

Support of the Long-Gun Registry

At the News Conference in Support of the Long-Gun Registry held on September 15, 2010, the following groups were represented: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women; Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses United to End Violence Against Women; Nova Scotia Nurses' Union; Halifax Regional Police and Halifax District RCMP.

Ms. Hazleton, President of Nova Scotia Nurses' Union addressed the group and provided the following remarks.

"Thank you Constable Palmeto. I am honoured to sit before you and represent all the agencies seated here as it relates to the long-gun registry.

Since the movement came afoot to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act and repeal the long-gun registry in March of this year, there has been much public debate on this issue. As we move toward Parliament's Public Safety Committee's motion on Bill C-391 in the House of Commons on September 22, the debate continues and the voices are growing louder. We believe it is time to make our voices heard in the interest of public safety.

We represent a unified voice, a coalition if you will, in support of maintaining the long-gun registry. We each have our organizational reasons for concern over the potential passing of Bill C-391 which I would like to briefly share with you.

Nurses and doctors, particularly those who work in emergency rooms, witness first-hand the horrific injuries and tragic deaths that result from firearms whether from homicides or attempted homicides, suicides or suicide attempts, or accidents. We meet the victims who fall prey to long guns and attempt to save them. For those whom we are unable to save in spite of our utmost efforts, we meet their families whose lives are shattered by long guns. We also treat patients on a regular basis who are suicidal or victims of domestic abuse. A long gun in their homes increases their chances of being victimized. We often work with the police, who accompany these patients to hospital, as they can access the registry to determine if a gun is registered to the home. This allows us to devise a safety plan for our patients. For these reasons, we collectively support the long-gun registry.

Several of the representatives with me today are specifically dedicated to ensuring the well-being, dignity and safety of women. These agencies have seen the negative effects of the use and access to long-guns on women, particularly as it relates to spousal abuse and domestic homicide. They are all too familiar with the statistics that show that access to guns is the fifth highest of 18 risk factors in spousal homicides and that 88% of Canadian women killed with guns are killed with a shotgun or rifle. It stands to reason that Canadian women and the agencies dedicated to furthering women's rights continue to overwhelmingly support the current firearms law, including registration of all firearms. Suffice it to say that women and their support agencies are very concerned about access to rifles and shotguns in cases of domestic abuse and violence. For these reasons, together we call for the abolishment of Bill C-391.

Our local police, in concert with the Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Police Association and Canadian Association of Police Boards, have long supported the registry given that it is a valuable investigative tool for law enforcement. Police officers regularly utilize the national firearms registry to prevent crimes, investigate offences and trace firearms. It has repeatedly proven invaluable in ensuring community safety. If the registry were to be abolished, it would eliminate officers' ability to hold people responsible for firearms offences and critically hamper police agencies' ability to investigate gun crimes. For these reasons, we stand unified in our support of the long-gun registry.

Together, the agencies represented here today are a united front for a common cause; an alliance on the quest to protect the vulnerable, give a voice to those who are unable to speak out, and ultimately enhance public safety in our community, our province and our country.

We have already lobbied government to defeat the current bill and maintain the long-gun registry. We encourage citizens and other agencies who share our concerns to express their desire to their Member of Parliament to maintain the gun registry. In the interest of our families and our communities in Nova Scotia, it is our hope that our collective voice will be heard.

Thank you.”