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SEVENTEEN FALSE CLAIMS ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GUN REGISTRY

By Garry Breitkreuz, MP – December 9, 2004

NOTE: With one exception the following Liberal claims were made in an e-mail sent to all Members of Parliament on Monday, December 6, 2004 by the Hon. Roy Cullen, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

1. LIBERAL CLAIM: *Important client service and public safety results being achieved.*

THE TRUTH: How can that be when the entire premise of the gun registry defies all logic? How can laying a piece of paper beside a gun stop someone from pulling the trigger? And gun owners aren't "clients" they were forced to participate under threat of severe criminal penalties of up to 10 years in jail for failing to get a piece of paper for their gun. The *Criminal Code* should be reserved for real crimes that do real harm – not paper crimes dreamed up the Liberals.

2. LIBERAL CLAIM: *Environics survey taken in January 2003 found that 74% of Canadians support the current gun control legislation.*

THE TRUTH: A national survey conducted in April 2004 by JMCK Polling states: A substantial majority of Canadians (76.7%) agree that the federal gun registry should be scrapped, allowing the federal government to fight violent crime by devoting more resources to other law enforcement priorities. JMCK Pollster Faron Ellis, Ph.D. reported that a total of 1,586 adult Canadians were interviewed by telephone and the margin of error was + 2.5 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

3. LIBERAL CLAIM: *The Canadian Firearms Program is much more than a "gun registry" - it comprises safe storage, handling and transportation of firearms, safety training and education, effective border controls. in addition to the licensing of firearm owners.*

THE TRUTH: Canada already had ample legislation requiring safe storage, handling and transportation of firearms, safety training and education long before the Liberals dreamed up the useless gun registry. The registration of handguns has been in the *Criminal Code* of Canada since 1934 but it hasn't kept handguns out of the hands of criminals. Before the Liberals came to power the whole gun control system cost the federal government about \$10 million a year – Not \$100 million a year - plus we would have saved more than a billion dollars.

4. LIBERAL CLAIM: *There are about 2 million firearms license holders, and almost 7 million firearms registered – a true success story in just over five years.*

THE TRUTH: Five Years? Bill C-68 was passed in 1995. The Liberals can't count years any better than they can count money. Only the Liberals could claim the firearms program is a success while, according to academic studies, more than 400,000 firearms owners are still unlicensed and, according to the government's own import and export records, more than 8 million guns are still unregistered. The truth is that every shooting in Canada proves the federal firearms program has failed. Think about it even if the Liberals won't. If the gun was unregistered – it failed! If the gun was registered – it failed! If the gun owner was unlicensed – it failed! If the gun

owner was licenced – it failed! It's time for Parliament to scrap Bill C-68 and cut the public's losses before another billion is flushed down the drain.

5. LIBERAL CLAIM: *Approximately 12,000 individual firearms licences have been refused or revoked to date by Chief Firearms Officers across Canada .*

THE TRUTH: This amounts to a 0.6% success rate. The 20-year-old Firearm Acquisition Certificate (FAC) program achieved better success rate than this. And what does the two billion-dollar Firearms Centre do with these 12,000 newly-identified-dangerous individuals? The Firearms Centre quits tracking them! The Firearms Centre quits requiring them to report their change of address to police? The Firearms Centre doesn't check to see if they turned in all their guns. The Firearms Centre doesn't even authorize police to "inspect" their home to see if they have acquired guns illegally? Only law-abiding, federally-licenced gun owners are subjected to this violation of privacy rights. Where's the logic in that?

6. LIBERAL CLAIM: *Statistics show significant declines in the use of firearms in homicides and robberies. These trends coincide with the introduction of firearms controls as far back as 1977, and more recently with the introduction of the Firearms Act in 1995.*

THE TRUTH: Statistics Canada refuted this claim in response to Garry Breitkreuz's Order Paper Question Q-19 on November 29th, 2004. Statistics Canada 's statement was in bold text and underlined: **"The specific impact of the firearms program or the firearms registry cannot be isolated from other factors."**

On July 28, 2004, Statistics Canada released their annual report on Robberies that stated: *The robbery rate increased (+5%) for the first time since 1996. Robberies committed with a firearm increased (+10%) in 2003, and continue to account for about one in seven robberies.*

What the Liberals should be concerned about is the overall reduction in violent crime including homicides and robberies and Statistics Canada data shows that this is not the case.

