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Date March 8<sup>th</sup> 2010

Anthony Rota MP  
House of Commons  
Ottawa Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Anthony:

Subject: Bill C-391 - Countering Ten Misleading Claims

This is to provide you with important information concerning Bill C-391, which is scheduled to go before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in the near future.

On October 20, 2009, prior to the November 4, 2009 vote at Second Reading in the House of Commons on Bill C-391, Members of Parliament received a letter from Wendy Cukier, Coalition for Gun Control, in which she claimed to present the evidence about what the repeal of the long-gun registry would mean for Canadians. We are also aware that the Coalition and other gun control advocates have recently initiated an information campaign based upon the same erroneous and non-factual arguments in an attempt to derail the obvious support in Parliament for Bill C-391.

In the material previously provided by the Coalition, they failed once again to show that the long-gun registry has been effective. Instead, their letter was disingenuous, devoid of fact and misleading. The arguments it contained may have been emotionally compelling, but the assertions provided are often little more than red herrings with no facts to support them.

We strongly believe that it is critically important that all Members of Parliament have the facts at their disposal when debating any piece of legislation. We are therefore pleased to provide you with a more thorough analysis supported by fact. The evidence demonstrates that the repeal of the long-gun registry will not reduce public safety in Canada and may even improve it. After a brief review of the arguments, **we provide you with an examination and rebuttal by Simon Frazer University Professor Emeritus, Dr Gary Mauser; of the key points in the Coalition's letter of October 2009.** <http://garymauser.net/index.html>

The statistics provided here clearly shows that the long-gun registry has not been effective in reducing criminal violence and most especially that it has not saved lives.

Bill C-391 deserves support because the long-gun registry has failed to protect Canadians from gun violence and diverts vital police resources away from more effective efforts. In her report to Parliament, the Auditor General of Canada found that the long-gun registry cost taxpayers at least one billion dollars; later research doubled this estimate. Most tellingly, she also noted that the Department had been unable to substantiate whether the long-gun registry had increased public safety or saved lives, which is surely the standard by which any success of the program should be measured.

Before countering the specific claims made in the October 20th letter, it is important to briefly review the Canadian firearms control system:

- Handguns have been registered since 1934.
- Police screening has been required for long-gun purchasers since 1979.

- Bill C-17 introduced greater restrictions on all gun owners in 1992.
- The legislation setting up the long-gun registry and owner licensing (Bill C-68) was passed in 1995, but virtually none of the regulations were put into effect until 1998.
- The long-gun registry began operations in 2001 and all long guns were required to be registered in 2003.

In response to the ten misleading claims made by the Coalition for Gun Control, please consider the following information compiled by Dr. Mauser.

**Claim #1: Access to a gun increases the risk of murder.**

**False: Canadian gun owners are less likely than other Canadians to commit homicide.** Depending upon the year, the homicide rate for licensed Canadian firearms owners varied from 0.35 per 100,000 to 0.85 per 100,000 firearm owners. In other words, **less than one licensed firearm owner per 100,000 gun owners is accused of murder in any given year.**

**Claim #2: Rifles and shotguns are the weapons most likely to be used in domestic homicides.**

**False: The problem is the murder of family members, not the means of killing.** Focusing on murder weapons - whether long guns, hand guns, or knives - is a red herring. It is false to assume that if there had been no gun of a particular kind available in a particular incident there would have been no murder committed. Nevertheless, Ms Cukier has raised this issue of weapon use, and even in this, she is incorrect. **Knives, not long guns (rifles or shotguns), are the weapons used more often to kill women than firearms.**

**Claim #3: Spousal murders with guns have fallen threefold since the law passed, while spousal murders without guns have remained the same.**

**False: Spousal murders (with and without guns) have slowly been declining since the mid-1970s.** (See the attached charts, Chart 1 and Juristat Chart 8). **The firearms used by abusive spouses to kill their wives are almost all possessed illegally. It has been illegal since 1992 for people with a violent record to own firearms.** Despite this, we do not currently have in place a system that would track prohibited offenders but choose instead to track legal, law abiding, licensed duck hunters, farmers and recreational sport shooters.

