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PUBLIC SAFETY

Long-Gun Registry

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Wednesday, December 7, 2011

THE SENATE

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[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

LONG-GUN REGISTRY

Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Yesterday we commemorated the sad anniversary of the murder of 14 young female students in 1989 at École Polytechnique in Montreal. The long-gun registry, which was developed in response to this tragic event, is supported by police officers, health care professionals and many victims' and women's rights organizations. In light of this day of remembrance and action on violence against women, why is the government refusing to give police officers the tools they need to prevent other similar tragic events, as the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has called for?

[*English*]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the tragic events of December 6, 1989, are etched in the memories of all. I remember well what I was doing and where I was on December 6, 1989: I was working in the office of former Prime Minister Mulroney, and it was a bitterly cold day. Everyone was horrified by the actions of Mr. Lepine against the female students at École Polytechnique. Two years after that event, I was in the office of Mr. Mulroney when December 6 was designated a national day of remembrance.

The Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister for Status of Women, has worked extensively on the issue of violence against women and has increased massively the amount of funding expended to combat this terrible situation. When the gun registry was passed through the Senate in the mid-1990s, I was on the public record as saying that the money anticipated being spent for the gun registry would be much better spent on border security and on homes for battered women. It is part of the public record.

The long-gun registry targeting duck hunters, farmers and sports collectors has proven not to be a useful tool. Proposed

legislation will make its way eventually to this chamber that will abolish the long-gun registry. I pointed out earlier today in an interview that the real problem lies in illegal guns coming across our borders. I also pointed out that this country has very strict gun control laws. People cannot simply buy a gun and walk away. No matter what kind of gun they choose, people require a firearms acquisition certificate and must go through a police check. The registry does not change any of those strong laws.

As I have told honourable senators many times, I was raised on a farm, where we had shotguns and rifles. My father was a law-abiding, upstanding citizen, and I would not have wanted a situation where he would have been deemed a criminal because he did not register the rifle or the shotgun.

[*Translation*]

Senator Tardif: Madam leader, why do you refuse to recognize the value of at least keeping the data already in the long-gun registry for the purpose of preventing other tragic events like the one we commemorated yesterday?

[*English*]

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, the guns used in the tragic incident in Montreal on December 6, 1989, were semi-automatics with the huge ammunition clips. That is not the type of gun in the long-gun registry; we are talking about hunters, farmers and gun collectors. There has been a moratorium on the long-gun registry, and the information is faulty and incomplete. We made a commitment many times to abolish the long-gun registry, and part of the registry is a list of the people on it.

• (1410)

The information is incomplete and not accurate. As I have pointed out many times in this place, I know many police officers and no police officer enters any facility without assuming that there are guns on the other side of the door. They do not need a long-gun registry to tell them that.