

# Register the person, not the gun

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Presented By:



We've said it before and we'll say it again. The controversial long-gun registry does not make Canadians safer. Forcing people to register hunting rifles and shotguns will not put an end to gun crime. Crimes will be committed with weapons whether they are registered or not.

Nor does the registration system ensure the safety of front-line police officers. An unscientific poll of Canadian officers for Blue Line magazine found that 92 per cent want it scrapped. They know that they cannot rely on the registry -- they must assume that weapons may be present at a scene whether the computer says they are there or not.

The registry will also not guarantee that a stolen weapon will be tracked. Serial numbers can be filed off and barrels cut down. As Calgary police Chief Rick Hanson has noted, criminals avoid awkward long guns. They prefer weapons that can be concealed. Most of these are prohibited weapons that find their way into Canada via the black market, or restricted weapons that have required registration for decades, well before the long-gun registry was even introduced.

Hanson and officers like Edmonton Constable Randy Kuntz disagree with the majority of Canadian police chiefs on the registry. "All it's doing is tracking legally owned firearms, which is kind of useless," says Kuntz, a long-gun owner and wilderness hunting guide.

The long-gun registry did, however, point police in the Mayerthorpe RCMP killing case to an accomplice of killer James Roszko. The registry also revealed that an Edmonton student who made threats to shoot his classmates lived in a home where there were three handguns and nine long guns.

So, is the registry useful investigative tool? Yes. Will it stop crime, theft or keep officers safe? No.

Our position on the registry has been one of opposition. Now that it is up and running, its astronomical startup costs of between \$1-to \$2-billion already spent, it seems to make little sense to throw it out. Yet there is too much conflicting information about costs and effectiveness for the registry to now receive our support. The police chiefs claim it only costs \$4 million a year to run. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, using a House of Commons report, pegs the real costs as closer to \$100 million. If the latter is the case, that money should be spent on more testing and profiling of would-be gun owners rather than counting who has how many and where they might be stored.

It is an interesting dynamic to see the law-and-order Harper government at odds with police chiefs.

The Conservatives have remained silent on an RCMP report done with the help of outside auditors showing the registry is effective and efficient. Perhaps it is time to take aim at true, impartial analysis.

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