

# Chiefs' case for long-gun registry fails

## Flimsy evidence substantiates front-line cops' vote to scrap it

BY LORNE GUNTER, EDMONTONJOURNAL.COM AUGUST 29, 2010

Canada's police chiefs are conducting a full-court press to preserve the long-gun registry, the dismantling of which could begin with a vote in Parliament next month.

At their annual meeting here in Edmonton last Monday, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACCP) insisted the registry was an invaluable police investigation tool and voted unanimously to recommend its preservation.

In doing so, they trotted out the usual canard about how police access the registry 11,000 times a day.

No, they don't -- at least they don't do so knowingly or deliberately.

If officers stop someone for speeding or shoplifting or drinking on a public street, and they run the alleged offender's name through their department's computer, it is likely that computer will also trigger a search of the gun registry to see whether the light-fingered speeder or street partier possesses firearms. But such indirect, inconsequential searches hardly prove the registry's usefulness in police's efforts to stop or catch criminals.

When pushed for practical examples of the registry's usefulness, Vancouver Chief Jim Chu came up with seven on Friday.

His first example involved a man named Eric Kirkpatrick, who in December of 2008 went to the Christmas party at a company that had fired him and murdered his former employer. A check of the registry database confirmed that the murder weapon was indeed registered to Kirkpatrick, along with a .22-calibre rifle not recovered at the crime scene. Chu said information obtained from the registry saved homicide investigators the chore of having to determine whether someone else -- perhaps an unknown owner of the murder weapon -- had been involved. They were also informed of Kirkpatrick's second gun.

Because of the long-gun registry, Chu explained, investigators were spared the chore of looking into the murder weapon's ownership and were able to prevent the .22 from falling into the wrong hands while Kirkpatrick was in custody, thus eliminating a potential threat to public safety.

Really? The \$2 billion taxpayers have been made to spend on the registry is warranted because it saved Vancouver homicide detectives a few minutes or hours determining whether Kirkpatrick was the rightful owner of the shotgun he used to kill his former boss? And officers would never have

recovered the .22 because without the registry they wouldn't have thought to search his home for other weapons?

Please. This justification is so weak it is an insult to the intelligence of Canadian voters.

The key point is, the registry did nothing to save the life of Kirkpatrick's victim, and that is how the intrusiveness and cost of the registry was sold to Canadians -- as a crime-prevention tool, not as a labour-saving device for paperwork weary detectives.

Chief Chu also explained how a shotgun seized in 2004 from a man accused of illegally hunting and trapping had taken six years to trace. Because the gun had been made in Brazil and never properly registered in Canada, investigators had little clue how it had come into the man's possession until Brazilian police responded to an Interpol request six years later. If it had been registered, Chu added, determining its source would have taken only seconds.

But the salient fact is, the poacher, who was prohibited by a court order from possessing firearms had nonetheless acquired the gun -- and seven others. Registry or no registry, an individual deemed by a judge as too dangerous to own guns had eight of them. Who cares where they had come from? Our national gun-control scheme did nothing to keep them out of his hands.

The chief also pointed to a home invasion in which the invader was shot and killed with a gun he brought with him. Because of the registry, police were save a "labour-intensive trace" to find the stolen gun's real owner.

Another example involved how the registry led Vancouver police to find a registered weapon that was unsafely stored under a bed, while yet another enabled them to determined that a licensed collector with 57 guns was indeed in legal possession of all of his firearms.

Whew! Sleep safe tonight Vancouverites, the registry is helping ensure that all the t's are crossed and i's dotted among non-threatening gun owners in your community.

Even the case of RCMP Chief Superintendent Marty Cheliak proves the registry's uselessness. Cheliak is the head of the registry who was recently reassigned for talking up its benefits. Many pundits have urged that Cheliak be listened to on the registry because he was in charge of the four officers murdered by James Roszko at Mayerthorpe in March 2005.

Once again, though, the registry did nothing to stop this horrendous massacre.

The public and front-line officers are not fooled. This week 72 per cent of Canadians told pollster Angus Reid they felt the registry had done nothing to prevent crime and 92 per cent of over 2,600 beat cops in an unscientific, online poll said they wanted it scrapped.

Let's hope MPs follow the practical, common-sense instincts of Canadians and front-line officers

when they vote on Sept. 21 and not the political, bureaucratic pleading of the chiefs.

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