

The Coalition News

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RESPONSIBLE FIREARMS OWNERS COALITION

OCT/NOV 1999

Sure, It's All About "Public Safety"

B.C.'s gun clubs and shooting ranges are under attack from both the federal and provincial governments. The following (paraphrased) article By Jody Paterson of The Victoria Times-Colonist gets it right.

"I'm not exactly an advocate for the right to bear arms. But there's something politically craven about the way our governments have chosen to disarm the nation.

You can take the principled route, in which you argue passionately for prohibition because Canadian society is better off without guns. Or you can take the coward's route, in which you pretend that you respect the rights of gun owners even while quietly waging a regulatory war against them. As has been proven since Bill C-68 began inching into federal law last December, we've opted for cowardice. Gun owners are going down in a hail of bureaucratic bullets.

Since the advent of Bill C-68, gun shops have floundered and folded by the hundreds, waits for firearms acquisition have lengthened dramatically, and almost \$150 million in tax dollars has been spent setting up a tangled firearms registration system that's currently little more than a make-work project for hundreds of bureaucrats. The latest victims are B.C. gun clubs, newly under the scrutiny of the provincial government after C-68 opened the door for provinces to inspect shooting ranges. B.C. embraced its new role with such relish that of 11 ranges inspected so far, only two have passed muster. **The attorney general's office says it supports shooting and is acting only out of concern for public safety.** The province's 150 or so gun clubs beg to differ. Citing impeccable safety records to date, they contend they'll be obliterated by the use of worst-case scenarios to estimate whether bullets could land outside range boundaries.

Shooting ranges are typically set up by people who want to keep up their shooting skills, including hunters, sport shooters and police officers. They find some land, secure a lease, and cover expenses the way any volunteer organization does: through membership fees, user charges and fund-raising.

Ranges allowing the use of restricted firearms such as handguns have been regulated for many years, and all ranges are subject to annual inspections by the RCMP. But C-68 toughens the rules and broadens them to include non-restricted firearms such as shotguns and rifles, and gives over inspection duties to a chief firearms officer in each province. Knowing the new rules were to take effect Dec. 1 of this year, the province and gun clubs started talking back in May. And initially, a few clubs even invited provincial inspectors to drop by with tips. "We were building a new place because we got squeezed out of our old place by development, so we asked them to come and give us some advice. Sure, they said -- 'We're here to help,' " recalls Campbell River Gun Club president Al Cooper. "Then they showed up and shut us down." The province said there was a risk of bullets leaving the range and hitting boats in a nearby lake. Cooper says the lake is four kilometres away, and there's a forest and a mountain in between.

"We're completely out in the bush. Our nearest neighbour is Quinsam Coal," says Cooper. "But what they want us to have is a huge off-range area under our control. And we've wanted that for a while too, but the Lands and Parks Ministry hasn't wanted to give it to us." A similar scene played out at the Powell River Gun Club; shut down over concerns that bullets could cross an airport runway—even though none have in its 60-year history. Obviously, we want shooting ranges to be safe. But they already are. No one can recall an out-of-bounds incident with a stray bullet in a century of B.C. range operations. Insurance rates, always a good gauge of risk, are as little as \$1.60 annually per gun-club member for \$2 million in liability. Those of us who don't like guns might like to think that every closed range is a step toward victory. But what's more likely to happen is that shooters with nowhere to go will take their target practice into the bush. And that's truly dangerous. The province has pulled in its horns of late and is calling on the gun lobby to come to the table and talk. **And if the aim is indeed safety, bureaucracy will take a back seat to common sense."**

McLELLAN REJECTS RECOMMENDATIONS TO CURTAIL BLACKMARKET GUN SALES

“Minister’s handpicked firearms experts concerned about non-compliance and impossible deadlines.”

On October 5th Garry Breitkreuz, Firearms Critic for the Official Opposition, made public a few more secrets from the Justice Department’s leaky firearms registry. In an August, Friday the 13th letter sent to the Canadian Police Association (CPA), Justice Minister Anne McLellan flatly rejected all four recommendations from her own handpicked group of firearms experts. The Minister referred to the recommendations to “*address black market gun sales*” as a “*quick fix*” in her letter. “Obviously, the Minister’s User Group on Firearms is raising the same issues that we are – non-compliance and impossible deadlines,” said Breitkreuz.

