

SUBMISSION TO THE
SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

RE: Bill C-19, An Act to Amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act (Ending the Long-gun Registry Act)

Submitted by: Gordon Steele
13311 64 ST NW
Edmonton, AB T5A 0Y6

Ph: (780) 478-2558 E-mail: gbstele@telus.net

I am a seventy-one year-old retired Albertan who strongly believes in the value to law enforcement and to all Canadians, of having **ALL** firearms registered!

I do so as I believe the registration of anything, whether it is an animal, vehicle, or firearm, promotes responsible ownership by legally tying the owner to the registered item!

First, Let me tell you how I became interested in this subject, and why I, an Albertan, strongly support the Canadian Firearms Program.

I worked for a wonderful organization, the Edmonton United Way, from 1990 to 2000 when I retired. And, it was during this time I became a strong supporter of "gun control".

Part of my responsibility was to teach an employee referral agent course. The participants learned about services in the community and where to refer co-workers seeking help for problems of personal impact.

I always included one session each year on Family Violence, instructed by a Director from one of our local Women's Shelters.

Hearing the stories of women who were abused, beaten, and in some cases killed by their husbands really opened my eyes. **I could not believe any man could do these horrible things to a woman.**

The women's shelters and other women's groups strongly supported the implementation of Bill C68 in 1995. They asked for my support and I gave it to them. Since then I continue to support their belief that **ALL** guns must be registered!

In my submission I will present my views on:

1. **GUN CONTROL - AN ISSUE OF SAFETY FOR WOMEN**
2. **MISINFORMATION and THE BIG LIE**
3. **THE GUN LOBBY AND "POLITICS"**
4. **MYTHS AND MISINFORMATION**
5. **OBSERVATIONS and CONCLUSION**

1: - GUN CONTROL – AN ISSUE OF SAFETY FOR WOMEN

Women’s Shelters, and women’s advocacy groups, are unanimous in their belief that Canada’s gun control laws, especially the registration of long guns, have saved lives!

To illustrate the positive effect Canada’s Firearms Program plays in reducing spousal homicide committed with firearms, primarily long guns, I have included the following excerpts from “Appendix 1” and “Finding 2” of the **RCMP “Canadian Firearms Program Evaluation Report - February 2010”** See: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/fire-feu-eval/index-eng.htm>

Appendix I - Elimination of long gun registration

Firearms registration provides the link between a firearm and its rightful owners and enhances owner’s accountability for their firearms. In addition, registration:

1. provides law enforcement officers with critical information to track firearms when investigating gun crimes and gun smuggling, distinguish legally owned firearms from those illegally acquired, and develop strategies to address safety risks before responding to a call;
2. **facilitates the enforcement of court ordered firearms prohibitions and allows police to take preventative action, such as removing all firearms from situations of domestic violence;** (my bold)

Finding 2 - The Canadian Firearms Program as a public safety-oriented regulatory framework, is continuing toward achieving its strategic outcome of reducing firearm-related harm.

Finding 2, Chart 3, shows a marked drop in spousal homicides by long gun since the implementation of Bill C-68 in 1995! **(Note: The accumulated drop in spousal homicide by long gun over these 11 years from 1996 to 2007 is 92)**

CHART 3 - Victims of Spousal Homicide Committed with Firearm by type of Firearm, Canada						
Year	Handgun	Rifle Shotgun	Other Firearms	Total Firearms	% Male Victims	% Female Victims
2007	1	6	2	9	0%	100
2006	4	9	3	16	18.8%	81.3%
2005	4	14	3	21	4.8%	95.2
2004	7	7	2	16	6.3%	93.8%
2003	7	12	4	23	8.7%	91.3%
2002	5	10	1	16	12.5%	87.5%
2001	6	12	1	19	5.3%	94.7%
2000	8	12	0	20	20%	80%
1999	5	17	1	23	4.3%	95.7%
1998	3	12	4	19	10.5	89.5%
1997	8	17	2	27	14.8%	85.2%
1996	4	20	3	27	14.8%	85.2%

- Spousal homicides are those that involve persons in legal marriages, those who are separated or divorced from such unions and those in common-law relationships (including same-sex spouses)
- Other Firearms include sawed-off rifle/shotgun, fully automatic weapons, forearm like weapons (i.e. nail guns, pellet gun, etc) and firearms of unknown type.
- Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey

It is an undeniable fact the “registration of long guns” has played a major role in the striking reduction of spousal homicides!