**Claim #4: stronger gun laws have helped reduce gun violence.**

**False: Ms Cukier's letter begs the question of the effectiveness of gun laws against crime.** Instead of showing how changes in gun laws have reduced homicide or suicide rates, she trots out the names of all the women's groups who oppose Bill C-391. Rationally, this approach cannot support her claim that gun laws reduce violence against women. The rate of homicides committed with a firearm generally declined from the mid-1970s to 2002. **This steady, long-term decline has been driven by economic and demographic changes.**

**The long-gun registry has not reduced gun violence.** The rate of homicides committed with a firearm generally declined from the mid-1970s to 2002. **However, the use of firearms (overwhelmingly illegal ones) in homicide has increased by 24% since 2002 despite the introduction of the long-gun registry.**

**Claim #5: Firearms stolen from legal owners are a significant source of crime guns. Registration is essential to prevent dangerous individuals from getting guns.**

**False: All studies of crime guns (or guns used in murders) agree that stolen registered firearms are infrequently involved.** We consequently find that **the bulk (54% - 69%) of crime guns are smuggled into Canada by criminal gangs.** (Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2006; Toronto Police Services, 2004, 2005; Toronto Police Annual Report, 2001; Project Gun Runner, 1993). It is abundantly clear that long-gun registration has no effect whatever on guns used in crime. The gun registry merely ties up police time and funds, and thereby contributes to blocking more effective means of prevention.

**The key to preventing dangerous people from getting guns is police screening and criminal record checks. Bill C-391 will not change the strict firearms controls in Canada.**

**Claim #6: Firearms pose more problems in smaller cities where there are more gun owners.**

**False: Homicide is a particularly acute problem in large cities where ironically there are fewer legal gun owners.** Canada's major metropolitan areas are increasingly plagued with gang-related homicides that predominantly involve handguns imported by criminal activity.

Ms Cukier talks about "firearm problems" rather than homicide because she wishes to use the term "gun deaths" which are mostly suicide. Suicide is a greater problem in small rural communities than in large cities, but suicide rates cannot be reduced by gun registration. Firearms are involved in only 15% of suicides; hanging (or asphyxiation) is much more prevalent. What is needed is greater effort in suicide prevention programs.

**The long-gun registry has saved no lives.** There were 3,605 suicides in 2000 before the registry started and 3,741 in 2005. Clearly, this analysis suggests that the money wasted on registering guns would have been better spent on suicide prevention efforts. There were 546 homicide victims in 2000, before the long-gun registry began, and 611 in 2008.

**Claim #7: The registry is an essential tool for police when taking preventative action and when enforcing prohibition orders to remove firearms from dangerous individuals.** "Before a police officer knocks on a door, they want and need to know whether the person behind that door owns a gun," (Ontario Attorney General, 2009).<sup>1</sup>

**False: The long-gun registry does not contain information on a gun's location.** There is no requirement to store a long-gun where the owner resides. **The registry only contains descriptive information about the registered guns.** In sum, Ms Cukier's claims are wrong again. The long-gun registry does not contain information on a gun's location. The Auditor General found that the RCMP could not rely upon the registry in court on account of the large number of errors and omissions. Less than one-half of all firearms in Canada are estimated to be listed in the registry, and a large number of records in the registry have errors or are missing important information (Breitkreuz, 2001; Mauser, 2007). Police officers on the front lines do not find the registry helpful.

**Claim #8: The gun registry is consulted by police 10,000 times a day and provides important information.**

**False: Almost all of the "inquiries" are routinely generated by traffic stops or firearm sales and are not specifically requested; nor do police often find them useful. Almost all of these inquiries involve licensing, not the long-gun registry.** Inquiries specific to the gun registry amount to only 2.4% of the approximately 3.5 million inquiries into the database in 2008, which has declined each year from 8.3% in 2003 as awareness has grown that actually looking for this data has limited usefulness.

Despite its reported irrelevance, some police associations have endorsed it. These endorsements may reflect where they receive funding and are currently under scrutiny. The majority of MPs who voted for Bill C-391 were right to ignore the disingenuous claims of these police associations. The registry is a shopping list for criminals. The RCMP has admitted to more than 300 breaches so far. Early in 2009, the RCMP handed over sensitive information to the polling firm Ekos Research Associates for a customer-satisfaction survey. Gun owners believe this is a serious breach of privacy. No registry means no shopping list for computer-hacking criminals (Hoepfner, 2009).

**Claim #9: Polls show Canadians believe the gun registry should not be dismantled.**

**False: Two recent polls show that the public does not support the long-gun registry. This is consistent with at least 11 earlier polls,** all of which have clearly demonstrated that the Canadian public has no faith in the long-gun registry or its ability to increase public safety.

The Angus Reid poll (Nov 2009) asked the following question:

"The Canadian Firearms Registry, also known as the long-gun registry, requires the registration of all non-restricted firearms in Canada. From what you have seen, read or heard, do you think this registry has been successful or unsuccessful in preventing crime in Canada?"

