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## Tell the Klein government to stop enforcing Ottawa's gun registry

Not much, one suspects, will result from the review the Martin government announced on Tuesday of Ottawa's splendid billion-dollar rifle registry.

No Liberal politicians are promising the registry will be junked. Paul Martin said, "There's a great deal of good in the gun registry," though he didn't say what.

Unfortunately, there is only one government that could sink the rifle registry, namely the government of Alberta, and it doesn't want to. In fact, it's helping Ottawa enforce it.

Alberta has brought charges under the Criminal Code against Oscar Lacombe, the 75-year-old Metis war veteran from Mundare who publicly defied the registration deadline a year ago.

Alberta's Justice Department, headed by Edmonton Whitemud MLA David Hancock, has allowed a federal prosecutor to charge Lacombe under the Criminal Code for failing to register.

Hancock then claimed in the Legislature (November 25) that because a federal prosecutor (named Michelle Doyle) was in the courtroom, the federal government was doing the prosecuting. But this was flat-out false. His own department appointed her as its agent; and had it not done so she could not have been in court.

Sneaky, eh?

She was asked at the start of Lacombe's trial whom she represented. "For the record," she told the judge, "the Federal Crown is attending as agent for the Provincial Crown in this matter." Had she said anything else, the trial would have ended right there, because ONLY provincial governments can prosecute Criminal Code offences (regardless of whom they authorize to do it).

It makes you wonder what on earth the Klein government thinks it's gaining, especially after swearing up and down since 1998 it would not prosecute registry offences.

All Hancock had to do was tell the feds to prosecute Lacombe themselves under the same provision in the federal Firearms Act. Lacombe could then have challenged the Firearms Act on at least 10 grounds under the Charter of Rights.

And note this. Lacombe is now awaiting his verdict and sentence. Upon conviction he will appeal. The government of Alberta can stay the charge prior to the verdict, or abandon the case on appeal. Either way, Lacombe wins and Ottawa loses.

It's utterly simple. Let Oscar go!

If Hancock drops the charge, as he is perfectly free to do, he would give Ottawa's rifle registry a big, black, embarrassing political

shiner. The feds would then have to watch Lacombe publicly thumb his nose at their registry, or give him a chance to get it struck down under the Charter of Rights--something they have never yet allowed to happen because they know it violates fundamental civil rights.

If you'd like to get the government to smarten up, you can visit the Web site [citizenscentre.com](http://citizenscentre.com). From there you can send a letter to your MLA, along with copies to the premier and the justice minister. (Other Canadians can use the site to write Ralph directly.) The letter is already written for you and you don't need to know your MLA's name, address or riding. Just type in your own name and postal code and the rest is done for you. It takes about thirty seconds and sends a clear message.

If all we're willing to do is belly-ache about the rifle registry and nothing else, we're as bad as the Alberta government. Big talk, no fight.

Oscar Lacombe is doing his duty. We should all do ours. Contact your MLA. That's why he's there.

- Link Byfield

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