The recommendations made by the Minister’s User Group on Firearms were:

- *Permitting dealers and individuals to transfer and register firearms outside the present scheme on a temporary basis, while maintaining full CPIC and background checks, licencing verification and necessary firearms information to facilitate more timely registration, similar to the reporting process in effect before December 1998.*
- *Delaying the final date for licencing to December 31, 2002, to match that in effect for registration.*
- *Suspending the \$25 transfer fee on a temporary basis to encourage compliance.*
- *Postponing the registration deadline for two years to relieve the reported backlog and presumed inability to achieve full capacity by the current deadline.*

The Justice Minister’s letter dismisses the recommendations outright and tells the CPA, “*a variety of system and process improvements will address the performance concerns raised by the User Group.*” Breitkreuz commented, “Minister McLellan is being duped by her bureaucrats. She should crunch the numbers herself and she would see the utter futility of it all. Maybe Finance Minister Paul Martin should lend the Justice Minister and her bureaucrats a calculator that actually works.”

“The government has created so much red tape and special taxes to buying a firearm legally that many responsible firearms owners are doing whatever it takes to avoid the overly expensive, totally ineffective system. Technically, they are breaking the law, but when it’s done to protest a bad law and high taxes, it’s called civil disobedience,” observed Breitkreuz. “Rather than admit failure, the government has chosen to spend hundreds of millions to make life more and more difficult for duck hunters instead of zeroing in on the public’s real priorities - real crime and real criminals.”

For copies of the letters, please call: Yorkton Office: (306) 782-3309 Ottawa Office: (613) 992-4394 e-mail: breitg0@parl.gc.ca

Military Collector? “*Canadian Military Times*” is a new newspaper and book list for military historians, researchers and collectors. This quarterly publication is available free of charge. Contact: Bunker to Bunker Publishing, P.O. Box 161, 200 Barclay Parade S.W., Calgary, AB T2P 4R5 Phone/Fax: (403)264-6242

Firearms Leasing is still legal:

A CILA source reveals that police services across Canada have been leasing firearms for years and are still doing it...all on standard business permits! So much for the nonsense emanating from the Canadian Firearms Centre and the Provincial Firearms Offices regarding supposed illegalities. CILA has obtained confidential documents relating to these leasing activities that clearly show the CFC’s thorough knowledge of these leasing activities and their complicity in it. **No wonder they refuse to take legal action against anyone leasing a firearm!**

CBC Commemorates Massacre: The CBC’s long running news magazine, “The Fifth Estate” will be producing an hour long documentary to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, December 6th, 1989. This tragic shooting of 14 young women by a crazed individual has long been used by both anti gun groups and militant feminist organizations to further their agendas by playing on the sympathies of Canadians. These monstrous and callous actions by the Lib-Left should be deplored and denounced by all compassionate Canadians.

Protest may be submitted to Francine Pelletier, The Fifth Estate, PO Box 500, Station “A” Toronto, ON., M5W 1E6 ph:(416)05-6660 fax: (416) 205-6688 e-mail: fpelletier@toronto.cbc.ca

User Fees or Taxes

Jean Valin, the CFC’s resident spin-doctor, assisted by his willing accomplice Wendy Cukier, have been attempting to con the Canadian public that firearms licence fees are not a tax. A user fee is a voluntary payment for a service or product that an individual desires. The licence and registration fees contained in the Firearms Act might, just might, not qualify as a desirable service. Jean and Wendy, repeat after me, this is a TAX.

CABINET SECRECY USED AGAIN TO HIDE INFORMATION ON GUN REGISTRY

“The government only did one study on economic impact and it’s too hot for the public to handle.”

On September 29th, Garry Breitkreuz, Firearms Critic for the Official Opposition, slammed the government for once again using Cabinet secrecy to keep vital information out of the public’s hands. In May, the Saskatchewan MP filed an Access to Information (ATI) Request asking for detailed information about the impact that the new firearms registration system would have on 18 different economic variables (see copy of original ATI Request attached). The Justice Department took three months searching their files and then sent Breitkreuz the following response: “***We have identified one record responding to your request (115 pages). This document has been deemed a Cabinet Confidence and has been excluded entirely pursuant to s.69(1)(a) of the Act.***” (meaning the *Access to Information Act*).

