

Open Letter To Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff On Bill C-391

Honourable Michael Ignatieff, M.P.
Leader of the Official Opposition

Dear Mr. Ignatieff:

On behalf of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation and its 30,000 members in 121 communities across our province, we wish to express our profound disappointment over the motion submitted by Liberal M.P. Mark Holland at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Despite your recent public pronouncements about a Liberal “compromise,” Mr. Holland’s actions on behalf of the Liberal party clearly demonstrate that your understanding of the word differs greatly from that which is commonly understood.

Mr. Holland’s attempt to completely derail the bill at Committee clearly demonstrates a lack of conviction in your own words and on the part of the Liberal party, and sends a clear message to the millions of anglers, hunters, recreational sport shooters, farmers and First Nations across Canada who support Bill C-391.

The fact that the Liberal party had to whip the vote when Bill C-68 was passed to ensure that party members stayed in line, and will again whip the vote on C-391, a private member’s bill no less, is a clear indication that despite all of the rhetoric, that unanimity does not exist within the Liberal caucus. Instead of recognizing the rights of individual members to vote their conscience, and more importantly, their right to vote in the best interests of their constituents, they are forced to toe the party line and continue to support a badly flawed, horrifically expensive and highly divisive long gun registry that has not saved lives, and has not enhanced the public safety. This win at all costs/scorched earth policy ignores all of the obvious signs that the program has been a dismal failure, and demonstrates conclusively that common sense and fiscal responsibility have been sacrificed at the altar of philosophical adherence.

There is no empirical evidence to demonstrate that the long gun registry has fulfilled its mandate, while a plethora of factual evidence exists to support the contention that it has failed. The continued support of the Liberal party for this albatross is not only disappointing, but flies in the face of public opinion and fact.

If Mr. Holland’s actions are indicative of what you call “compromise,” the eight Liberal members who supported Bill C-391 on Second Reading have themselves been “compromised” by being forced to support a rigid and highly unpopular stance in many areas of the country, with the exception of downtown Toronto and a few other major urban centres.

Other jurisdictions, notably Baltimore, New York, Virginia, and New Jersey, have found that the creation of a “prohibited offenders” registry, much like the sex offender registry, which targets those who are prohibited from possessing firearms by virtue of past offences, or those most likely to offend, has made a significant difference. If you truly believe in “compromise,” stop the blatant attempts to derail Bill C-391, and allow your members a free vote on Third Reading.

The gun registry did not save the victims at Dawson College where all of the firearms used were registered. It did not save the lives of four RCMP officers at Mayerthorpe where a prohibited offender used three unregistered firearms and one borrowed registered firearm to kill. Nor will it save other officers who place their faith in the system.

It is time to look for other answers -- acknowledging the failings of the long gun registry and working to achieve a system, which targets the offenders and not the legal, law-abiding firearm owners in this country is. If you have the courage of your conviction, and meant what you said when you used the word "compromise," withdraw the motion at Committee, allow a free vote, and work with the government in support of the creation of a registry that targets the 400,000 high-risk individuals entered in CPIC, including the 254,949 who are prohibited from possessing firearms and the 36,000 with restraining orders against them, something that has been proven elsewhere to have a significant impact on public safety.

Bill C-391 is a simple and straightforward piece of legislation that does one thing, and one thing only. It does not touch licensing. It does not impact on mandatory background checks, which are not currently done for every application, but should be. It does not affect mandatory registration of restricted and prohibited firearms. It does not change the requirement for mandatory firearms safety courses, and does not change the need for safe storage or transportation. All it does is scrap a program that has clearly and factually been proven to be an abject failure.

Yours in Conservation,

Greg Illerbrun

Greg Illerbrun
Firearms Chairman
Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation