

Long-gun registry: The Coalition for Gun Control disappointed by today's Supreme Court decision

For Immediate Release

OTTAWA, March 27, 2015 - The Coalition for Gun Control is disappointed by the decision made today by the Supreme Court refusing Quebec's right to access the data from the Quebec portion of the long-gun registry. Despite the verdict the Coalition is asking the federal government, in good faith, to renounce from his intention to destroy the data, given the unanimous position of the Quebec government, despite everything, will establish its own registry.

This decision, made by 5 judges against 4 judges including the three judges from Quebec, paves the way for the federal government to destroy the data of more than 1.6 million registered rifles and shotguns in the province of Quebec. The police and public safety experts have emphasized that these data are essential to support investigations. The Quebec government therefore requested that they be made available in the province.

"The federal government action aimed to interfere with the decisions that could legitimately take the Quebec government, as demonstrated by the analysis of both the majority and dissent in the ruling today." "The actions of the Federal Government were purely punitive. It was one thing to pass a law to end the registration of firearms, but the decision to go further and to destroy the records of more than 6 million registered rifles and shotguns was without justification," commented M^e Marc-Antoine Cloutier, Partner at Deveau Avocats and President and Founder of the Clinique juridique Juripop, whose lawyers represent the Coalition at the Supreme Court. "The judges enrolling in the dissent wrote a cooperative regime enjoyed by federal and provincial governments can be dismantled unilaterally by one party without considering the consequences of such a decision on the jurisdictions of his partner. To hold otherwise would be to condone cooperative federalism in one direction. Unfortunately, this is the position that was adopted by the majority of the Supreme Court today", added M^e Cloutier. The Government of Quebec had a strong mandate to fight for the data and was backed by a unanimous decision of the National Assembly.

"We are enormously grateful to the Government of Quebec and all major parties in the province for standing up for public safety," said Wendy Cukier, President of the Coalition for Gun Control. "While we are disappointed with the decision, their strong support of the intervention, backed by police, public safety experts and victims of gun violence sent a strong signal," said Cukier.

The impact of the destruction of the registry and its data in other parts of the country has already been seen. Police can no longer trace rifles and shotguns found in crime. Police no longer know what guns they will face when they go on a domestic violence call. While handguns are a major problem in urban violence, rifles and shotguns are the guns most often used in murders of police officers, in domestic violence, in suicides and, indeed, in political violence. "While other countries are strengthening their laws and combatting illicit trafficking, Canada is the only country to reverse its laws on the control of firearms and ignores its commitments to fight against illicit firearm trade," said Cukier. "The Federal Government currently has legislation before Parliament that will further relax controls on licensing of gun owners as well as the controls on handguns and military weapons. The Coalition for Gun Control has fought for 25 years to reduce the risk that dangerous people will have access to guns. This decision is a setback but we will continue to fight for strong and effective laws," concluded Cukier.

"The Federal Government needs to change direction and to stop adopting policies that respond directly to the demands of the gun lobby," concluded Me Cloutier.

The Juripop lawyers are supported by Frédéric Langlois from Deveau Avocats, in this case.