



A TURNING POINT  
FOR WOMEN

December 10, 2009

To the Editor:

### Gun Registry Saves Lives

The YWCA supports the registration of guns, as a tool to protect the safety of women and children who experience abuse. When a woman calls police for help, she is likely to be facing serious harm, and police officers who respond are doing their most dangerous work.

What many people may not realize is that the gun registry plays an important role in keeping our police officers safe when they risk their lives to help us.

Before a police officer enters a home to deal with a domestic violence call or other potentially volatile situation, the police officer can use the gun registry to find out if there are firearms in the home. This can save lives: the police officer's life and/or the lives of innocent civilians.

Had the gun registry been available 21 years ago, a local tragedy might have been prevented. Joyce Watson was shot by her husband with a legal hunting rifle when she went with her children to collect their belongings in order to move from the YWCA Crossroads Shelter to their new home. That gun could have been removed by OPP officers when they accompanied her the day before, had they been able to search a gun registry to find out about the gun. And Joyce might be alive today.

Police officers work side-by-side with the YWCA in dealing with the complex problem of domestic violence in our community. Last spring, they even took to the streets in their red high heels to help raise money for our new Crossroads Shelter.

We care a great deal about the safety of our police officers and strongly support anything that can keep them safer as they, in turn, work to keep our communities safe. We believe that maintaining the gun registry will allow them to do that:

- Women and children are more likely to be killed with hunting guns than handguns because they are the firearms that are most often found in the home.
- Eighty-eight percent of Canadian women killed with guns are killed with a shotgun or rifle.



- In 2008, 76,000 Canadian women and children entered shelters, fleeing abuse – that's more than the entire population of Peterborough City or County.
- As we remember the 14 women killed at L'Ecole Polytechnique on December 6, 1989, we also remember the 19 Ontario women killed by their partners in 2009.

We are respectful of the long tradition of hunting in our community and believe that maintaining the gun registry balances the needs of hunters with the community's need for safety. The gun registry is no more an invasion of privacy than registering our motor vehicles.

If Bill C-391 is passed, all records of long guns will be erased and police officers will be looking at a blank screen when they answer 911 calls from citizens facing immediate harm and need to know whether guns are likely to be involved.

Sincerely,



Lynn Zimmer  
Executive Director  
YWCA of Peterborough, Victoria & Haliburton