



August 24, 2010

## **Op-ed submitted to Canadian media from the Canadian Shooting Sports Association**

---

### **Ethics expert says police chiefs' association has track record of "dodgy behaviour"**

By Larry Whitmore  
Executive Director  
Canadian Shooting Sports Association

In the torrid game of political chess that is poised to scrap Canada's long-gun registry, some players appear willing to sacrifice ethical principles to win.

The kings, knights and rooks are quick to push their pawns to the middle of the board to demonstrate faux teamwork, but many of those pawns are unwilling accomplices. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP), the Canadian Police Association, and the Canadian Association of Police Boards want to maintain the long-gun registry.

But, many front-line police officers have pronounced it useless and potentially dangerous to any cop who believes the data. A national survey taken by an Edmonton police officer last year shows an astounding 92 percent of police respondents want the registry scrapped.

The gun registry is not gun control. It merely lays a piece of paper beside a gun, which has no bearing on whether it will be used for good or evil. And, criminals don't apply for that piece of paper because they want their firearms kept secret. At an estimated cost of \$2 billion and growing daily, there are myriad compelling reasons to send the registry riding off into the sunset.

So, why do the politically motivated police associations lobby so breathlessly to keep the registry? The answer may have more to do with financial gain than social conscience.

There was barely a ripple within the mainstream media when ethicist Dr. John Jones suddenly resigned his position on the CACP's ethics committee last year. The whole committee had been warning the CACP board of directors for some time that they should stop taking money from organizations they do business with – the ethics committee said it's a clear conflict of interest.

In April 2009, media reports confirmed the CACP accepted about \$115,000 from CGI Group, a Bell Mobility affiliate. Is it mere coincidence that CGI is the software contractor for the gun registry and the chiefs' organization is strident in its support for the registry? The CGI donation was used to send CACP conference delegates to a Céline Dion concert. The CACP annual galas are legendary for their opulence as cities compete to out-do the conference before. During this year's gala in Edmonton on August 22-25, the media reported that the chiefs voted unanimously to support the gun registry.

"I resigned on a matter of principal," Dr. Jones explained to the CSSA. "I was deeply discomfited that Celine Dion tickets were supplied to CACP by Bell and a couple of other sponsors at their Montreal conference. They were handed out to delegates. It didn't sit well with me because if a front line officer takes so much as a cup of coffee, they are considered to be in a conflict of interest. I thought it was hypocritical on the part of those chiefs to accept those tickets.

"We (CACP ethics committee) had worked with the chiefs for about six months trying to constructively change their opinion," he adds. "I resigned when we received a letter from them that said 'thanks but no thanks, we're going to continue to do business.' What makes it unethical for me is that first step that puts you in debt to these corporations."

Dr. Jones, who was also an ethics adviser to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, says the practice of accepting donations is particularly unethical when the CAPC provides public support for a product that a donor provides.

“It’s simply the impropriety of taking gifts from people with whom the chiefs do extensive business,” he says. “That puts them in the pockets of the chiefs and I think that’s an unfortunate state of affairs. If there is a link between Bell and CGI and this registry work, then there is definitely a conflict. There were other sponsors at the time who were funding lavish dinners that no one is talking about.

“There is a track record there,” adds Dr. Jones. “There was a very public endorsement of Taser International – there’s certainly a precedent for this kind of endorsement in the face of sponsorship. My advice was ‘hands off’ – keep a distance so you can’t be accused of favouritism or being swayed in your opinion-making. It’s not ethical. In the moral domain, it’s really dodgy behaviour. It’s just inviting public criticism in my view.”

Dr. Jones also notes that some Taser shareholders expressed concern that company funds shouldn’t be handed out without some assurance of a return. In the wake of the CACP public endorsements for Taser and GCI, surely even the chiefs can’t deny the trend.

Given the CACP’s questionable business methods exposed by their own ethicist, there is scant reason to trust the chiefs’ shrill edict that the registry is essential to police. With this said, why does the Liberal Party of Canada place so much trust in a self-serving group that has demonstrated that its approval is for sale?

On the other side of the chess board, Detective Sergeant Murray Grismer of the Saskatoon Police Service recently appeared before the federal public safety committee to opine on Private Members’ Bill C-391 to scrap the gun registry. He claims that Canada’s top cops are pulling rank by prohibiting police officers from speaking out.

“I represent the opinion of thousands of police officers across Canada who are, in my opinion, the silent majority and, for some, the silenced majority,” Det. Sgt. Grismer told the parliamentary committee. “(They are) not only police officers who have been ordered not to speak out against the long-gun registry, but also officers who fear for their careers should they voice an opinion publicly in opposition to continuation of the registry or against the position adopted by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, their chief of police, or commanding officer. To say the police community is divided on support for the long-gun registry is an understatement.”

Meanwhile, even pro-registry police admitted to the public safety committee that if the registry advised there was no gun present in a residence, police would not trust that information to be accurate. Conversely, if registry data said there were a specific number of guns present, they would not trust that information either, and assume there could be more guns. So, if pro-registry police recommend ignoring both a positive *and* negative registry result, it seems obvious that the registry is an utter waste of time for police.

Criminologist Dr. Gary Mauser, Professor Emeritus at Simon Fraser University, told the committee that the registry data itself is too corrupt to be useful.

“It is difficult to understand why the chiefs of police support the long-gun registry,” says Dr. Mauser. “(It) has so many errors that relying upon it puts the lives of rank-and-file police members at risk. This is a classic database problem: garbage in, gospel out. The police should know better.

“Millions of entries are incorrect or missing,” he adds. “Most striking, less than half of all long guns in Canada are in the registry. The long-gun registry does worse – it misdirects the police. People who have registered their firearms are less likely to be violent than Canadians who don’t even own firearms. They should be. Gun owners have been screened by the police since 1979. We are told that 15 percent of the guns used in homicides are long guns. What is not said is that virtually none were registered. How does the gun registry help? When I spoke at the Ontario Police College, one of the instructors told me privately that trusting the registry was a way to get good police officers killed.”

The Canadian Shooting Sports Association has had this issue under its microscope since the legislation was proposed 15 years ago. We have an extremely safety-conscious membership, and if there was even a hint of evidence that the gun registry actually saved lives or kept Canadians safer, we would support it.

Instead, creating the registry was a political knee-jerk reaction to the tragic deaths of innocent students at L'ecole Polytechnique on December 6, 1989. Rather than targeting the criminal element, the Chrétien government elected in 1993 took its wrath out on sport shooters, hunter and farmers. In an act of desperation to quell the public's anger, the government decided to take it out on the "good guys."

There is evidence that the registry would not have prevented the L'ecole Polytechnique massacre. That proof was revealed on September 13, 2006 at Dawson Collage in Montreal where a gunman shot and killed one student and injured 19 others. The registry was up and running in all its glory, and it failed outright.

The long-gun registry should be dismantled and the funds reallocated to provide more police in the street, better technologies in their hands, and improved firearms laws in Canada. Until Canadians are allowed to hear from the rank-and-file police officers, it appears that registry supporters will refuse to play by the rules.

The burning question is this: Since when do Canadians allow police chiefs to create the policies that should be made by our elected representatives?

How long will Canadians tolerate the tail wagging the dog?

The CSSA is the voice of the sport shooter and firearms enthusiast in Canada. Our national membership supports and promotes traditional target shooting competition, modern action shooting sports, hunting, and archery. We support and sponsor competitions and youth programs that promote these Canadian heritage activities.

**For further information, contact:**

**Tony Bernardo**  
**Canadian Shooting Sports Association**  
**Canadian Institute for Legislative Action**

**905-571-2150**