

# Friends of Fur

## Keeping Cultures Alive

[www.friends-of-fur.org](http://www.friends-of-fur.org)

"Our aim is to enhance and preserve the Cultures that surround the fur trade, to educate and inform."

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# Step up to support outdoors caucus

It seems likely there will soon be a national outdoors caucus in Ottawa, a non-partisan group of members of parliament and senators who will lend an ear to Canada's outdoor community.

The caucus doesn't exist at the moment. But the driving force behind it is Saskatchewan Tory MP Gary Breitkreuz, the man who battled the federal firearms registry from Day 1.

Day after day, year after year, he zeroed in on the bureaucracy, the bungling and the torrent of taxpayer dollars going to the registry. He never let Canadians forget the \$2-million registry was eating its way through a full billion dollars and is now working on its second billion.

Why, you might wonder, did the job wind up in the lap of a single prairie MP instead of being on the agenda of Canada's large, wealthy and active firearms/hunting/fishing/trapping/shooting lobby?

Let me share a secret with you.

The Canadian firearms/hunting/fishing/trapping lobby does not exist. At least not in the sense our American friends understand a lobby.

There is no huge organization (despite gallant attempts to form a national umbrella group) that exists to lobby governments at the municipal, provincial and federal levels, that speaks for the five million or so Canadians who



GARY BALL

## Field Notes

participate in hunting, fishing, trapping or competitive shooting.

There is no national war chest ready and waiting to ensure that governments understand and respond to our concerns.

There is, instead, a loose coalition of hunting, fishing and shooting clubs, plus trappers councils, that try their best to act as an organization when things get a little tough, raising funds on an ad hoc basis.

But that scattergun approach means a lot of our energy and activity winds up going off-target ... a blown shotshell pattern, rather than a single, superbly aimed round.

Outdoor people tend to be fiercely independent souls. Organizing them is a lot like trying to herd cats.

Trust me, the wealthy, powerful and sneaky lobby that you hear about is really nothing more than a collection of democratic clubs and groups of outdoors folk made up of

your friends, neighbours and members of your family.

When those clubs and groups link up, however loosely, they become federations, such as the Peterborough-based Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, which speaks for 80 to 90 thousand members, primarily those who hunt and fish.

I'm not knocking the OFAH and its sister organizations in other provinces.

## CANADA'S OUTDOOR PEOPLE, THOSE WHO FISH, HUNT, SHOOT AND TRAP, NEED TO BE HEARD AS LOUDLY AS POSSIBLE. THAT'S WHY I'M EXCITED ABOUT PLANS FOR A NATIONAL OUTDOORS CAUCUS.

I am a member of the federation and have supported its work for a long, long time.

From time to time, I find myself disagreeing with the OFAH. That's fine.

This is by far the best game in town when it comes to representing my interests.

I want to hear more voices raised when outdoor interests are threatened.

It's tough for small, membership-driven groups to

cover all the ground.

The outdoor industry, which earns its daily bread selling to hunters, anglers, trappers and sport shooters, lacks the financial clout and the political voice enjoyed by its American counterparts.

Nor does it operate in the American culture, where the idea of a president who enjoys and supports hunting and fishing and actually totes a shotgun or a spinning road is quite acceptable.

I can't think of the last Canadian prime minister who actually hunted.

Yes, I can. It was Brian Mulroney, who went boar hunting with (I think) Russian president Boris Yeltsin. I remember it now because the Canadian mass media and the chattering urban classes were outraged at the very idea.

Anyhow, you get my drift. Canada's outdoor people, those who fish, hunt, shoot and trap, need to be heard as loudly as possible. That's why I'm excited about Breitkreuz's plans for a national outdoors caucus.

I think the idea's great.

Why not take the time to walk into your MP's office, or phone or e-mail him or her. Remind them that those of us who fish, hunt, shoot and trap, pay taxes and vote. Suggest he/she join the national outdoors caucus.

■ Gary gball@