2: - MISINFORMATION and THE BIG LIE

Canadians expect their politicians to be honest and to not play politics with issues of public safety such as gun control. However, this is not the case!

The Conservatives and their gun-lobby friends continuously spread misinformation and myths in a calculated attempt to discredit Canada's Firearm Program.

They have deliberately, and dishonestly, deceived Canadians by:

- referring to the “Canadian Firearms Program” as the “Long-gun Registry” and
- falsely claiming “The long-gun registry” has cost \$2 billion dollars.

Neither of these two statements is truthful, but registry opponents in the Conservative Party and the gun lobby have constantly presented them as fact!

THERE IS NO “LONG GUN REGISTRY”! - There is a “registration of Long-Guns!

There is no bill, law, or anything that establishes a “Long Gun Registry”!

1995's Bill C-68 - short title the Firearms Act, improved gun control laws in many ways. For the first time we had a Canadian Firearms Program with a requirement to “register” ALL firearms, not just hand guns and restricted/prohibited weapons as were previously registered. Bill C-68 also implemented advanced “Licensing” provisions that will be retained under C-19.

It is important to note the words “long gun registry” do not appear anywhere in Bill C-68!

It is obvious Bill C-19, short title “Ending the Long-gun Registry Act” refers to something that does not legally exist!

Therefore “registration records” pertaining to long guns must be considered part and parcel of the records within the Canadian Firearms Program and must not be destroyed!

THE \$2 BILLION BIG LIE

For the most blatant example of the use of the \$2 billion “BIG Lie”, I refer you to the Conservative Party's own “Scrapped the registry” site <http://www.scrappedtheregistry.ca/> Here you will see written - **“Billions were wasted on creating and maintaining the registry, money that in the future can be put to better use – like on the economy or actually fighting crime”**. (UNTRUE, but even if so, how can past dollars be put to future use??) And then if you click on “petition” you see a smiling Prime Minister Harper and the words **“Whereas the wasteful Long-Gun Registry has cost Canadian taxpayers over \$2 billion to create, and over \$100 million annually to maintain” BOTH STATEMENTS ARE DISHONESTIES!!**

MP Candace Hoepfner has used the term “\$2 billion Long Gun Registry” extensively in speeches and comments in the house (as have all other Conservative MP's) and during her costly, world-tour like, campaign visits to opposition ridings. This link <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/video/harpers-anti-gun-registry-champion/article1718264/?frolm=1717453> takes you to a Canadian Press video, posted Sept 22, 2010, in which Hoepfner states **“I Don't think you have to be a gun owner to know the long gun registry isn't working and it cost almost \$2 billion, and continues to cost \$106 million per year. THIS IS A COMPLETELY FALSE STATEMENT!!**

MP Garry Breitkreuz wrote in a February 9, 2009 press release - “**The long-gun registry** was originally budgeted to cost Canadians \$2 million, but the price tag spiraled out of control to an estimated **\$2 billion** a decade later.” (My bold)

THE FACTS!

The following information, showing the accumulated net cost of the entire firearms program was \$946 million, is from the **2006 May Status Report of the Auditor General of Canada – Canadian Firearms Program. [May 2006 Status Report—Chapter 4](#)** .

(Note: The AG Report appropriately refers to the comprehensive “Canadian Firearms Program” and not to the fictitious –“Long-Gun Registry”! In fact, the words “long gun registry” cannot be found anywhere in the AG Report!

