

JUSTICE

*"Anastasia was where she was supposed to be, at school. It was the shooter who was in the wrong place."* LOUISE DE SOUSA



Left to right: Jean François Larivée, Jim Edward, Louise De Sousa and Suzanne Laplante, who all lost loved ones to gun violence, issue a plea for voters to choose gun registry supporters. VINCENTO D'ALTO THE GAZETTE

# Families of gun victims unite to stop Harper

## FIGHTING TO KEEP NATIONAL REGISTRY

*'I'm here today because I don't want others to suffer like I did'*

ALYCIA AMBROZIAK  
THE GAZETTE

A group of people whose lives over two decades ago were directly affected by gun violence gathered Thursday to warn that a majority vote for the Conservatives on May 2 would mean the end of the national gun registry – and a threat to public security.

"I'm here today because I don't want others to suffer like I did," said Jean-François Larivée, whose bride of exactly three months and three weeks died in the 1989 Polytechnique massacre.

"We're very worried that if (Stephen) Harper's Conservatives get a majority, the gun registry will go down

the drain," said Jim Edward, whose daughter, Anne-Marie, was among 14 women killed at the Polytechnique shooting.

"For the sake of security of Quebecers and Canadians, we should not let that happen."

Anne-Marie's mother, Suzanne Laplante-Edward, said the only reason the gun registry has not already been abolished was because Harper's Conservatives were in a minority position in the last government.

"Harper has stated again and again that he wants to scrap the gun registry," she said. "And even after the motion to abolish the registry was defeated, he vowed to continue trying.

"All he needs to do so is a majority government."

In fact, a vote in Parliament last September ended 153-151 in favour of keeping the registry, with all Conservatives voting to scrap it, and all Bloc Québécois and Liberal MPs voting to keep it. The New Democratic MPs voted 30 to 6 to keep the registry.

"That's why we are urging people to vote for the Liberals or the Bloc Québécois, but not the Conservatives," Edward said, adding that the group is not fully endorsing the NDP because the party has not taken a unified stand on the matter.

NDP leader Jack Layton was asked about his party's position on the gun registry as he made a campaign stop in Quebec City.

"What we've done is propose legislation to work out the different positions concerning the registry. We're a party that works together, we're looking for solutions.

We took action on this. We hope we can pursue these solutions rather than continue to divide people like some others are doing," he said then.

Back in his Pierrefonds home, Edward repeated his call to block a Conservative majority, and was joined by Louise De Sousa, whose

*"Our hearts are broken and our family will never again be complete."*

LOUISE DE SOUSA

daughter, Anastasia, was killed at the Dawson College shooting on Sept. 13, 2006; Hayder Kadhim, a friend of Anastasia, who was also shot at Dawson and who still carries two bullets, one in his head, the other in his neck; Larivée, whose wife, Maryse Laganière, was among the Polytechnique victims

on Dec. 6, 1989; and Heidi Rathjen who, after escaping the Polytechnique massacre physically unscathed, became a strong advocate for gun control.

All members of the group, some of whom brought photos of the loves ones they lost, said the Tories are soft on gun restrictions and added that even though the registry cannot prevent all gun crime – for example, the gun used in the Dawson shootings had been registered – it is still a valuable tool.

"It's not rocket science," said Kadhim, who is now a student at Concordia University. "Gun control works."

Larivée said the gun registry costs each Canadian about 10 cents yearly.

According to RCMP data, in 2010, 574 gun permits were refused and 2035 were revoked, all for public security reasons.

"We know the registry saves lives," he added.

De Sousa remembered her

daughter's last day of life as one that began as just a normal day, until it was shattered by gunshots.

"This can happen to anyone, anywhere," she said. "People would come up to me and say that Anastasia was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"But that's not true. Anastasia was exactly where she was supposed to be, at school," De Sousa said. "It was the shooter who was in the wrong place.

"Our hearts are broken and our family will never again be complete," she said.

"In the name of all who have been touched by gun violence, we cannot allow Harper to abolish the gun registry."

"That's why when you vote on May 2, remember that a vote for anyone but Harper's Conservatives could help save the gun registry."

aambrosiak@montrealgazette.com

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