“This is becoming a nasty habit for this government. In June they used ‘*Cabinet Confidence*’ to hide 172 pages of information on the true costs of the gun registry and now this,” complained Breitkreuz. “I have written to the Information Commissioner about the Justice Department’s abuse of the ‘*Cabinet Confidence*’ excuse and apparently his hands are tied by the legislation.” The Information Commissioner wrote, “*As you know, Cabinet Confidences are excluded from the ambit of the Act. My office has no authority to compel an institution to produce such records for inspection in the course of an investigation.*”

“During the debate of Bill C-68 (the *Firearms Act*) in 1995, the Liberal government promised Parliament and the Canadian people that their gun registration scheme would not have a negative impact on the economy and that the implementation costs would only be \$85 million over five years. Both these statements have been proven false,” said Breitkreuz. “I have budget documents proving the government spent \$216 million on the registry since 1995. And a review of Firearms Business Permits issued by the RCMP between 1979 and 1997 shows that the number of firearms dealers has dropped from 8,931 to 2,349 over the last 18 years - that’s 6,582 fewer firearm dealers. Who knows how many jobs have been lost? Maybe that’s what is in the secret government report? This is a disgusting performance for a government that promised in 1993, “*Open government will be the watchword of the Liberal program.*” (Page 92 of the Red Book, *Creating Opportunity – The Liberal Plan for Canada*). “So much for their promise to restore confidence in our political institutions,” concluded Breitkreuz.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUEST

Filed May 14, 1999 - Department of Justice File A99-00034

Please provide me with all documents, reports, studies, and correspondence that would allow me to know what impact the implementation of Bill C-68, *an Act respecting firearms and other weapons*, Statutes of Canada 1995 Chapter 39, will have on the economy of Canada, including but not limited to:

- the impact on the number of jobs, the number of businesses, their sales and operations
- the impact on the number of firearms dealers, their sales and operations
- the impact on number of visitors to and from Canada and tourist dollars spent in Canada
- the impact on aboriginal guiding and outfitting jobs and businesses
- the impact on sporting goods sales and manufacturers
- the impact on the sales and manufacturing of recreational vehicles
- the impact on trade between Canada and the U.S.A. and other foreign countries
- the impact on the gun clubs and shooting ranges and the economic spin-offs in their communities
- the impact on firearms collectors and museums
- the impact on hunting and shooting sports
- the impact on the number of hunters and the consequential effect on wildlife populations
- the impact on the number of firearms collectors and museums
- the impact on gun shows and economic spin-offs in the communities that host them
- the impact on the number of violent crimes and related costs
- the impact on government operations, personnel, expenditures and revenue
- the impact on customs and excise operations, personnel and expenditures
- the impact on police operations, enforcement, personnel and expenditures
- the impact on the court system and the corrections and parole system.

Access to Information Requests

Anne Brennan, Departmental Co-ordinator
Access to Information and Privacy Office
Department of Justice
284 Wellington Street, First Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H8

Appeal to the Supreme Court

The appeal to Canada's Supreme Court is scheduled for December 15 - 16, 1999. Unfortunately, a decision is not expected until the autumn of 2000. Six provinces and two territories are opposed to the Firearms Act.

Appellant - Province of Alberta

Respondent - Government of Canada

Intervenors

Manitoba

Intervenors

Alberta Council of Womens' Shelters

New Brunswick

Saskatchewan

Ontario

Nova Scotia

Yukon

N.W.Territories

Shooters (RFOCBC)

CORFOS (RFOCBC)

Fed. of Sask. Indian Nations

LUFA

CAVEAT, Fondation des victimes de 6
decembre contre la violence, Can.
Assoc. for Adolescent Health and Can.
Pediatic Society.

Coalition for Gun Control, Can. Assoc.
of Chiefs of Police, City of Toronto,
City of Montreal, City of Winnipeg

Assoc. pour sante publique du Quebec

Thank you to all our members whose generous donations financed our participation in this court challenge.

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RESPONSIBLE FIREARMS OWNERS COALITION OF BC

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Name _____

Cheque

Address _____

City _____ Province _____

Postal Code _____ Telephone _____

Age _____ Occupation _____

New Renewal Change of Address

\$15 One Year Membership

\$25 One Year Silver Membership Visa

\$50 One Year Gold Membership Master
Card

And/or Donation \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Credit Card# _____

MAKE CHEQUE PAYABLE & MAIL TO: Exp.Date _____

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Yes I would like to be an RFOC Volunteer
BC Societies #S-32155 NL 10/99