

Greetings,

On May 2, the Stephen Harper Conservatives won a majority government. This is bad news for Canadians. Our union clearly expressed concern about the prospect of a Stephen Harper majority, and what it would mean for Canada's economic and social policies. We considered a Harper majority the worst-case scenario for our country. Today, this is the reality we face.

Progressive-minded Canadians – who still represent the majority of our population – consistently did not support the economic and political agenda of the Stephen Harper government. Whether it was his decision to unjustly prorogue Parliament, stifle the role of Statistics Canada, blindly pursue a potentially damaging free trade accord with Europe or show contempt towards our democracy, among many other issues, he stood opposite public opinion.

That includes his persistent efforts to kill Canada's important long-gun registry.

So far, his efforts to destroy the registry have failed. Activists, from all walks of life, have fought to maintain the registry – a critical part of Canada's gun control program and vital to our efforts to forever end violence against women.

Regulation of rifles and shotguns began in 1977 with the introduction of the Firearms Acquisition Certificate (FAC) and new requirements to record sales and transfers of those firearms. At the time Tommy Douglas lamented the fact that the law did not go further, stating "Half a loaf is better than none," and predicting "I believe that someday we will have the techniques to register all guns."

Harper has already made it clear the registry will be eliminated under his majority rule. Legislation is expected to be introduced when the House of Commons sits – likely in the fall.

There are still a lot of uncertainties surrounding this move. We don't yet know what parts of the registry Harper will elect to scrap. We also don't yet know if his efforts will include the complete wiping out of nearly two decades of registry data. There have been proposals for provinces to set up their own long-gun registries, but that remains to be seen.

Over the summer, our union will be taking action – along with the Coalition for Gun Control and other allies. We will strategically target Conservative MPs who won their ridings only by a thin margin in the last election and who are most vulnerable to public pressure on gun control. Our campaign message is clear: **a vote to scrap the registry is a vote to stop their re-election.** This effort is the first of many that our union will take on to publicly target Conservative MPs and their wrong-headed national policies. This is one part of our long-term political strategy, building toward the next federal election in 2014.

We are sending out this activist package to local unions that's complete with background campaign information as well as helpful tips to assist in local organizing efforts. The summer is filled with good opportunities to raise the public profile on this issue in your community – whether by organizing a community lobby with your MP, or by organizing a fun flash mob among unsuspecting guests at a Tory barbecue. We need to make this issue front and centre over the coming months.

Make no mistake. We know the odds are stacked against us. Stephen Harper has already made it clear that dismantling the gun registry will be a priority for his government. But as trade unionists and social justice advocates we have a responsibility to try and save the long-gun registry. If we aren't willing to fight, then we've already lost.

Strategy sessions will be organized in the coming weeks through our Membership Mobilization and Political Action Department as well as our Women's Department and I encourage all activists and concerned members to participate. I've no doubt this will serve as a useful summer project for local union committees and might even encourage new members to play a more active role in the union.

Should you have any questions in regards to this initiative please contact Jenny Ahn, Director of Membership Mobilization and Political Action (jenny.ahn@caw.ca) or Julie White, Director of CAW Women's Programs (julie.white@caw.ca).

In solidarity,



Ken Lewenza
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