



MP PIERRE LEMIEUX RISES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TO SPEAK ON THE LONG-GUN REGISTRY

October 28, 2011

12:45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to speak to Bill [C-19, the ending the long-gun registry act](#). My colleagues have spoken very passionately about the need to end this wasteful and ineffective registry, and I am very glad that the moment has arrived when we are actually able to do so.

Since my election in 2006, I have clearly stated to my constituents that I do not support the long gun registry, because it criminalizes farmers, hunters and target shooters who respect the law, but does nothing to prevent criminals from getting their hands on firearms.

I intend to keep my promise to scrap it, which is more than I can say for the NDP and Liberal MPs from rural ridings, who have long spoken about wanting to end the long gun registry but who vote to continue it whenever they are asked to take a stand on the matter. I will do as I said, as will my Conservative colleagues, and we will abolish this Liberal bureaucratic mess that infringes on the freedoms of Canadians.

As members may know, I represent a rural riding where farming is a way of life. Farmers make a living from the land and they have to protect their livelihoods. That means that a majority of the people who I represent own shotguns or rifles to safeguard their livelihoods.



The thrust of the problem is that these hard-working, law-abiding people who grow food for all Canadians are made to feel like dangerous criminals because of the long gun registry.

This long gun registry's criminalization of farmers, hunters and sport shooters is wrong. How is it possible that imposing needless and extensive red tape on these people is going to stop crime elsewhere? What is the connection between regulating the long gun in the hands of a farmer in my riding and stopping gun crime in Toronto, Montreal or Winnipeg? There is absolutely none, and what is worse is that the resources being used to administer the long gun registry could be used elsewhere to actually fight crime and protect victims.

This issue of the long gun registry demonstrates clearly the fundamental disconnect between opposition MPs and rural Canadians, and Canadians see this disconnect. Canadians elected Conservative members of Parliament on May 2, including, notably, not a single Liberal MP from a rural riding in Ontario. It is not hard to see why. Former Liberal minister of justice Allan Rock, the individual who implemented the long gun registry on behalf of his Liberal government, stated that “Only the police and military should have firearms”. This is a ludicrous statement.

Let us take my situation, for example. As the House knows, I served in the Canadian army for 20 years. During that time, I was trained for, carried and fired guns of all description: pistols, rifles, light machine guns, heavy machine guns, automatic grenade launchers, et cetera. I also trained other soldiers in their safe operation and acted in the capacity of range safety officer on many occasions.

The Liberal position enunciated by Allan Rock would be that despite all of this training, experience and responsibility, now that I am retired, I should have no access to firearms as a hunter or sport shooter and, to make it worse, I should be criminalized by the long gun registry if, for whatever reason, I missed a long gun registration deadline, even if it was not my fault.



This situation must change, and I am very pleased and proud that we now have the opportunity to change it.

I would also like to draw attention to a statement made by the hon. member for Mount Royal to the effect that destroying the long gun registry is synonymous with destroying evidence. Since I am a generous man, I will assume he misspoke. I say this because, interestingly enough, his statement implies that Canadians living in rural areas are criminals about whom evidence must be gathered, whether or not they have committed a crime. We on this side of the House fundamentally disagree with this attitude of the opposition members.

Hunters, farmers and sport shooters are not the people that we need to target if we want to keep our streets and communities free from gun-related violence. We need to target criminals and continue with the practical and concrete measures that the Conservative government has taken in this regard—measures that, I should add, the opposition has rejected. The opposition parties are speaking out against anti-crime measures that work and they are firmly supporting those that do not.

It is clear to the experts that safer streets and communities come from tough, effective laws and from smart crime prevention programming. Our government has taken concrete actions in both of these areas. Whether it is through increasing sentences for crimes involving guns, increasing sentences for gang crime, putting more police on the streets, or improving investments in crime prevention, our government believes in effective crime-fighting measures.

These are the kinds of measures that keep Canadians safe, not increasing bureaucracy, paperwork and red tape on law-abiding Canadians, with the threat of a criminal record if they do not.

Members need not take my word for it. Let me read the following quote: “The federal government has recently introduced a bill to end the long gun registry introduced by the Liberals in the mid-1990s. University of Ottawa



criminologist Ron Melchers said the registry has had little to do with the decline in firearm homicides, adding that its absence will also make little difference”.

This is what the experts are saying.

I would also like to address a common inaccuracy used by the NDP and the Liberals. They say we register cars and boats, so why not guns? The fact of the matter is that if I am late filling out the paperwork to register my car, I get a small fine, but if I am late filling out the paperwork to register my shotgun, under the current system I am threatened with being charged, convicted, given a criminal record and perhaps being sent to jail.

Another point about the registration of cars and boats is that we only have to register them if we are going to use them. We can store a car in the backyard or garage and leave it unregistered for as long as we want. It is only once we start using that car that it has to be registered. However, if I store a long gun in a locked storage container in my basement and I do not look at it for 15 years, it has to be registered that whole time, or else I am committing a criminal act under the present long gun registry.

Turning law-abiding sport shooters, farmers and hunters in rural regions into criminals is not an effective means of gun control.

The bill before the House today is, in fact, very simple. It makes it possible for this government to do exactly what it promised—to abolish the expensive and ineffective long gun registry. It is not complicated. Members simply need to vote for or against it. Are they in favour of imposing useless bureaucracy on farmers because of their occupation? Are they in favour of treating hunters like criminals simply because they own firearms?

I know where my constituents stand, and that is why I will be voting to support the ending the long gun registry act. I call on all members opposite to do the same.



They need not listen just to me. The NDP member for Western Arctic said, “They say [the long gun registry] is effective, but effective for what?”

The NDP member for Timmins—James Bay said, “What rural people were concerned with is wasting money tracking down your grandfather's 20-gauge rifle as opposed to putting money into urban gun violence”.

Many similar statements have been made by both NDP and Liberal MPs who are members of the House today. It is my hope that they will reflect on the words that they themselves have spoken, that they will represent the will of their constituents and that when the time comes to vote, they will do the right thing, stand in their place and vote to end the expensive and ineffective long gun registry, which has criminalized responsible and law-abiding Canadians for far too long.

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