Successful	11%
Unsuccessful	46%
It has had no effect on crime	32%
Not sure	11%

This was corroborated in an Ekos poll, also conducted in November 2009, that found 38% supported abolishing the registry, while 31% wanted to keep it; 31% were undecided or did not respond.

**Claim #10: Stronger gun laws have helped reduce gun-related death, injury, violence and suicide.**

**False. No properly designed study has been able to show that gun laws have been responsible for reducing criminal violence rates or suicide rates in any country in the world.** There is no evidence that Bill C-68 has reduced the homicide rate or the suicide rate in Canada. Gun deaths have been declining since the 1970s, long before Bill C-68 and the creation of the long-gun registry.

Gang-related homicides have increased dramatically since the mid 1990s. The long-gun registry has had no obvious effect on gang-related violence. (See attached Chart 3).

Homicide rates have fallen impressively in both the United States and in Canada since the early 1990s. Homicide rates have plummeted 45% in the US, compared to just 32% in Canada over the same time period (See attached Chart 4). The US did this without the benefit of Canadian gun laws. In fact, the trend in the US over the past twenty years has been to make gun ownership easier for licensed citizens, not harder.

### Conclusions

To sum up, every one of the claims made by Ms Cukier and the Coalition to oppose bill C-391 is false or misleading.

1. The problem is not access to guns. Canadian gun owners are less likely than other Canadians to commit homicide.
2. In domestic homicides, the problem is the murder of family members, not the means of killing. Rifles and shotguns are not the weapons most likely to be used in domestic homicides. Knives are.
3. There is no empirical support for the claim that the long-gun registry has reduced spousal murders. Spousal murders (with and without guns) have slowly been declining since the mid-1970s.
4. There is no empirical support for the claim that stronger gun laws have helped reduce gun violence. In fact, the use of firearms in homicide has increased by 24% since the beginning of the long-gun registry.
5. Firearms stolen from legal owners are not a significant source of crime guns. All studies of crime guns, or guns used in murders, agree that stolen registered firearms are infrequently involved. **It is licensing, not registration, that is essential to prevent dangerous people from getting guns.**
6. Firearms do not pose more problems in smaller cities. Homicide is a particularly acute problem in large cities where ironically there are fewer legal gun owners.
7. Rank and file police members do not find the registry useful. In approaching dangerous situations, the police must assume there is a weapon. The long-gun registry does not contain information on a gun's location, but only descriptive information about the guns that have been registered. When enforcing

prohibition orders to remove firearms from dangerous people, the police cannot rely upon the registry because of the large number of errors and omissions.

8. Almost all inquiries to the gun registry are routinely generated by traffic stops or firearm sales. Almost all of these inquiries involve licensing, not the long-gun registry. Rank and file police say that this information is not useful to them.
9. Polls show that the Canadian public does not support the long-gun registry.
10. No properly designed study has been able to show that gun laws have been responsible for reducing criminal violence rates or suicide rates in any country in the world.

In closing, it is important to note that MPs listen to their constituents. Ours is a diverse country and this is reflected in our parliament. Parliamentary democracy means that party leaders should respect the opinions of all MPs. Bill C-391 passed second reading because constituents have told their MPs they want their tax money invested in programs that actually fight crime. **More police officers and better technologies are more effective routes to improving public safety.**

Bill C-391 is a simple and straightforward bill that proposes to dismantle the long-gun registry for non-restricted long guns, nothing more. **Bill C-391 leaves in place the rest of Canada's gun control regime, including the requirement to obtain a licence, the screening of applicants, the requirement to register restricted and prohibited long guns, the need to take and pass the firearms safety course, and the rules on safe storage and transportation of firearms.**

The test of any governmental program should be whether it meets its goals. In this case, the long-gun registry has failed. It has failed to save lives. It has failed to reduce murder, suicide or aggravated assault rates. The long-gun registry continues to **cost Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars each year. This money could be better spent on the creation of a prohibited offenders registry to track the more than 250,000 persons who are prohibited from possessing firearms; to create more guns and gangs units in municipalities across the country; to increase border security to halt the flow of illegal handguns into Canada; or spent on key national priorities for all Canadians like health care.**

Thank you for your time and consideration in this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Eldon Hawton, President  
Founding Member

Friends of Fur

[www.friends-of-fur.org](http://www.friends-of-fur.org)

cc: Prime Minister Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.  
Mr. Michael Ignatieff, M.P., Leader of the Official Opposition  
M. Gilles Duceppe, Chef, Bloc Québécois  
Mr. Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada  
Ms. Candice Hoepfner, M.P.

