

Submission

To

**COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL
SECURITY**

Re: Bill C-391 and Gun Control

By



**The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional
Women's Clubs/*La Federation Canadienne des Clubs de
Femmes de Carrieres Commerciales et Professionnelles*
Member of the International Federation of BPW Clubs**

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**Working towards improving economic, political, social and
employment conditions for women in Canada**

"Women working for working women."

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INTRODUCTION

In 1930, BPW Canada was a founding member of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, which has grown to include clubs in more than 90 countries around the world. BPW International, the recognized voice of gainfully employed women in all professions and occupations, promotes equal opportunities and status for women. As a non-governmental organization (NGO), BPW International has Category I Consultative Status at the United Nations.

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPW Canada) is an equality-seeking group working towards improving economic, political, social and employment conditions for women. We are "*Women working for Working Women*". Our membership includes women from a variety of professions and occupations, including women entrepreneurs, in clubs across Canada. BPW Canada develops the professional and leadership potential of women through education, awareness, advocacy and mentoring within a supportive network.

For 79 years, we have been advocating for just and equal status of women in all levels of society and have played a significant role in achieving advancement for women. For more information on our achievements, please visit our website at www.bpwcanada.com.

Currently, we have 35 local BPW Clubs across Canada. Our clubs offer a range of opportunities and activities for members based on the four pillars of our Membership Model: Awareness, Advocacy and Action on women's issues; Leadership skills and career advancement; Supportive networking; and Personal development.

The issue of the Gun Registry is supported by our many resolutions over the past 79 years on the issue of prevention of violence against women and children which are a concern to society as a whole. Although there are some flaws in the current management of the Gun Registry, we support the continuation as one means for preventing unnecessary death using lethal weapons.

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The Committee for Public Safety and National Security

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Club is opposed to the abolition of the Gun Registry based on the following:

- *Reduction in death by guns.* Gun deaths and injuries in Canada are a serious public health problem, claiming more than 1200 lives each year and resulting in over 1000 hospitalizations.¹
- *Gun control laws have made Canada safer.* A research summary on domestic violence involving firearms from *Statistics Canada* tells us that over the past decade there was an average of 1,300 *deaths involving firearms* per year in Canada. Forty-nine percent of all solved firearm homicides involved acquaintances (mostly spouses and relatives). Three times more women than men are killed by their spouse each year. Firearms are more likely to result in serious injury and death than if another weapon is used.² The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics report on weapons and violent crime, between 1985 and 1994, indicated that the leading method used to kill a female spouse was shooting.³ In 1991, more than 1400 Canadians were killed with guns. Now it is fewer than 800. The 2007 rate of murders with rifles and shotguns was 78% lower than in 1991, before gun control legislation. Murders of women with guns have plummeted from 85 in 1991 to 32 in 2004 (the number of murders without guns has not dropped as much). Suicide rates, particularly among youth, have also declined.³
- *Spousal Homicides using firearms.* Statistics Canada data consistently indicates that over 85% of spouse homicides occur in a private residence.⁴ Homicides accounted for about 15% of all firearms deaths. Three times more women than men were killed by their spouse each year. Long guns are the most common type of firearm used in spousal homicides. Over the past decade, 71% of spousal homicides involved rifles and shotguns.² Most firearms recovered from crime in Canada are rifles and shotguns, not smuggled handguns. Handguns are more commonly used in murders in large cities whereas rifles and shotguns are more commonly used in smaller, more rural areas. The homicide of a family member was 2.7 times more likely to occur in a home with a firearm than in homes without guns according to Wendy Cukier.¹
- *Destruction of Gun Registry.* Passing Bill C-391 would not only abolish the requirement to register long-guns, undermining the Firearms Act as a whole, but would also retroactively destroy all records of Canada's over seven million long-guns registered to date.⁵ Dismantling the Registry will not save money. The \$2 billion has already been spent, and the funds will not be recovered by destroying the documents. Furthermore, for enforcement officers to have knowledge of who owns firearms, facilitates the removal of firearms in situations in which the possessor is at risk of misuse. It assists police in determining the type and number of firearms they may encounter when responding to an emergency call, and provides police with information on the number of guns known to be in the home when enforcing a prohibition order.²
- *Personal History and references.* Current legislation on firearms requires that the applicant provide information regarding personal history and references. It also provides an opportunity for

the current or former spouse or common-law partner to voice any concerns they may have about their safety or the safety of others.⁵

