

Presentation by Kevin Gaudet to
Standing Committee On Public Safety re:
Bill C-391 to end the Long Gun Registry
25 May 2010
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**Thank you Mr. Chairman. Ladies and Gentlemen of the
Committee.**

**My name is Kevin Gaudet. I am the Federal Director of
the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. We are a national,
non-partisan, not-for-profit organization with more than
74,000 supporters nation wide. We have offices in
British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and
Ontario, including both Toronto and Ottawa.**

**The mandate of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation is
to advocate for lower taxes, less waste and more
accountable government. We've been doing this for a
long time, celebrating our 20th anniversary this year. We
don't take government money or issue tax receipts. I
want to thank the CTF supporters who made
contributions to bring me here today as we did not
accept the offer of the committee to pay our way.**

I am pleased to be here today on behalf of CTF supporters to speak against the wasteful long-gun registry and for its appropriate elimination thanks to Ms. Hoepfner's Bill C-391.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Chair of the Committee on behalf of CTF supporters for his many years of work on this issue and the MPs from the committee who supported our attendance today.

As well, all the members of the committee and their parties are to be commended for the open and free vote that allowed this bill to come before the committee. Free votes are a key element to a fully functioning democracy. If it wasn't for the support of MPs from the NDP and the Liberal party joining the Conservatives in support of this bill at second reading, we wouldn't even be here today having this reasoned discussion. All of these MPs should be applauded for their courage and conviction on this issue.

That open and free approach should be continued in the

House when this Bill comes up again for vote after Third Reading. This has been a long-standing privilege that MPs have enjoyed for decades. It is a practice that ought to be followed without exception.

Given the sensitivity of this debate many have been calling for a compromise on this issue. I agree.

I suggest that Ms. Hoepfner's bill does just that. It provides a reasonable compromise for responsible and trustworthy gun owners and we support it.

This bill is a compromise because many responsible and trustworthy gun owners would have preferred to see more changes regarding hand guns, licensing, and other restrictions. It became clear a bill with such changes was not going to get majority support from the House, so S5 was introduced in the Senate. It was deeply flawed with the possibility of creating a new gun registry in every province. Thankfully, it too would not garner majority support.

As a result this bill was created. Ms. Hoepfner's bill provides a compromise having stripped away all other changes save for one; the elimination of the wasteful long gun registry.

The long gun registry has been an extremely wasteful and burdensome placebo that provides false impressions of improving safety.

Most importantly, the long-gun registry has been a substantial financial boondoggle since its creation in 1995 by then Justice Minister Alan Rock. It has cost well beyond \$2 billion, and the final figure is still unclear.

Some like to argue that annual operating costs associated with the registry run at only \$3 million. This is false. This figure does not reflect true fully-loaded direct costing. Nor does it factor in indirect costing. In fact the registry costs taxpayers more than \$106 million per year, with a final figure we cannot know, as the Auditor General has pointed out not once, but twice.

For a program that does little to nothing to keep Canadians safe this is and has been a huge waste of taxpayer money. And all of this wasted spending originates due to misleading information given to Parliament when Bill C68 was passed.

Relatedly, of course, we don't even know if the \$2 billion is a complete figure. In 2002 the CTF presented the Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, with a petition with over 14,000 signatures requesting her office audit the program. She did so and found astonishing waste.

In a second audit of the program in 2006 Ms. Fraser found that whenever costs ballooned beyond what Parliament had authorized, or above what the government had publicly promised, the true amounts were hidden from legislators and the public. The Auditor General concludes that hiding these costs broke the law and violated the government's own accounting practices. It also meant that Parliament's constitutional power to decide how taxpayers dollars are spent was usurped by bureaucrats. This is where the committee

should be focusing its time.

In 2006 my predecessor delivered to then Public Safety Minister Day another petition. This one with 28,000 signatures calling for the elimination of the wasteful long-gun registry.

To quote from the Auditor General's report from December 2002, "From the start, insufficient financial information was provided to Parliament".

The Auditor General says that Parliament was misled in 1995 to believe that the program would cost a net of only \$2 million. Canadians may never know the full and true cost of this program. We know, thanks to the Auditor General and the CBC, that it has cost over \$2 billion.

The program has been disastrously managed. According to the Auditor General 70% of all money approved by Parliament for the creation and management of this program came from Supplementary Estimates. As you are aware this is a clear indication of

how out of control the program has been as this spending was NOT budgeted.

The Auditor General's report is scathing. It outlines waste and mismanagement of immense scale. An important excerpt from the audit reads:

“In our view, the financial information provided for audit by the Department does not fairly present the cost of the Program to the government. Our initial review found significant shortcomings in the information the Department provided. Consequently we stopped our audit of this information because we did not believe that a detailed audit would result in substantially different findings.”

The Auditor General notes that costs exceeded \$1 billion according to the department and she notes that this costing was importantly incomplete.

The Auditor also highlights that “the Program's focus had changed from high risk firearms owners to

excessive regulation and enforcement of controls over all owners and their firearms. The Department concluded that, as a result, the Program had become overly complex and very costly to deliver, and that it had become difficult for owners to comply with the Program.”

Importantly, the AG notes “The Department also did not report to Parliament the wider costs of the Program as required by the government's regulatory policy.”

As a result the CBC submitted a Freedom of Information request to attempt to gain better information on full costing. The CBC story from February of 2004 reports the wasteful program costs at \$2 billion.

Canadians likely will never know how much the wasteful program cost us to date. Equally we don't know how much it costs annually in direct and associated costs. The RCMP reports it spends \$8.4 million a year for registration. Leave aside for the moment the credibility of this number, simply add to it the \$98 million annual

operating costs for other related programs, as outlined in a detailed research report from the Library of Parliament from 2003, and the total operating cost impact of this wasteful registry exceeds \$106 million.

Of course, we don't even know the real cost to the RCMP as the ongoing registry operating costs have been routinely purposefully misreported.

In her 2006 audit the Auditor General points out repeated examples of improper accounting, where spending was hidden from Parliament. One example for \$17 million and another for \$22 million. She notes in 2006 that the managers intended to continue with this accounting practice of hiding costs.

Nor do we know the true feeling of the rank and file members of the force. On May 5th of this year, Deputy Commissioner Killam issued an outrageous memo to all Commanding Officers regarding Ms. Hoepfner's bill, ordering the Commanders and all their employees to keep their opinions to themselves. With this kind of

culture of chill in the RCMP the true costs of managing the wasteful registry may never truly be known nor may the true attitudes of the front line officers.

The only way to save taxpayers from this ongoing debauché is for this committee and parliament to put and end to the wasteful long gun registry.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.