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CBC's Radio's Commentary

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Transcript:

Introduction:

Blast Off!! That what the cost of gun control has done. This week the Auditor General, Sheila Fraser released a scathing report on the overruns in the firearms registry. Gary Mauser teaches in the Business Administration Department of Simon Fraser University. He's written extensively on gun control. On Commentary he says expect the cost to double with no increase in benefits.

Gary Mauser:

Sheila Fraser went easy on the government. The Auditor General estimated the firearms registry will soon cost Canadian taxpayers one billion dollars. It was supposed to break even or cost only a few million. That's bad enough, but her report could have been a lot worse. Even though she was shocked at the astronomical cost of the overrun, she didn't examine all of the expenditures. She had to stop when she couldn't get the documents she needed. Consequently the problem is far worse than she reported.

I think the firearms registry will end up costing Canadians over two billion dollars, not one billion. And we should remember that the bureaucrats have just started to register guns. As I speak fewer than half of the 10 million firearms in this country have been registered.

Fraser left the costs out of her report of the other governmental agencies that are working with the Department of Justice. Ottawa is underwriting those bills too. We haven't been told what it's cost the RCMP or Customs and Immigration or the provinces and territories that signed on to administer the registry. Together these agencies have spent almost as much as the Justice Department itself.

What's worse, the RCMP lack confidence in the registry. The screening is so bad that the police are concerned that people known to have violent records may have been issued firearm licences.

The firearms registry itself is full of errors. The Department of Justice stopped checking the data because it cost too much. This means the expensive registry is all but worthless.

Registering firearms was supposed to guarantee a safer society, but it hasn't worked out that way. Violent crime has not declined since this legislation was brought in. Spousal homicide in Canada has even increased; and so has handgun homicide.

Chretien defended the registry by comparing Canada with the US. That's irrelevant. The question is whether the gun registry is a boondoggle or an effective tool.

I say, we should scrap the registry. It's just not working. It's too expensive and it's not helping to reduce crime.

Maybe we'd be safer if we spent the two billion dollars going after violent criminals instead of hunters.

Earlier this week the Coast Guard said it couldn't defend our shores against terrorists. They could sure use some of this money. Customs says it needs more money to catch smugglers. The Correctional Service hasn't got enough money to track all the parolees who fail to report. Immigration Canada needs more money to find and deport illegal immigrants with violent criminal records.

These are government programs where a few billion dollars really might save lives.

For Commentary, I'm Gary Mauser in Vancouver.

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[http://cbc.ca/storyview/CBC/2001/01/26/gun\\_owners010126](http://cbc.ca/storyview/CBC/2001/01/26/gun_owners010126)

Gun owner poll inaccurate: expert  
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CALGARY - One of Canada's leading experts on gun control says there are hundreds of thousands more gun owners in this country than Ottawa is willing to admit. Gary Mauser, a criminologist at Simon Fraser University, says the number of owners in a new survey - 2.3 million - is about 400,000 too low. He says Ottawa's survey, released Thursday, doesn't take into account people who would lie about owning a gun. And, he says, one person in a household may not know that another in the same house owns a gun. These two factors have shown up repeatedly in previous research, says Mauser.

The results of the survey of 6,000 Canadians are being used by the Canadian Firearms Centre to show that with two million in compliance, about 87 per cent of gun owners have registered for the new gun registry.

"They're motivated to find a lower number of firearms owners, so their efforts to make people comply are more successful," Mauser said. He thinks the truth would be more like 60 or 65 per cent.

The CFC says the methodology of the survey was sound, and a number of steps were taken to ensure the results are accurate.

The poll also shows an apparent decline in gun ownership over the past decade.

Mauser says people just aren't saying they own the guns they do.

Written by CBC News Online staff