**More detailed information is continued below starting on page # 6:**

## More ... in-depth support information Claims # 1 – #10 as follows:

By Dr. Gary Mauser <http://garymauser.net/index.html>

**Claim #1: Access to a gun increases the risk of murder.**

**False: Canadian gun owners are less likely than other Canadians to commit homicide.**

Based upon statistics from the Homicide Survey and the Canadian Firearms Program, the probability of a licensed Canadian firearms owner committing murder is less than one-half that of the typical Canadian.

In any given year, there were between 7 and 17 people accused of homicide who possessed a valid firearms licence or an FAC (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2006).

1997	17	2002	14
1998	10	2003	14
1999	11	2004	16
2000	7	2005	11
2001	11		

According to the Canadian Firearms Program, the number of people with valid firearm licences is just under 2,000,000 (RCMP, various years).

December 2005	1,979,054
December 2002	1,912,939

Depending upon the year, the homicide rate for licensed Canadian firearms owners varied from 0.35 per 100,000 to 0.85 per 100,000 firearm owners. In other words, **less than one licensed firearm owner per 100,000 gun owners is accused of murder in any given year.**

Over the same time period, the Canadian national homicide rate ranged from 1.74 per 100,000 to 2.06 per 100,000 people in the general population (Beattie, 2009). In other words, **approximately two people out of every 100,000 Canadian residents are accused of murder.** Thus, the likelihood of a licensed Canadian firearms owner committing murder is less than one-half that of the typical Canadian. It follows that, **on average, Canadians who do not own firearms are more likely to commit homicide than those who do.**

This should not be surprising since prospective firearms owners have had to pass criminal record checks since 1979. Also since that date, the conviction of a violent crime has been grounds to revoke a firearms licence (or FAC).

The police should find this information quite helpful. When the Canadian Firearms Database (via CPIC) shows that an individual is a licensed firearm owner, the police will be able to know that he is less likely to be dangerous than other Canadians. Of course, it goes without saying that the police should always be wary and take all reasonable precautions. Criminals do not tend to see themselves obliged to obey gun laws.

**Claim #2: Rifles and shotguns are the weapons most likely to be used in domestic homicides.**

**False: The problem is the murder of family members, not the means of killing.**

Focusing on murder weapons - whether long guns, hand guns, or knives - is a red herring. It is false to assume that if there had been no gun of a particular kind available in a particular incident there would have been no murder committed. There is copious research that shows that when laws are directed to restricting particular instruments such as firearms, the murder rate stays the same (See Kleck, 1991, 1997; Kates and Mauser, 2007; Mauser, 2008). Spousal murderers are opportunistic in that they use whatever implements are available to them to kill. Every home has many normal objects, such as baseball bats, hockey sticks, kitchen knives and rifles which can be used for assault or murder.

Nevertheless, Ms Cukier has raised this issue of weapon use, and even in this, she is incorrect. **Knives, not long guns (rifles or shotguns), are the weapons used more often to kill women than firearms.** A recent study found that in the period 1995-2008 knives were used in 31% of the murders of female spouses (Casavant, 2009). Long guns are involved in only 18% in female spousal homicides. Firearms of any kind are used in 29% of homicides of female spouses.<sup>2</sup> See Tables 1a and 1b.

In a typical year there are almost 600 homicides and 60 female spousal murders; long guns are involved in the deaths of 11 female spouses.

Table 1. Female spousal homicides (Annual average 1995 to 2008)

1a. Types of Firearms Used in Homicide		
	Number	Percent
Handgun	5	11%
Long gun (rifle or shotgun)	11	18%
Other type of firearm or unknown	2	3%
Total homicides involving firearms	18	27%

Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, (Casavant, 2009).

1b. Types of Weapons Used in Homicides		
	Number	Percent
Spousal homicides involving firearms	18	27%
Knife or other cutting/piercing tool	19	31%
Total (average annual number of female victims)	60	100%

Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, (Casavant, 2009).

**Illegally possessed handguns pose a much greater problem. In 2008 handguns were involved in over 60% of homicides involving firearms.** This follows from the discussion above: licensed firearms (including handgun) owners are a safer group than those who do not own firearms, and by a very considerably large margin. Those who illegally hold handguns are outside the law and consequently are criminals.

**Claim #3: Spousal murders with guns have fallen threefold since the law passed, while spousal murders without guns have remained the same.**

**False: Spousal murders (with and without guns) have slowly been declining since the mid-1970s.** (See the attached charts, Chart 1 and Juristat Chart 8).