- In 2003, 71% of THE 548 homicide victims were murdered with something other than a firearm. 109 (68%) of the 161 firearms homicides were committed with handguns that the government has spent the last 70 years trying to register.
- In 2003, 85% of 22,906 robberies were committed with something other than a firearm. Eleven percent of the robberies were committed with handguns that the government has been registering since 1934.

Another good example the Liberals fail to mention is suicides. Yes, suicide by firearm is down dramatically since 1991, but the increase in suicides by hanging more than makes up for the decline in firearm suicides. If the Liberal government really wanted to save lives they should be funding more suicide prevention programs - not the useless gun registry.

Professor Gary Mauser, Ph.D, Simon Fraser University Burnaby BC added the following comments in response to this bogus Liberal claim: *"The program being evaluated is the gun registry, not firearms controls in general. Since the gun registry did not even come into effect before 1998, it can not possibly be credited with causing any declines that started before this date. In evaluating the past 25 years of Canadian gun control, the key question to ask is, have these laws improved public safety, not just reduced firearms crime. It is illogical to credit any improvement in public safety to firearms controls, as both homicide rates and violent crime rates are falling faster in the United States than they are in Canada . Violent crime rates have plateaued in Canada , while they continue to decline in the US . Suicide rates have not declined in Canada , despite the drop in firearms related suicide."*

7. LIBERAL CLAIM: the Canadian Firearms Registry On-Line (CFRO) receives approximately 2000 daily queries from police and other public safety officials. Since Program implementation in 1998, CFRO has received more than 3 million queries.

THE TRUTH: The Liberals have admitted through repeated *Access to Information Act* requests that they have no idea who is actually accessing the system, why the numbers seem so high, or how many times the police got any useful information out of the system. On October 23, 2003, Firearms Commissioner Bill Baker admitted to the Standing Committee on Justice that he didn't know how police were using the system. Mr. Baker also admitted that police wouldn't know where the registered guns are because there is no requirement in the *Firearms Act* for gun owners to report where their firearms are stored or who their firearms are loaned to.

Police on the street tell us they seldom use the system. Here are a few examples:

- On March 10, 2004 – Toronto Police Chief told the Toronto Star that the system has not helped Toronto police solve a single homicide.
- On June 2, 2004, Calgary Police Chief Jack Beaton told the Calgary Herald, *"Our investigators are encountering situations where registration information isn't accurate."*
- January 22, 2003, CBC Radio in Saskatchewan reported: *"Police in Regina say they haven't yet had a lot of use for the new gun registry. Sgt. Rick Bourassa says officers in his city do not use the data-base very often."*
- On December 4, 2002, CFRA reported that officials from the Police Association of Ontario said that they fail to get the information requested from the registration system 95% of the time.
- One Saskatoon City Police officer said it took six hours to get a "negative" reply.
- Another Ontario police officer believes that the number may actually reflect the amount of times data is sent to Firearms Interest Police (FIP) database each day (NOT THE GUN REGISTRY!) from all police departments in Canada, and/or the number of times FIP is queried by government employees – not the police.

Until the Liberals can provide documentation to support their claim that these queries are actually producing something useful for police, these numbers should be looked at with as much skepticism as their cost estimates.

8. LIBERAL CLAIM: *So far in 2004, the Canada Firearms Centre (CAFC) has already produced more than 1100 affidavits to support the prosecution of firearms related crime. A further 1152 affidavits were prepared in 2003 building on 381 affidavits produced in 2002.*

THE TRUTH: Yes, they produce a few affidavits but the Liberals are unable to produce any information to show that their affidavits are actually resulting in convictions of violent criminals or how many firearms have been removed from criminal hands. Until they can actually produce the above statistics to show what good their affidavits are actually doing for public safety, Parliamentarians should remain very skeptical about what this statistic actually means.

9. LIBERAL CLAIM: *about 6,000 firearms have been traced in gun-crime and firearm-trafficking cases within Canada and internationally.*

THE TRUTH: Once again, the Liberals fail to tell anyone, how many of these traces actually used information from the soon-to-be two billion dollar gun registry. If criminals don't register their guns and most crime guns are smuggled into Canada, what possible good can a registry of legally-owned guns do?