“**4.3** In 2001, the program cost \$200 million annually to administer, and the government estimated that by 2005 its costs from its inception would total \$1 billion. The program's actual net cost reported by the government was \$946 million from 1995 to March 2005 ([Exhibit 4.1](#)). and **Currently, annual funding is set at \$82.3 million**” (my bold).

(It is important to note the “\$946 million from 1995 to March 2005” is over a ten year period! This works out to an average of \$94.6 million per year!)

The Auditor General reported that “**Currently, annual funding is set at \$82.3 million**” This is for the entire firearms program including the licensing and registration of **ALL** firearms

The following table clearly indicates how the yearly \$82.3 million is allocated. It shows the annual licensing costs, which will still be required under C-19, are \$61.5 million, while the yearly “Registration” cost for **ALL** firearms, not just long-guns, is \$15.7 million.

Resource Breakdown by Sub-Activity for 2005-2006 to 2007-2008 for the Firearm Centre Activity

Sub Activities	Financial Resources			Percentage of Total Cost
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	
Licensing	61.5	61.5	61.5	74.7%
Registration	15.7	15.7	15.7	19.1%
Justice System Support	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.0%
Border Control	1.7	1.7	1.7	2.1%
International Initiatives	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1%
Public/Stakeholder Outreach	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0%
TOTAL	\$82.3 M	\$82.3 M	\$82.3 M	

Current estimates are that eliminating the registration of long-guns would only save \$3 to 4 million per year. So I would ask the following: **Why are the proponents of Bill C-19 willing to waste all the time, effort, and progress made, to save only a few million dollars per year.**

Conservatives, and the gun lobby, must explain how is it possible for the “registration” of long guns” to cost more than the entire “Canadian Firearms Program” of which the registration of ALL guns is, and always has been, a 19% cost portion.

3: - THE GUN LOBBY AND “POLITICS”

Over many years Canada's Criminal Code and its Firearm Laws have been enhanced and strengthened to keep Canadians safer.

Unfortunately, Canadian gun-lobby groups, who are closely linked to the USA National Rifle Association, have vigorously opposed each of these changes to the law.

These paranoid groups, whose members feel threatened, and terrified, at the prospect of having to register their firearms, have one common basic belief.

Anyone should be able to acquire as many firearms as they wish and law enforcement and government, whom they inherently mistrust, should not have any way of knowing how many firearms they own, or what type they are.

With the introduction of Bill C-68 in 1995, the gun-lobby increased their firearm law opposition and tactics. They did this because they realized they had, for the very first time, the support of a political party that shared their anti-firearm law views.

As an Albertan I was witness to, and embarrassed by, the actions of the Reform Party (now Conservative). They adopted “USA attack/smear style politics” and were willing to do almost anything to gain seats in Alberta and throughout the west. “French was being shoved down our throats”, the “east was stealing our resource wealth”, Stephen Harper believed we needed a “firewall around Alberta”, separation threats, etc etc.

Sadly, the introduction of Bill C-68 and its passage in 1995 gave the Reform Party a chance to again play “politics” with an issue. Once more the hated “East was shoving something down our throats”. **The result is Reform became the enabler for the Gun Lobby!**

Every day on talk radio, in newspapers, and at meetings and forums, Reform MP's and spokesmen, including current PM Stephen Harper, spread misinformation and trashed the registry: and the remnants of Reform continue to this day. (To verify this I would suggest the Committee subpoena audiotapes of the Dave Rutherford Show, if available, from stations CHED and QR 77 in Alberta)

This “political” help emboldened Canada's highly organized anti-firearm law groups who conducted a continuous concerted campaign attacking the registry. They constantly called talk radio in Alberta, and sent letters to the editor, openly promoting disruptive methods to undermine the Registry: including turning in forms at the last minute with deliberate errors.

I strongly believe the “political” actions of the Reform Party and the disruptive tactics of the Gun-Lobby are major reasons the registry costs were higher in the early years!