This claim confuses the date the law passed with when the long-gun registry began. The law setting up the current firearms system was passed in 1995, but the long-gun registry did not begin until 2001 and all guns were required to be registered by 2003.

The female spousal murder rate fell by more than 50% from 1979 to 2000 (the year before the long-gun registry started); it has slid only 15% since that time. It is unknown why spousal murders have become less frequent over the past few decades but what is certain is that this decline is a long-term trend. It is logically incorrect to link it to the legislation of the last few years.

<sup>2</sup> Stats Can defines spouses quite broadly to include legally married, common-law, as well as separated and divorced persons age 15 years or older.

**Bill C-391 does not interfere with licensing or screening, but only changes the long-gun registry.** Licensing and the screening of persons wanting to own firearms legally will continue as before.

The long-gun registry and licensing are rarely useful to police in solving spousal homicides; in almost all cases the accused is immediately identified.

**The firearms used by abusive spouses to kill their wives are almost all possessed illegally.** One study of long guns involved in homicide found that approximately 4% were registered and 24% of homicide suspects who used a firearm had a valid FAC or licence (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2006).

**It has been illegal since 1992 for people with a violent record to own firearms.** Despite this, we do not currently have in place a system that would track prohibited offenders but choose instead to track legal, law abiding, licensed duck hunters, farmers and recreational sport shooters.

Police reports show that 63% of spousal victims come from a family known to have a history of violence (Dauvergne, 2005). Approximately two-thirds of those accused of homicide were known to have a Canadian criminal record; the majority of these were previously convicted of violent offences. Over one-half of the victims were also known to have a Canadian criminal record; most had been convicted of violent offences (Homicide in Canada, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005).

**Claim #4: stronger gun laws have helped reduce gun violence.**

**False: Ms Cukier's letter begs the question of the effectiveness of gun laws against crime.** Instead of showing how changes in gun laws have reduced homicide or suicide rates, she trots out the names of all the women's groups who oppose Bill C-391. Rationally, this approach cannot support her claim that gun laws reduce violence against women.

The rate of homicides committed with a firearm generally declined from the mid-1970s to 2002. **This steady, long-term decline has been driven by economic and demographic changes.**

**However, the use of firearms in homicide has increased since 2002.** In 2002, the percentage of homicides that involved firearms was 26% in 2002, but by in 2008 it had jumped to 33%. Firearm homicides increased despite the registering of long-guns between 2001 and 2003. See Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of Homicides that Involve Firearms

	Percentage of homicides that involved firearms
1998	27%
1999	31%
2000	34%
2001	31% - Long-gun registry started
2002	26%
2003	29% - Long-guns required to be registered
2004	28%
2005	34%
2006	31%
2007	32%
2008	33%

Source: Table 4, (Beattie, 2008)

Over the past 30 years, the use of handguns to commit homicide has tended to increase, as a result of gang-related activities, while the use of rifles and shotguns has generally declined. The long-gun registry began in 2001 and all long-guns had to be registered by 2003. (See attached Chart 2). The long-gun registry had no effect on this long-term decline. Ms Cukier is again incorrect.

Gang-related homicides have been increasing since the early 1990s. In 2008 about one in four homicides were gang-related. (See attached Chart 3). Of the 200 homicides committed with a firearm in 2008, 61% or 121

were with handguns (almost all illegally possessed). There were also 34 homicides committed with rifles or shotguns. Again, Ms Cukier is incorrect.

Over the past 10 years, firearms were involved in approximately as many homicides as knives; long-guns (rifles and shotguns) are involved in 8% of all homicides. See Tables 3a and 3b. Again, Ms Cukier is incorrect. Guns are not uniquely dangerous.

Table 3. Homicides involving firearms (percent total homicides)

3a. Types of Firearms Involved in Homicides (Annual average 1998 to 2007)		
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Handgun	106	18%
Rifle or shotgun	45	8%
Other type of firearm or unknown	25	4%
Total involving firearms	176	30%

Source: Table 5, (Beattie, 2008).

3b. Types of Weapons Involved in Homicides (Annual average 1998 to 2007)		
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Homicides involving firearms	176	30%
Homicides involving knives	198	31%
Average annual number of victims	584	100%

Source: Table 4, Beattie, Homicide in Canada, 2008.

