

Protesters plead to save gun registry on anniversary of university massacre

Jordan Press, Postmedia News

On the steps of Parliament Hill, whipped by biting cold air, Suzanne Laplante-Edward on Tuesday remembered her daughter Anne-Marie Edward who was murdered 22 years ago at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal.

On Dec. 6, 1989, Marc Lepine walked into the engineering school of the University of Montreal with a semi-automatic rifle and shot 28 people, killing 14. He then took his own life.

That event planted the seeds for the long-**gun registry**, and Laplante-Edward said its existence gives her the knowledge her daughter did not die in vain.

On Oct. 25 -- Anne-Marie Edward's birthday -- the Conservative government introduced legislation to kill the long-**gun registry**.

Laplante-Edward said this year's memorial took on a more political tone because of the move to scrap the registry.

"It's very political because it has to be political. Do we have a choice? They are about to destroy the **gun-control** law that we worked 22 years to put in place and it is working very well," Laplante-Edward said.

"We had to fight back."

No Conservatives were invited to take part in the event, leaving the crowd dotted with NDP, Liberal and Bloc Quebecois politicians.

Conservative **Kerry-Lynne Findlay** said supporting the end of the registry -- which will happen, she said -- won't mean an increase in violence against women.

"To equate it with the long-**gun registry** is not fair," she said in an interview. "That is the politicizing of a solemn event."

Inside the House of Commons, politicians stood for a moment of silence in the afternoon.

"This touches everyone and I think that got lost somewhat today in the messaging," **Findlay** said.

Liberal interim leader Bob Rae said he was hesitant to make an overly partisan speech at the memorial because it wasn't your usual political event. There were families who had lost loved ones and would have to go home without them.

"At the end of this day, they will still be remembering a life that was cut down," Rae said. "And that's the sadness to remember at the heart of this event."

Interim NDP leader Nycole Turmel said the scrapping of the registry was tantamount to "turning back the clock on women's rights."

"We have to say it out loud: Shame on them."

The government argues the registry doesn't prevent all violent **gun** crime and that money spent on the registry would be better spent on more effective measures.

"It's ineffective in fighting violent **gun** crime. We need to get behind measures that don't just make people feel safe, but actually make them more safe," said Candice Hoepfner, the parliamentary secretary to the public safety minister.

If it does go, speakers at least hoped that the database with lists of guns and owners not be wiped.

But they were not willing to admit defeat just yet. Laplante-Edward said the fight will go to the Senate, which she hoped would review the legislation and change or reject it.

ILLUS: Colour Photo: John Mahoney, Montreal Gazette, Postmedia News / A rally Tuesday outside the Palais de Justice in Montreal recalled the students killed 22 years ago at Ecole Polytechnique.;