To see first-hand how these anti-gun control groups operate, what their views are, and who they are affiliated with, I would encourage Committee members to log on to Canadian GunNutz (a fitting name indeed) at <http://www.canadiangunnutz.com/>, Their “Firearms Politics” forum is very interesting! But you will need to create a user name to log into it.

There are over 80,000 GunNutz members who are extremely active in plotting ways to undermine firearm laws. **I would estimate this group generates 80 to 90 percent of all anti-registry e-mails/letters to MP's, and newspapers.** They have a website link that allows a member to automatically send e-mails to all MP's, and almost all newspapers in Canada, with just one click.

They post links to on-line polls on their website and members are urged to log on and vote. It is no surprise that traditional random polls show Canadians generally favor gun control, while on-line polls show the opposite.

By eliminating the registration of long guns, the Conservatives are fulfilling a foolish promise made years ago to the gun lobby by the Reform Party. They have been unduly influenced by the millions poured into the Conservative war-chest each year by these NRA clones. **This is a gain for the gun lobby, but a tremendous loss for Canada!**

4: - MYTHS AND MISINFORMATION

MYTH - The registration of long guns has not prevented any deaths or helped solve a single crime.

DEATHS: - How can one prove that: ---

- Suspending the license of a drunk driver prevented him/her from killing someone?
- Revoking a Firearms License and removing firearms from an explosive/abusive family situation saved a life?
- Firearm registration promotes responsibility and prevents deaths?
- Registration stops the proliferation of firearms and this prevents deaths?

In these examples, and in others, it is impossible to prove lives were saved. How can you prove something that didn't happen? However, it is a fact they all can, and do, save lives!

I believe the murder rate comparison between Canada, with its superior gun laws, and the gun happy USA is further proof that gun control saves lives.

2008 statistics on murder rates in the USA and Canada:

These rates can be verified at: Statistics Canada Crime rates 2008:

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2009003/article/10902/tbl/t5-eng.htm>, and FBI US Crime rates: http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_01.html

USA – Population 304,058,724 – murders 16,272 – murders per 100,000 population – 5.4
(This is 300% higher than the Canadian rate!)

Canada - Population 33,311,389 – murders 611 – murders per 100,000 population 1.8

ALL Western Provinces and the Territories have murder rates far higher than the average 1.8 per 100,000 Canadian rate, and the rates in ALL Eastern Provinces are lower than the average..

Manitoba – 4.5 murders per 100,000, Saskatchewan – 3.0 per 100,000, Alberta – 3.1 per 100,000, BC – 2.7 per 100,000, Yukon – 9.1, NWT – 6.9, Nunavut – 12.7. . (One would think the rates in the “West” with our “law abiding gun owners” would be the lowest?)

Quebec, 1.2 per 100,000, Ontario & PEI 1.4 per 100,000, Nova Scotia 1.3 per 100,000, Newfoundland 1.0 per 100,000 and the lowest of all - New Brunswick 0.4 per 100,000

CRIME SOLVING: - I have heard and read numerous comments from the gun lobby and Conservative MP's that "the registry has never helped solve a single crime". This is false!

There are no doubt numerous other examples, but the registry did indeed help solve a famous case in Alberta!

In 2005 the "registration of long guns" proved to be very important in an investigation! It helped law enforcement identify Shawn Hennessey and Dennis Cheeseman as the men who had driven James Roszko back to his Mayerthorpe Alberta farm where he murdered four Mounties.

Here are the facts:

- Roszko murders four Mounties March 3, 2005
- After finding a rifle registered to Hennessey' grandfather beside Roszko's body investigators call on the Hennessey home March 6.
- Hennessey and his grandfather concoct a story that the rifle was stolen.
- The police remain highly suspicious, do not give up, and over many months Hennessey is interviewed 15 more times.
- On March 18, 2006, fully one year after the killings, Brad McNish, Dennis Cheeseman's boss, tells the RCMP Dennis confessed to him.
- To generate sufficient proof of guilt the RCMP set up a "Mr. Big" sting that finally led to the successful prosecution of Hennessey and Cheesman.