On January 3, 2003, Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino said in a news release: ***"We have an ongoing gun crisis including firearms-related homicides lately in Toronto, and a law registering firearms has neither deterred these crimes nor helped us solve any of them. None of the guns we know to have been used were registered, although we believe that more than half of them were smuggled into Canada from the United States. The firearms registry is long on philosophy and short on practical results considering the money could be more effectively used for security against terrorism as well as a host of other public safety initiatives."***

10. LIBERAL CLAIM: *At the same time, significant steps have been taken to reduce costs and provide more information to Parliament on the CAFC and the Canadian Firearms Program.*

THE TRUTH: How many times have Parliamentarians heard this story in the last ten years? Remember when it was only supposed to cost \$85 million (net \$2.2 million) to implement over five years? Now they say, "You can trust us now; it will be fully implemented by December 31, 2007." Remember when they promised that user fees

would cover the entire cost of the program? More than a billion dollars ago!

The fact is the Liberals are still keeping Parliament in the dark. The Liberals' most recent cost guesstimate has pegged the total cost of the firearms program at \$1,055,400,000 as of March 31, 2005. But the Liberals have failed to comply with all of the recommendations in the Auditor General's December 2002 exposé on the program. She told the government to provide Parliament with estimates of the cost of enforcement and the cost of compliance as required by Treasury Board Regulatory Policy. According to reports prepared by the Library of Parliament Research Branch, enforcement and compliance estimates add hundreds of millions to the costs of the program.

Add to this the fact that the government's own reports on the economic cost and the cost-benefit analysis have both been declared Cabinet secrets. Liberals are still keeping Parliament and the public in the dark. Even the Liberals' estimate of \$85 million for next year is an atrocious amount for such an ineffective program.

11. LIBERAL CLAIM: *The 2004-05 Main Estimates for the CAFC, which have now been approved by the Committee, are \$100.3 million.*

THE TRUTH: When all the "indirect costs" from all the other departments are added in, the total cost to taxpayers for the firearms program this year is a whopping \$119.7 million! The Main Estimates were approved by Justice Committee but only after the Liberals, NDP and Bloc voted against the Conservative Motion to transfer \$20 million from the gun registry to RCMP front-line policing priorities. Once again, the Liberals conveniently overlook at least another billion in still-to-be-reported enforcement costs, compliance costs and economic costs of this Energizer-Bunny of a boondoggle.

12. LIBERAL CLAIM: *Individual licensing and firearm registration work hand in hand to help ensure that legally owned firearms are not diverted into illicit markets.*

THE TRUTH: After nine years the Liberals just don't get it. Criminals don't register their guns and law-abiding citizens don't "divert their firearms to illicit markets." On January 9, 2001, the Canada Firearms Centre released a document stating: "Risk to public safety is mitigated through licencing – it is not a registration issue."

13. LIBERAL CLAIM: *Licensing ensures that only individuals who have undergone a thorough background check and do not pose a safety risk to themselves or others may legally possess and acquire firearms.*

THE TRUTH: As we uncovered last year, background checks are optional. On June 7, 2003, the Ottawa Citizen reported: *The federal government disclosed Friday background checks have not been done on all the 589,200 individuals who have been granted firearms possession and acquisition licences since 1998. The disclosure, prompted by questions from Canadian Alliance MP Garry Breitkreuz, contradicts justice department statements last year and puts into question the government's claim that the new licensing system will keep guns out of the wrong hands.*

14. LIBERAL CLAIM: *Registration provides police with a clear record of the last legal owner of a firearm. That information can be a critical lead for police investigating firearms crime or working to prevent the diversion of legally owned firearms into the hands of criminals.*

THE TRUTH: Who in their right mind would register a gun with the government and then divert it to the hands of criminals? All this exercise does is waste investigator's time and lead police to the completely innocent victims who have had their guns stolen from their locked homes and their locked gun cabinets and who have already reported their stolen guns to police months or years earlier. Law abiding gun owners who fail to report a stolen gun already face penalties equal to the criminal who stole their guns. A search of the gun registry does next to nothing to lead police to the real criminal. Still in doubt - Ask Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino (see point 9 above).

15. LIBERAL CLAIM: *Our Government will provide enhanced support to police to fight gun crime and smuggling.*

THE TRUTH: This is a clear admission of failure by the Liberals that the soon-to-be \$2 billion gun registry is not

producing the results they promised in 1995. On February 16, 1995, Justice Minister Allan Rock promised: *"Criminals acquire their firearms in the underground market illegally. Surely we must choke off the sources of supply for that underground market. Surely we must reduce the number of firearms smuggled into the country. Surely we must cut down on the number of firearms stolen and traded in the underground. **How do we achieve that? Through registration.**"* Think how much farther ahead we would have been at fighting gun crime and smuggling if the billions wasted had been directed at the right target in the first place.