Again, Ms Cukier is incorrect. **The long-gun registry has not reduced gun violence.** The rate of homicides committed with a firearm generally declined from the mid-1970s to 2002. **However, the use of firearms (overwhelmingly illegal ones) in homicide has increased by 24% since 2002 despite the introduction of the long-gun registry.**

**Claim #5: Firearms stolen from legal owners are a significant source of crime guns. Registration is essential to prevent dangerous individuals from getting guns.**

**False: All studies of crime guns (or guns used in murders) agree that stolen registered firearms are infrequently involved.**

In fact it is licensing, principally the criminal record check, and certainly not registration, that stops criminals from getting guns legally. Bill C-391 will not change the current provisions for obtaining a firearms licence. Registration simply refers to the firearm, not the owner.

The claim about stolen firearms is disingenuous. Ms. Cukier should know better. A study, co-authored by her, reported that more than 66% of crime guns seized in Canada have their origin south of the border (Canadian Press, 2009). A study of homicides between 1997 and 2005 reported that 13% of all firearms involved in a homicide could be found in the registry (Dauvergne, 2005). A variety of police studies have found that between 2% and 16% of crime guns were stolen from legal owners or were ever in the Canadian gun registry.

Even stolen guns rarely end up being used by criminals to commit subsequent crimes. An Australian study of almost 1,500 firearms stolen over the two-year period, 2004-05, found that just 1% had later been identified as having been used in a serious crime (Borzycki and Mouzos, 2007).

We consequently find that **the bulk (54% - 69%) of crime guns are smuggled into Canada by criminal gangs.** (Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2006; Toronto Police Services, 2004, 2005; Toronto Police Annual Report, 2001; Project Gun Runner, 1993). It is abundantly clear that long-gun registration has no effect whatever on guns used in crime. The gun registry merely ties up police time and funds, and thereby contributes to blocking more effective means of prevention.

**The key to preventing dangerous people from getting guns is police screening and criminal record checks. Bill C-391 will not change the strict firearms controls in Canada.** The claim by Ms. Cukier and the Coalition for Gun Control that the repeal of the long-gun registry will make it easier for people to get a gun is disingenuous, given that she knows (or should know) that it is the firearms licensing system, and not the registry, that determines who can or cannot have legal access to a firearm. In addition, the amount of time, effort and money directed towards preventing criminals from having easier illegal access to the guns of lawful owners is not as effective as increasing police staffing and directing it against criminal activity. One undetected container load of illegal firearms fuels criminal needs for decades.

**Claim #6: Firearms pose more problems in smaller cities where there are more gun owners.**

**False: Homicide is a particularly acute problem in large cities where ironically there are fewer legal gun owners.**

Canada's major metropolitan areas are increasingly plagued with gang-related homicides that predominantly involve handguns imported by criminal activity.

Ms Cukier talks about "firearm problems" rather than homicide because she wishes to use the term "gun deaths" which are mostly suicide. Suicide is a greater problem in small rural communities than in large cities, but suicide rates cannot be reduced by gun registration. Firearms are involved in only 15% of suicides; hanging (or asphyxiation) is much more prevalent. What is needed is greater effort in suicide prevention programs.

Table 4. Homicide Rates in Rural and Urban Canada

Homicide rate per 100,000 population by census area (2008)	
Census metropolitan areas (population 500,000 and over)	1.93
Census areas less than 500,000 population	1.73
Canada	1.85

Source: Table 3 (Beattie, 2008)

Table 5. Firearms ownership is lower in urban areas than in rural areas

	<u>Firearms-Owning Households</u>
Urban	13%
Rural	30%

Source: GPC Research (2000)

**The term "gun deaths" is a red herring.**

One of the most important aspects of understanding the debate about guns is to be clear that observing so-called "gun deaths" is not an appropriate measure for evaluating firearms laws. If the point of gun laws is to improve public safety, then the proper goal for stricter gun laws is to reduce homicide or violent crime, the figures for which have been kept for many decades in all civilized countries. The primary goal of public safety is to protect the public from criminal violence, and secondarily to diminish suicide rates. The term "gun deaths" has been widely adopted by activists when closer scrutiny shows that it is a red herring which masks changes in more important indicators.

Table 6. "Gun deaths" consist primarily of suicides.

Gun deaths (Canada, 2005)		
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Suicide	593	71%
Homicide	223	27%
Accidents	17	2%

Total	833	100%
Note: 2005 is the most recent year suicides and accidental deaths are available nationwide.		
Source: Statistics Canada: Causes of Death		

Lives cannot have been saved if the number of "gun deaths" declines but there is no corresponding drop in total homicides or suicides. This is known as "the problem of method substitution." Yet those criticizing gun ownership assume that removing guns would automatically stop the crime (or the suicide). This is false as can be seen immediately in Table 7. This "substitution effect" is not limited to Canada, but can be seen in other countries, such as Australia, where suicide by asphyxiation immediately filled the gap left by a decline in firearm suicides (Baker and McPhedran 2007; Klieve et al, 2009; Lee and Surardi, 2008). In New Zealand, suicide rates continued to increase after the 1992 Firearms Act (Beautrais, 2006).