- *Education and Safe Handling.* The fact that there is a requirement on *safe handling and storage* for individual owners provides a measure of comfort for families living with weapons in the home.⁵

- *Important Policing Tool in Investigating Domestic Disputes:* It is important to know that the *universal registration* provides police with knowledge of who owns firearms which will: facilitate the removal of firearms in situations in which the possessor is at risk of misuse; assist police in determining the type and number of firearms they may encounter when responding to an emergency call; and provide police with information on the number of guns known to be in the home when enforcing a prohibition order. This information is especially important to police when responding to a domestic dispute. If this legislation passes final approval by the Senate, police departments will have to destroy all firearms records. Furthermore, “prohibition orders can be invoked by the courts if it is deemed that the safety of an individual or the public could be threatened by an individual’s acquisition of a firearm. In cases where firearms are in the individual’s possession, prohibition orders provide for their removal”.²

- *Support for Gun Registry.* Originally, gun registration was supported by an alliance of 350 groups, including Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, the Canadian Trauma Association, the YWCA of Canada, CAVEAT and Victims of Violence International. Canadian women continue to support overwhelmingly the licensing of gun owners and registration of all firearms. Polls have shown that while half of gun owners opposed the law, 77% of people living with a gun owner supported it.¹

- *Prevention strategy.* Gun deaths and injuries are preventable. In Canada guns pose a serious problem that can be reduced through effective public health strategies that combine legislation with education and enforcement. While Canada’s problem with guns pales compared with that of the United States, many other countries have significantly lower rates of gun death and injury. Canada’s legislation requiring licensing of all firearms owners and registration of all guns brings the country in line with regulations in most industrialized countries. According to criminologist Neil Boyd as quoted by Wendy Cukier in her paper *Firearms Regulation: Canada in the International Context*, “by putting a regulatory system in place that can limit access to firearms, enhance the safety of firearm use, and, in a more general sense, educate the public with respect to the dangers inherent in widespread availability of these potentially lethal commodities.”¹

- *Security Around the World.* Wendy Cukier states that “the absence of controls in other jurisdictions creates problems worldwide” and that “most of the firearms recovered from crime in Canada are rifles and shotguns, not smuggled handguns” and “most of the firearms used to kill in Canada are rifles and shotguns.”¹ The United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Commission recently passed a resolution encouraging all countries that have not done so to strengthen their domestic gun controls since weak controls in one country can affect security in others. Further, the conclusions and observations of the United Nations on Gun Control are to reduce out-of-control violence and conflict by limiting the availability of firearms and light

weapons and small arms that contribute to and aggravate these situations. It was stated that Canada's legislation requiring licensing of all firearms owners and registration of all guns, brings the country in line with regulations in most industrialized countries.¹

Recommendations:

1. That the Gun Registry be maintained by police forces for their use in public safety.
2. That the Gun Registry legislation be reviewed to provide consideration for law-abiding hunters who fail to properly fill out the registry's paperwork to be subject to non-criminal fines.

References:

[1] *Wendy Cukier*, Professor, Administration and Information Management, Ryerson Polytechnic University, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3; *Firearms Regulation: Canada in the International Context*, http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/edcic-mcc/19-1/d_e.html

[2] For a review of the statistics and research on firearms suicide refer to "Research Summary Firearm Suicide", Department of Justice Canada.

[3] Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics report.

[4] Statistics Canada, *Homicide Survey* Firearms Research Unit (Canada Firearms Centre) analysis of extractions from the Homicide Database maintained by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

[4] Statistics Canada, *Causes of Death*.

[5] Canadian Firearms Program, Facts and Figures (July - September 2009)
<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/index-eng.htm>