16. LIBERAL CLAIM: *The Government has re-affirmed its commitment to the Program as an important element of its approach to public safety.*

THE TRUTH: How can this be true when on November 24th, 2004, the Commissioner of Firearms Bill Baker admitted to the Standing Committee on Justice that 176,000 prohibited gun owners and 37,000 persons with restraining orders against them (the most dangerous people with guns in Canada) are "no longer effectively covered by the Firearms Act." Statistics Canada recently reported that in 2003, 69% of the murderers had a criminal record (five had even been previously convicted of murder). As Toronto's Police Chief Julian Fantino reported on January 24, 2004: *Our Guns and Gangs Task Force began conducting compliance checks on residents freed on bail after being charged in a gun-related crime, "almost 50% were breaching their conditions."*

Statistics clearly indicates that the Liberals missed the real target of gun control by a million miles. If the gun registry were a shooting range, all the spectators would have be running for cover.

17. LIBERAL CLAIM: On December 8, 2004, the Halifax Daily News quoted Public Works Minister Scott Brison's comments on the Conservative Party's motions to cut \$24 million to the gun registry: *"The fact is that this would eliminate gun control completely in Canada , " he said. "It would actually mean that in Canada , we would have less control than ... in the United States ."*

THE TRUTH: This is a completely ridiculous statement by someone who used to know better. For the last nine years all our party has ever advocated is repealing Bill C-68, the *Firearms Act* and returning Canada 's gun control the laws to the way they were in 1995. By focusing mainly on a couple hundred thousand truly dangerous and high risk individuals instead of 2 million law-abiding citizens, the cost of our gun control programs should be about \$10 million a year – not \$100 million a year.

SOME KEY POINTS ABOUT THE GUN REGISTRY THE LIBERALS FORGOT TO MENTION

1. THE LIBERALS HAVE ONLY REGISTERED 7 MILLION OF THE 16.5 MILLION GUNS THAT ARE IN CANADA ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT IMPORT AND EXPORT RECORDS. SO MUCH FOR THE LIBERAL PROMISE THAT POLICE WILL KNOW WHERE ALL THE GUNS ARE.
2. MORE THAN 300,000 OWNERS OF PREVIOUSLY REGISTERED HANDGUNS STILL DON'T HAVE A FIREARMS LICENCE
3. MORE THAN 400,000 FIREARM LICENCE HOLDERS STILL HAVEN'T REGISTERED A GUN.
4. MORE THAN 315,000 OWNERS OF A REGISTERED HANDGUN STILL HAVE TO RE-REGISTER THEIR HANDGUN.
5. MORE THAN 5 MILLION OF THE 7 MILLION FIREARMS IN THE GUN REGISTRY HAVE STILL NOT BEEN VERIFIED – CONTRARY TO POLICE DEMANDS.
6. ONLY 282,847 OF THE 2 MILLION FIREARM LICENCE HOLDERS HAVE TAKEN FIREARM SAFETY COURSES.
7. THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT IN THE *FIREARMS ACT* FOR GUN OWNERS TO TELL ANYONE WHERE THEY STORE THEIR GUNS OR WHO THEY LOAN THEIR GUNS TO. SO MUCH FOR THE

LIBERAL PROMISE THAT POLICE WILL KNOW WHERE ALL THE GUNS ARE.

8. FIREARMS REGISTRATION FOR NUNAVUT INUIT HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED BY THE COURTS FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS.
9. A BRIEFING NOTE TO ANNE McLELLAN WHEN SHE WAS MINISTER OF JUSTICE DATED APRIL 12, 2001: STAFFING LEVELS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FIREARMS PROGRAM stated: "*There are currently just over 1,800 employees associated with the firearms program, counting processing sites, the regions and all partners including the Registrar and CCRA.*" THE LIBERALS HAVE REFUSED TO PROVIDE A COMPLETE STATISTIC ON THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATED WITH THE FIREARMS PROGRAM SINCE THAT DATE.
10. 86% OF FIREARMS USED IN HOMICIDES WERE UNREGISTERED AND 80% OF MURDERERS WERE UNLICENCED. Statistics Canada Homicide in Canada 2003 Report: *Between 1997 and 2003 in Canada , the registration status was known for 46% of firearm-related homicides. Of these, 86% were not registered and 80% of the accused persons did not possess a valid FAC or Firearms Licence.*

WHAT POLICE HAVE SAID ABOUT THE GUN REGISTRY

By Garry Breitkreuz, MP – Updated: October 17, 2004

<http://www.garrybreitkreuz.com/publications/policequotes.htm>