Table 7. Trends in Suicide Methods in Canada (selected years)

	<u>Total suicides</u>	<u>Firearms</u>	<u>Hanging</u>
1991	3,593	1,110	1,034
1995	3,968	916	1,382
2000	3,605	685	1,546
2003	3,764	618	1,662
2005	3,741	593	1,682
Source: Statistics Canada: Causes of Death			

The long-gun registry has saved no lives. There were 3,605 suicides in 2000 before the registry started and 3,741 in 2005. Clearly, this analysis suggests that the money wasted on registering guns would have been better spent on suicide prevention efforts.

Table 8. Number of Homicides in Canada, 1991 to 2008 (selected years)

	<u>Number of homicide victims</u>	
1991	756	
1995	588	
1998	558	
2000	546	
2001	533	- long-gun registry started
2002	582	
2003	549	- long guns required to be registered
2004	624	
2005	663	
2006	606	
2007	594	
2008	611	
source: Beattie, Sara (2009) Homicide in Canada, 2008		

There were 546 homicide victims in 2000, before the long-gun registry began, and 611 in 2008.

The key question is whether stricter gun laws, e.g., long-gun registration, are effective in reducing criminal violence. No properly designed empirical study has found that gun laws have been responsible for reducing criminal violence rates (or suicide rates) in any country in the world. See Baker and McPhedran (2007), Hahn et al (2003), Kates and Mauser (2007), Kleck (1991, 1997), Mauser (2007, 2008), Thorp (1997), Wellford et al (2004).

**Claim #7: The registry is an essential tool for police when taking preventative action and when enforcing prohibition orders to remove firearms from dangerous individuals.** "Before a police officer knocks on a

door, they want and need to know whether the person behind that door owns a gun," (Ontario Attorney General, 2009).<sup>3</sup>

**False: The long-gun registry does not contain information on a gun's location.** There is no requirement to store a long-gun where the owner resides. **The registry only contains descriptive information about the registered guns.**

The police need information they can trust. The most dangerous criminals have not registered their firearms. When police approach a dangerous person or situation, they must assume there could be an illegal weapon. **Many serving police officers say the registry is not useful to them.**

**The Auditor General found that the RCMP could not rely upon the registry in court on account of the large number of errors and omissions** (Office of the Auditor General, 2002). It is and has always been the nature of gun registries to have such errors and omissions, on a staggering scale. This is why New Zealand abandoned their long-gun registry (Thorp, 1997).

The RCMP has reported error rates between 43% and 90% in firearms applications and registry information. A manual search, prompted by an MP's ATI request, discovered that 4,438 stolen firearms had been successfully re-registered without alerting authorities. Apparently, the thieves had resold the firearms to new owners who (unsuspectingly) had subsequently registered them (Breitkreuz, 2003; Paraskevas, 2003).

The Auditor General reported that, "The (Canadian Firearms Program) did not establish targets for data accuracy or methods of measuring the accuracy of data in the CFIS," and that only 27% of firearms had been verified (Office of the Auditor General, 2006). It should be understood that the irregularities in gun registration stem from multiple causes which will always be with us. Guns carry a lot of stampings, and officials who handle guns to register often them know little about firearms. Despite the best efforts of the Canadian Firearms Program, it is prohibitively expensive to address these problems adequately. Hence it follows that gun registries are always inaccurate.

In sum, Ms Cukier's claims are wrong again. The long-gun registry does not contain information on a gun's location. The Auditor General found that the RCMP could not rely upon the registry in court on account of the large number of errors and omissions. Less than one-half of all firearms in Canada are estimated to be listed in the registry, and a large number of records in the registry have errors or are missing important information (Breitkreuz, 2001; Mauser, 2007). Police officers on the front lines do not find the registry helpful.

**Claim #8: The gun registry is consulted by police 10,000 times a day and provides important information.**

**False: Almost all of the "inquiries" are routinely generated by traffic stops or firearm sales and are not specifically requested; nor do police often find them useful.**

**Almost all of these inquiries involve licensing, not the long-gun registry.** Inquiries specific to the gun registry amount to only 2.4% of the approximately 3.5 million inquiries into the database in 2008, which has declined each year from 8.3% in 2003 as awareness has grown that actually looking for this data has limited usefulness.

Bill C-391 will not change the licensing system so 97.6% of these inquiries will continue as before.