Common sense leads anyone to conclude that the registered rifle was the primary clue that initially led the police to Hennessey and Cheeseman, and if it had not been registered they may never have been identified!

MYTH – The registering of long guns is complicated and burdensome.

To check this out I phoned a gun shop to find out what I had to do to buy a hunting rifle. I was told I needed to obtain a firearms license that would be renewable every five years.

I asked how I would register the rifle? He said, no problem. By law our guns are pre-registered, we phone the Firearms Centre, transfer the registration to you, give you a temporary registration until the original is sent to you by mail, and you take your gun home. **And, the good thing is you only have to register the gun once for as long as you own it**

Registering a firearm appears to be uncomplicated compared with what we "law abiding vehicle owners" are required to do to drive on our roadways. We also need to obtain an operators license, renewable every five years. Then, we have a yearly requirement (not only once for as long as we own the vehicle) to renew our vehicle registration, license plates, and in addition we must insure the vehicle.

MYTH -“Registration is unnecessary as the licensing process will be retained”

Contrary to what the Conservative Party believes “Licensing” is merely a snapshot in time and does not constitute gun control! Anyone can be adversely affected by negative life changes like marital breakup, job loss, the onset of alcoholism and/or drug abuse, etc.

In some circumstances there is a need to revoke a firearms license. Registration is a valuable tool in identifying firearms that may need to be removed in these cases! For example: The “registry” shows five weapons and, after an exhaustive search, only three are found. In this instance interrogation and continued searching will find the missing two.

This excerpt is from Hansard, Wednesday, October 28, 2009 and can be found in the “Private Members Bills” debate section (second reading of Bill C-391).

Ms Candice Hoepfner: “Many of the concerns that have been brought forward are addressed under the licensing process, and it is important that Canadians understand this important part of our gun control. It truly is gun control; it is the licensing process.”

I would ask the Conservative Party, and MP Hoepfner, the following.

- How will eliminating the registry protect society or assist law enforcement in any way?
- How will eliminating the registry help stop the proliferation of guns?
- Without registration would it not be virtually impossible to determine how many long guns an owner has, if any, - what type they are, or where they were purchased?
- Do you agree that eliminating the registry would allow anyone with a “firearm license” to covertly acquire as many long guns as they wish from multiple sources?
- Could someone then secretly sell, or pass, all or some, of these long guns on to others, including criminals/gang members, who are unable to obtain a license, or had their license revoked, and that law enforcement would have no way of proving it?
- And, most importantly, if a firearms license is revoked, how will authorities know how many, or what type, should be turned in or removed?

MYTH – The registration of long guns makes criminals of “law abiding gun owners”

If I speed, or do not register my car, and receive a fine, I might feel targeted and criminalized. But it was my choice to disobey the law and therefore I have no reason, or right to complain!

The same logic holds true regarding registration of long guns! Especially in view of the fact that “Law abiding Canadians” have chosen to register 7 millions non-restricted firearms!

Therefore, If an owner deliberately chooses to not register firearms, he/she is intentionally breaking the law and therefore has no reason, or right, to complain!

5: - OBSERVATIONS and CONCLUSION

Sadly, Canadians are on the verge of having our Criminal Code Firearms Act severely weakened if Bill C-19 is passed into law and the registration of long-guns is abolished and all records destroyed!

It is rather bizarre that a government claiming to be “tough on crime” and “supportive of law and order” is initiating this regressive legislation for partisan political reasons! Old habits are indeed hard to break! They are continuing on with the worst traditions of their predecessor, the Reform Party, and are willing to do almost anything to gain, or retain, seats.

In spite of the relentless attacks from a paranoid gun-lobby, and their political friends, the Canadian Firearms Program has made very good progress, is working well, and Police, public safety, crime prevention, women’s organizations, and others support the existing law and maintain that it contributes to public safety!

