

CANADIAN SHOOTING SPORTS ASSOCIATION / CANADIAN INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

COMMENTARY: DENNIS YOUNG IS A DRIVING FORCE FOR FAIR FIREARMS LAWS

Dennis Young has suddenly resigned as Alberta Director of the National Firearms Association.

His reasons to step down are contained in his resignation letter below and the CSSA will not pass comment on them. What is most important at this time is to consider the contribution of Dennis Young to every Canadian who owns a firearm and engages in our heritage sports.

The Canadian Shooting Sports Association (CSSA) is proud to have Dennis as a lifetime member. Without his dedication to fair firearms legislation, Canada would now present a very different environment for sport shooters. The unfair laws introduced by the Progressive Conservatives and Liberals in the early 1990s needed to be counteracted for sport shooting to prosper, and Dennis has been at the forefront.

How could one person have so much influence, you ask? Let's set the calendar back to 1993.

An upstart political party was gathering steam in Canada's west. Dennis Young took on the job of Reform Party regional coordinator for Saskatchewan and Manitoba. His mandate included building membership, volunteers and sizing up would-be members of Parliament. Five prospective federal candidates stepped forward in the Yorkton-Melville riding in Saskatchewan and Dennis took part in all five interviews with the candidate selection committee.

One of the candidates they grilled was a middle-aged teacher who had taught school in Canada's Far North and Africa. Dennis was the returning officer in the nomination races that declared who would represent the Reform Party in the next election. He stepped up to the microphone and announced – and mispronounced – the name of the new Reform Party candidate for Yorkton-Melville – Garry Breitkreuz. History books show that in the ensuing 1993 federal election, Garry took the seat from the incumbent NDP MP and headed for Ottawa as part of the first wave of Reform MPs.

When Garry Breitkreuz, MP suddenly needed to hire a politically motivated assistant in Ottawa, he head-hunted Dennis Young. With that powerhouse union working in the shadow of the Peace Tower, firearms politics in Canada would never be quite the same. Garry was invited to address a rally of 1,200 gun owners in Preeceville, Saskatchewan in March 1994 and discovered that the firearms community urgently needed a voice in Ottawa. The tag team of Breitkreuz and Young carpet-bombed Parliament for the next 13 years by protesting the ravages of bills C-17 and C-68.

Dennis Young would file more than 500 Access to Information (ATI) requests to dig the dirt from federal departments up to and including the RCMP. Having served as an RCMP officer himself for five years in northern Saskatchewan, Dennis knew the national police force had an independent streak and was bringing the hammer down on gun owners without much political intervention. His Parliament Hill office soon looked like a bowling alley with filing cabinets stacked shoulder-deep on every wall, and stuffed with ATI results.

Government ATI replies are legendary for their ability to obscure shreds of truth in fat files designed to frustrate those who seek facts. Dennis is no ordinary researcher. He dragged a fine-tooth comb through tens of thousands of pages looking for wee nuggets of gold hidden in the bureaucratic piffle. His tenacity was rewarded when he became the first person to find that the long-gun registry cost at least a billion dollars, and probably much more. Dennis's research gave Garry Breitkreuz the impetus to ask the Auditor General to confirm the waste of taxpayers' money and the jig was up. The Billion Dollar Boondoggle was born.

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Thanks to the relentless determination of Dennis Young, the national gun registry conversation has taken place a million times at dinner tables, gun clubs, call-in radio broadcasts and on editorial pages. The wave from Dennis's momentum continued through the Conservative Party of Canada and finally turned the Titanic. When the Parliament of Canada scrapped the gun registry, it made news on the world stage as an unprecedented reversal of firearms legislation. It finally evolved as the first successful bid to treat lawful gun owners as responsible. Someday, history will show that the registry was the ice-breaker for other legislative reforms that gun owners continue to seek.

Dennis had a habit of showing up for work on Parliament Hill before most people were even awake. News clippings were on the boss's desk when he arrived. After 13 years in the hot seat on Parliament Hill, Dennis moved to Alberta with his wife Hazel. Together they have been dealing with the complications of Hazel's multiple sclerosis for 30 years. His dedication to Hazel to this day reflects the same tenacity Dennis employs with every endeavour.

Many firearms enthusiasts continue to receive daily news emails from Dennis's desk via the Canadian Firearms Digest. He scours the media as fervently as ever, always passing along newsworthy developments for all who wish to stay informed. His clippings are frequently included in the CSSA E-News, too. It comes as good news to the entire firearms community that he will continue to inform us. He is the glue that keeps everyone on the same page.

Anti-gun legislation in the '90s placed Canada on a very slippery slope toward disarmament. Without the resistance of Dennis Young and those who worked with him, it seems likely that many more guns would have been banned by now and more laws passed to put our heritage sports out of reach. The next time you gaze upon the contents of your gun safe, you might want to think fondly of Dennis Young.

And perhaps take the time to wish him well.

DENNIS YOUNG POSTS OFFICIAL RESIGNATION: Effective Tuesday, March 11, 2014, I resigned as Alberta Director of the National Firearms Association. NFA President Sheldon Clare and I disagreed over decisions he made about NFA communications on social media and my suggestion regarding coordination of our efforts with the CSSA, both matters that I felt should have been referred to the NFA Board of Directors for further consideration. I waited until today to make this announcement to see if the impasse could be resolved. Sadly, it could not.

I would like to thank the NFA members in Alberta who voted for me and gave me the opportunity to serve as their Director. It was a rewarding experience and I hope the members feel I made a positive contribution to the organization. I want to thank Sheldon and the Board of Directors for their support for my work, especially on the High River file, and for the considerable time and effort they make every day to the cause of freedom and our right to own and enjoy our property. I apologize to everyone in the NFA for my early departure but better to leave a few months early and ease the level of frustration for both Sheldon and myself.

I remain a loyal and dedicated Honorary Life Member of both the CSSA and the NFA and I am even more committed to seeing the repeal of Bill C-68 today than I was in 1995 when it was rammed through Parliament and down our throats. I encourage every gun owner in Canada to hold memberships in both the NFA and the CSSA and by doing so hopefully we can get these two fine organizations to work together and build on each others strengths to achieve our common goals.

I will continue to work with Lorne Gunter and Sun News on the High River Gun Grab file until the whole truth is made public. I will continue to file Access to Information Act requests on all firearms related issues and post the

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results on the Canadian Firearms Digest. I will pursue a new non-profit career writing columns that I hope will be of interest to the firearms community.

It's been exactly twenty years since I started working on the firearms file with MP Garry Breitkreuz in his Parliament Hill office. We still have such a long fight ahead of us and I look forward to continuing this good fight with all of you.

Sincerely,
Dennis R. Young