Note: the firearms registry only contains gun-specific data, e.g., the serial number and certificate number.

Despite its reported irrelevance, some police associations have endorsed it. These endorsements may reflect where they receive funding and are currently under scrutiny. The majority of MPs who voted for Bill C-391 were right to ignore the disingenuous claims of these police associations.

Here is what one serving RCMP corporal (who requested anonymity) had to say:

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<sup>3</sup> The Ontario Attorney General has made the same mistake that is repeated by the Coalition and others. The licensing system, which is not affected by C-391, is only able to identify that someone in the residence may own a gun, not where it is stored

"I certainly do not understand how the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police can claim that the registry is a useful tool. I think their doing so is more a statement of how long it has been since any of them has been in touch with front line policing. I supervise 10 RCMP members on a daily basis and have done so for quite some time. I have never once in my career found the registry to be a useful tool in solving a single crime and can say without a doubt that I have never witnessed the long-gun registry prevent a crime."

SOURCE: Email to Candice Hoepfner, M.P. - October 2009

The registry is a shopping list for criminals. The RCMP has admitted to more than 300 breaches so far. Early in 2009, the RCMP handed over sensitive information to the polling firm Ekos Research Associates for a customer-satisfaction survey. Gun owners believe this is a serious breach of privacy. No registry means no shopping list for computer-hacking criminals (Hoepfner, 2009).

In summary, almost all of the inquiries are routinely generated by traffic stops or firearm sales and are not specifically requested by police. More than 97% of these inquiries involve licensing, not the long-gun registry. Inquiries specific to the gun registry amount to only 2.4% of the approximately 3.5 million inquiries into the database in 2008. Once again, Ms Cukier's claim is wrong.

**Claim #9: Polls show Canadians believe the gun registry should not be dismantled.**

**False: Two recent polls show that the public does not support the long-gun registry. This is consistent with at least 11 earlier polls,** all of which have clearly demonstrated that the Canadian public has no faith in the long-gun registry or its ability to increase public safety.

The Angus Reid poll (Nov 2009) asked the following question:

"The Canadian Firearms Registry, also known as the long-gun registry, requires the registration of all non-restricted firearms in Canada. From what you have seen, read or heard, do you think this registry has been successful or unsuccessful in preventing crime in Canada?"

Successful	11%
Unsuccessful	46%
It has had no effect on crime	32%
Not sure	11%

This was corroborated in an Ekos poll, also conducted in November 2009, that found 38% supported abolishing the registry, while 31% wanted to keep it; 31% were undecided or did not respond.

**Claim #10: Stronger gun laws have helped reduce gun-related death, injury, violence and suicide.**

**False. No properly designed study has been able to show that gun laws have been responsible for reducing criminal violence rates or suicide rates in any country in the world.**

There is no evidence that Bill C-68 has reduced the homicide rate or the suicide rate in Canada. Gun deaths have been declining since the 1970s, long before Bill C-68 and the creation of the long-gun registry.

Gang-related homicides have increased dramatically since the mid 1990s. The long-gun registry has had no obvious effect on gang-related violence. (See attached Chart 3).

Homicide rates have fallen impressively in both the United States and in Canada since the early 1990s. Homicide rates have plummeted 45% in the US, compared to just 32% in Canada over the same time period (See attached Chart 4). The US did this without the benefit of Canadian gun laws. In fact, the trend in the US over the past twenty years has been to make gun ownership easier for licensed citizens, not harder.

**No properly designed empirical study has found that gun laws have been responsible for reducing criminal violence rates (or suicide rates) in any country in the world.** See Baker and McPhedran (2007),

Hahn et al (2003), Kates and Mauser (2007), Kleck (1991, 1997), Mauser (2007, 2008), Thorp (1997), Wellford et al (2004).

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## Professor Gary Mauser



Gary A. Mauser is a Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Business Administration and the Institute for Urban Canadian Research Studies at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia. Professor Mauser earned his Ph.D. from the University of California at Irvine. He has dual American and Canadian citizenship. He and his wife, Ede Wong, have five children and live in Coquitlam.

His interest in firearms and "gun control" grew out of his research in political marketing. He has published two books, *Political Marketing*, and *Manipulating Public Opinion* and more than 20 articles. For the past 15 years, Professor Mauser has conducted research on the politics of gun control, the effectiveness of gun control laws, and the use of firearms in self defense.

Gary has been a featured speaker in New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, and in North America.

He purchased his first firearm after moving to Canada and conducting research into firearm legislation. He is a member of the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee for Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day and of the British Columbia Wildlife Federation.

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