The following items are from the AG 2006 Report and the RCMP 2010 Report:

- Financial reporting has satisfactorily improved.
- Costs are under control and being fully reported to Parliament.
- Systems have been improved.
- In 2008, annual funding was set at \$82.3 million.
- The bulk of the \$82.3 million annual funding is allocated to two areas.
 1. The yearly licensing costs, which will still be required under C-19, are \$61.5 million.
 2. The yearly “Registration” cost for **ALL** firearms, not just long-guns, is \$15.7 million. (Estimates are that abolishing the registration of long-guns would only save \$3 to 6 million per year.)
- Non-restricted firearms registered = 7,137,386
- Total firearms registered – including restricted and prohibited = 7,865,994
- License Refusals in 2010 = 570 and Licenses Revoked in 2010 = 2,229

I am 71 years old and, as a “law abiding” vehicle owner, have renewed my “registration”, license plates, and insurance, every year for 52 years. I do this willingly, knowing it is good for society, promotes responsible ownership, and is valued by law enforcement as it allows easy identification of stolen vehicles or ones used in hit and run or criminal activity! **I believe the registration of firearms has similar benefits, and is equally as important, to Canadians as a whole, and to law enforcement, as the registration of vehicles?**

Without registration: ---

- Personal firearm responsibility will decline!
- There will be a marked proliferation of guns!
- It will be virtually impossible to determine how many long guns an owner has, if any, - what type they are, or where they were purchased!
- Anyone with a “firearm license” could covertly acquire as many long guns as they wish from multiple sources in multiple provinces!
- Owners could secretly sell, or pass, all or some, of their long guns on to others, including criminals/gang members, who are unable to obtain a license, or had their license revoked, and law enforcement would have no way of proving it!
- And, most importantly, if a firearms license is revoked, authorities would not know how many, or what type of, firearms should be turned in or removed?

CONCLUSION

I sincerely believe eliminating the registration of long guns, and the destruction of records, would be an appalling decision that will severely weaken Canada's Firearm Laws! And, that the decision to do so is based solely on ideology, rather than fact!

This foolish decision will waste all the time, effort, and dollars invested to improve the program, simply to save an estimated \$3 to 6 million per year?

I believe Bill C-19 must not be passed as is!

But at the same time I believe there are some changes that can be made to make registration easier and more acceptable to all.

I do not know exactly how Senate Committees work and what powers you have to change bills or perhaps to relegate this bill to a "recycle bin". (Just kidding?)

However, I would recommend the following for your consideration:

- Make it easier for farmers and hunters in remote areas to register firearms by setting up temporary offices/locations to help them fill out, and submit, registration forms.
- Only fine/punish someone who fails to register after a 30 day warning, or if they refuse to register.
- And my last, but most important recommendation - End the ideological political games and work toward improving Canada's Firearms Program and the registration of long guns component.

As I wrote at the beginning of my submission: "I am a seventy-one year-old retired Albertan who strongly believes in the value to law enforcement, and to all Canadians, of having ALL firearms registered!

I will never change my views on this issue!

And, because of what I discovered by temporarily becoming a member of a Canada's most active anti-firearm law gun-lobby group, GunNutz, I can assure you that Bill C-19 is only the first step in their long-range plan to see ALL firearm gun control laws abolished or fatally weakened!

I find it very hard to believe that Canada's current government wants to be known and remembered, for supporting the aims of these misguided gun-lobby groups by weakening Canada's Criminal Code Firearms Act Provisions!

That is why I sincerely hope what I have written will give Committee Members and all other Senators the required information, and incentive, to either alter your position and support, or continue to support, Canada's Firearm Laws!

PLEASE ALLOW THE RCMP, WHO IS DOING A FANTASTIC JOB ADMINISTERING THE CURRENT PROGRAM, TO CONTINUE TO DO SO!

Gordon Steele, Retired