council chief

—that would be Chief Bill Montour—is the same. He said he'd be willing to come and testify to that on behalf of the largest first nation in Canada. This is a group of first nations people living within what I would call an urbanized part of our country, not in the far north. They see this as something that's been foisted upon them and as something that is not very efficient or effective in their own community.

The other point I'd like to pick up on—and perhaps this is to you, Chief Rich—is that as we've listened to testimony, I think there is a desire to have something that's effective and efficient by way of gun control. We're not against gun control, not at all. Former police chief MacKenzie brought up the system of interviewing people. Guns are dangerous in the hands of criminals, and it isn't the guns, but the person behind the gun. The chief articulated that well in a discussion with his friend—I won't use the same words you used, Minister—and that's been said several times. I'm just wondering—

● (1725)

The Chair: Close your question.

Mr. Phil McColeman: The question is about licensing and stiffening up the requirements to get a licence to own a gun. Can you make comments on that?

Chief Bob Rich: If I were picking between the two, I would put my money into who gets a licence. To me that's the biggest single issue, as well as aggressively reviewing whether people have become unstable or involved in domestic violence or are mentally ill. It's all of those issues. That's where I would put my money.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Thank you so much.

The Chair: We have about three and a half minutes left, Mr. Holland, if you would like to use that time.

Mr. Mark Holland: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We register our car. We register our boat. We register our dog. The reality is that registration of all of those things, and of guns, is an important tool. Nobody would suggest that registering a car alone is going to save drivers from accidents in itself, but we recognize when we have to stand in line at the DMV, as I did yesterday, that it's part of the process and it's part of being in a democratic society and having the privilege of being able to use a car or a boat, or to have a pet, or to own a gun.

When we have the Canadian Police Association, which elects its executive—by the way, every single one of us at this table is elected—challenged as somehow unrepresentative of the people who elected them, or have our system of representative democracy challenged, then I have an issue.

When we have the Canadian Police Association come to us and say that they need this to do their job; when we have the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police say that this is important to them and that we need it to keep our communities safe; when we have medical professionals come forward in a nearly unanimous fashion—in fact, there isn't a single one who says otherwise—saying that we need to keep this registry because it helps save lives; when we have all of these individuals come forward and have the head of the police boards across the country say that this is essential; when the Auditor General tells us that all of this costs \$4.1 million a year; when we know that police are using it 11,805 times a day—

Mr. Phil McColeman: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Just a minute.

Mr. Mark Holland: No, Mr. Chair, let me finish, please. I'm leading up to a question.

Mr. Phil McColeman: It's a point of order.

The Chair: It's a point of order.

Mr. Mark Holland: I only have a minute.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: I'm just curious whether we're going to hear a question anytime before the end of this period.

Mr. Mark Holland: That's not a point of order. Think of this just for a second—all of that.

An hon. member: You're not the chair.

Mr. Mark Holland: Think of it. It's overwhelming that it's being used more than 11,000 times a day.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: He's making a speech.

Mr. Mark Holland: Here's the thing.

Mr. Chair, I have the opportunity to lead into a question. Mr. Chair, please, I'm trying to ask a question. Please.

First of all, I stand proud with a leader who will stand for keeping our communities safe. I stand proud with a leader who's going to say that a system that is supported by that many professionals is one that we need to keep. I would ask this question to anybody: why on earth would you kill something that costs \$4.1 million when so many people say it's a tool they need?

At the end of the day, if you as an individual don't particularly need to use that tool, then let others continue to use it, just as is the case with a trucker who has to drive for a living. He understands that he has to register his car. It's the same thing with a gun.

My question is for the Fédération des femmes du Québec.

The Chair: Allow some time for answering.

Mr. Mark Holland: Do you think this bill, and by extension the Harper government to which this bill belongs, stands up for women? Do you think that killing the gun registry is an effective way to combat violence against women?

The Chair: Does anybody want to pick up on that?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexa Conradi: Of course it is not a good way to combat violence against women.

I have a question for the Conservatives. Have they asked aboriginal women's groups what they think about the domestic violence they are experiencing and what they think about registration? Also, what do women in rural areas think about the domestic gun violence they will be facing when firearms no longer have to be registered?

We consider this bill to be irresponsible and it really has to be opposed.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there anybody else? Go ahead, Mr. Edzerza.

Hon. John Edzerza: Yes, I would—

Mr. Mark Holland: It's my turn, Mr. Chair. I have a question for Mr. Momy.

The Chair: You addressed this to everybody on the panel, and now—

Mr. Mark Holland: No, I didn't. I asked a very specific question to the federation. I have a last question for Mr. Momy and one for Detective Constable Teeft, and I only have one moment.

I just want to know—

The Chair: I'm sorry. The time is up.

This meeting stands adjourned.

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and
Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the
following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les
Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à
l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>