



November 1, 2009

Member of Parliament
Liberal Caucus
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Liberal Member:

We are writing as members of the executive of the Canadian Association of Police Boards (CAPB), the national association representing civilian oversight of policing in Canada, about the private members Bill C-391 that is set for second reading in the House of Commons on Wednesday, November 4, 2009.

CAPB's members provide governance and oversight of more than 35,000 municipal police officers and chiefs in Canada. In their role as civilian oversight bodies, police boards appoint and manage the performance of chiefs and deputy chiefs, set policing objectives, establish policies, and generally represent the public interest. The effective governance and oversight of policing in Canada is an important means to ensure that Canada's police services are fully accountable, transparent and enjoy public confidence as they tackle important issues of public safety, social stability and international terror. It is one of the foundations of our democracy.

It is from this critical and unique vantage point that CAPB, advocates for strong firearms laws. We believe such laws to be essential for the safety and security of individuals, families, communities and police officers and accordingly we vigorously oppose any ideologically motivated effort to weaken existing provisions as being inimical to the public interest.

Together with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACFP), we represent the voice of those who are best positioned to appreciate the damage that passage of this bill will do to public safety.

Today we write to you to express our opposition to Bill C-391. As civilian oversight bodies of municipal policing, we cannot support any attempt to weaken police ability to deal with gun violence, as this bill will surely do, if passed. At a time when gun crime is a serious concern in communities across the country, such an act will be irresponsible and a disservice to the cause of building safe communities. We, therefore, urge you to not treat the bill lightly and to consider the consequences of your action if you are considering supporting it.



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This legislation will not only eliminate the need to register more than 8 million rifles and shotguns but it will also require that the existing registration records on long guns be destroyed. CAPB will not stand by legislation that increases the risk for frontline police officers and undermines public safety. We therefore ask you to vote against Bill C-391.

The federal firearms program is considered a vital tool for effective policing. The registry is consulted thousands of times on a daily basis by police services across the country. The point is all firearms are potentially lethal and gun control is a necessary part of an integrated strategy to address violence. The CAPB is proud of Canada's international reputation as a country with effective gun-control legislation and strenuously opposes any legislation that weakens Canada's current firearms registry.

Simply put, without information about who owns guns and the guns they own, there is no efficient way to stop dangerous people from getting firearms.

We reject the notion promoted by certain special interest groups that the gun registry is somehow an intrusion on the rights and freedoms of law abiding Canadians. With respect, there is no right to bear arms in Canada; the ability to do so is a privilege. Like innumerable other laws, regulations and practices that Canadians readily accept, the gun registry provides a reasonable balance between the exercise of an individual privilege and the broader right of the society to be safe.

Please consider this an official request for you to show your leadership by not supporting Bill C-391. There are lives depending on it.

Sincerely,

Greg Dionne
President
Prince Albert, SK

Ivan Court
Vice President
Saint John, NB

Alok Mukherjee
Secretary Treasurer
Toronto, ON