

Francine Dulong  
Vancouver, BC

March 20th, 2012

Shaila Anwar  
Clerk  
Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs  
The Senate of Canada  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A4

Dear Ms. Anwar,

I write to you as a concerned citizen, as I watch over thirty years of work in our country to encourage responsible gun ownership being silenced through a bill which negates our obligations to prevent illicit firearms trade both nationally and internationally.

write to you as a concerned teacher, as I see bullying on the rise combined with gun laws that promote less accountability, less responsibility and easier access to firearms.

I write to you as a grieving daughter, as I witness the creation of a gun sale loophole becoming a reality in Canada, which is one half of the equation that set the stage for the death of my mother Jocelyne Couture-Nowak at Virginia Tech University, in the United States, almost five years ago.

All guns are lethal, and any gun in the wrong hands is dangerous. To quote Colin Goddard, a Virginia Tech survivor, when he spoke on the Chadron school tragedy just two weeks ago "You have to look at this problem... in two ways. From the supply side: how did someone this young get a weapon they were legally not allowed to own. And you also have to look at it from the demand side: why did this young man feel like using a gun was the way to solve his problem?" Whether a mass shooting or a single murder, mandatory license checks ensure only those with valid firearms licence can purchase guns. They exist in Canada to prevent the supply side of this equation. As do records of sale and registrations that track legal weapons. These measures also keep us accountable and responsible for our guns, because we can be held accountable by law if they are misused. An individual must go through many different background checks to obtain their licence, which stops potential "demand" side issues such as depression, domestic violence, or criminal history, at the source. It is the applicant who must prove they are competent and responsible, through courses and two references on top of the background check. The rigours of these checks become meaningless if we facilitate gun purchases where sellers are not required to ensure that the buyer's licence is valid. Amendments in Bill C-19 will repeal mandatory licence checks and mandatory records of transaction for long guns. If we take away legal obligation and potential tracking, we create an open private space (supply) for guns to get into the wrong hands (demand) - an eerily similar situation to what we see in our neighbors in the south.

Some people argue that these are "duck guns" used solely for hunting and sporting activities. A semi-automatic Ruger Mini-14 is what was used in the Montreal Massacre of '89 and the Norway shootings in 2011. They have that potential. Others claim that Bill C-19 will end the criminalization of law-abiding, gun owning citizens. I come from rural Nova Scotia and a hunting family, I understand this opinion, and what I claim in no way criminalizes them. Guns come with responsibilities, just like cars do. Some critics

claim the registry is a waste of time and money. Granted it did take more funds to set up than originally estimated, but the current costs of maintaining the registration of rifles and shotguns alone have been determined to be less than \$4 million per year, an investment that is dwarfed by the costs of gun death and injury.

Over my five years in research on both Canadian and US gun laws, there are many statistics I can quote to you that plainly show the reduced rates of violence directly supported by our current long gun registry. We have only to look at the US to see what ease of supply and lack of responsibility in demand can do. The bottom line is that over the course of fire arms legislation in Canada since 1991, we have finally created a system that works, a system that supports international norms towards the prevention of illicit gun trade, and a system we can continue to improve upon. It has taken a great amount of time and tax dollars to get to this point. Now Bill C-19 will literally scrap all those efforts and the hard copy knowledge we have gained from the experience.

Whether a national tragedy or a single victim, if you had the chance to avert a death by gun violence, would you not take that chance? And if you had the tools at your disposal, after a violent death, to seek out justice, would you use those tools or throw them away? Myself and thirty two other families live with the intense loss and unending suffering of just one act of gun violence. This bill will change the safety of our country for the worse, leading to others suffering that same fate.

I humbly ask the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs to reassess the amendments and the purpose in its entirety of Bill C-19.

Sincerely,

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