

## 2. The New System is Working

### Q — Gun violence is going down so why do we need this?

#### Answer:

Firearms violence is declining with stricter controls on firearms.

When controls on rifles and shotguns were strengthened in 1991, 1441 Canadians were killed with guns; in 2005, the number was 818. Murders with rifles and shotguns have decreased dramatically, from 107 in 1991, to 32 in 2008, in part because of the stronger controls on firearms.<sup>1</sup> Criminology Professor Neil Boyd from Simon Fraser University, has concluded that there is more evidence to support the efficacy of gun control legislation in reducing death and injury than there is for most other legislative interventions. But further improvements are possible. Motor vehicle fatalities have also declined significantly since the early 1970's but efforts continue to make the roads safer.

### Q — How the system is contributing to public safety?

#### Answer:

The Canadian Firearms Registry contains data on more than 2 million gun owners and over 7.3 million firearms, representing 90% of guns in Canada. . 23,537 firearms licences have been refused or revoked by Chief Firearms Officers (CFO) for public safety reasons between 1999-2008. As of 2009, the system is being used by police 11,085 times a day.<sup>2</sup>

There are several examples of enhanced public safety since the new system was put in place, for example:

**July 2007:** The long gun registry allowed the RCMP to identify two men who were later convicted as accessories to the murder of 4 RCMP officers in Mayerthorpe (AB) because a registered rifle was left on the scene of the crime.<sup>3</sup>

**September 2006:** The registry has been used to remove guns from dangerous people, including a potential copy cat shortly after the Dawson College shooting (QC). Told of threats made by another individual, police found out from the registry that this person owned several weapons and they were able to confiscate them.<sup>4</sup>

**May 2000:** The firearm registry played a pivotal role in uncovering what is alleged to be one of the largest and most sophisticated firearm smuggling rings in North America. Likely destined for the black market, nearly 23,000 firearms and their components were seized.<sup>5</sup>

**January 2000:** in Newfoundland, the Chief Firearms Officer was alerted to a series of classified advertisements selling firearms in a newspaper. Following a police investigation, an individual was charged with transferring firearms without authority. The individual pleaded guilty and was fined.<sup>6</sup>

**Early 2000:** an individual in B.C. had his licence revoked because of a history of sexual assault offences. The individual decided to appeal the decision in court, but the judge confirmed the decision of the firearms officer to revoke the licence.<sup>7</sup>

**Early in 2000,** an individual in B.C. had his licence revoked for repetitive drinking and driving offences. Again, the revocation was appealed and the judge upheld the decision that the individual should no longer hold a licence because of irresponsible behaviour.<sup>8</sup>

**August 1999.** An Alberta judge upheld the decision of a firearms officer to refuse a licence to an applicant awaiting trial on drug charges on the basis of public safety concerns.<sup>9</sup>

**August 1999.** In Nova Scotia, a woman called the spousal line with a concern that her estranged husband was applying for a licence and was going to indicate that he did not have a spouse because she had refused to sign his application. She was quite concerned for her safety and the safety of their children. She later filed a complaint with her local police agency in order to generate a reference on the new Firearms Interest to Police (FIP) database (a reference log which indicates that an individual has recently been involved in a violent incident, has a history of mental illness or other information relevant to a firearms licence application). This means that if he tries to obtain a licence in the future, it will automatically trigger an investigation.<sup>10</sup>

**April 1999.** In Quebec, the FIP database matched several cases of domestic abuse to " valid licence holders". Their licences were revoked.<sup>11</sup>

**February 1999:** Nelson (BC) an individual with a valid Firearms Acquisition Certificate (FAC-precursor to the new licence) attempted to purchase several firearms over a two-week period. The background check indicated numerous prior convictions and several recent incidents involving criminal and violent activities. His licence was suspended pending further investigation. The individual later attempted two more times to purchase firearms until his licence was revoked and his firearms seized.<sup>12</sup>

**January 1999:** Red Deer (AB), evidence was discovered that an armoured car company employee had been falsifying his gun licence and permit to carry a handgun for the past three years and had gone undetected until the new registry caught this anomaly. Officials reported the incident and an investigation was launched.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Q — What about claims that the system is inefficient?**

##### **Answer:**

There have been challenges involved in implementing any new legislation but there have been dramatic improvements in performance and a reduction in costs.

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<sup>1</sup> Kwing Hung, "Firearms Statistics Updated Tables," January 2006; Statistics Canada, "Mortality, Summary List of Causes", 2000-2005. Statistics Canada, " Homicide in Canada, 2008".

<sup>2</sup> "Facts and Figures (October-December 2009), Canadian Firearms Program". Available at : <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/index-eng.htm>. Accessed January 20, 2010.; RCMP-GRC, Commissioner of Firearms, 2008 Report. Table 3. Available at : <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/rep-rap/2008-comm-rpt/2008-eng.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> "Two charged in Mayerthorpe RCMP slayings" CanWest News Service. July 9, 2007. Available at: <http://www.canada.com/vancouver/story.html?id=1dc35b77-803a-406b-af18-200af109adc5> Accessed February 2, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Lettre d'appui à la Coalition pour le contrôle des armes par Monsieur Yvan Delorme, directeur du service de police de la Ville de Montréal. November 2 2009. Available at (French only) : <http://www.guncontrol.ca/francais/F/SPVM.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Yang, Carter M. Gun-Smuggling Ring Busted U.S., Canadian Agents Seize 23,000 Guns and Parts <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world...ing000502.html> May 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Firearms Centre (*Today Canadian Firearms Program*) . Making a Difference: The Firearms Act.

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Firearms Centre (*Today Canadian Firearms Program*) . Making a Difference: The Firearms Act.

<sup>8</sup> Canadian Firearms Centre (*Today Canadian Firearms Program*). Making a Difference: The Firearms Act.

<sup>9</sup> Canadian Firearms Centre (*Today Canadian Firearms Program*). Making a Difference: The Firearms Act.

<sup>10</sup> Canadian Firearms Centre (*Today Canadian Firearms Program*). Making a Difference: The Firearms Act.

<sup>11</sup> Canadian Firearms Centre (*Today Canadian Firearms Program*). Making a Difference: The Firearms Act.

<sup>12</sup> Canadian Firearms Centre (*Today Canadian Firearms Program*). Making a Difference: The Firearms Act.

<sup>13</sup> Canadian Firearms Centre (*Today Canadian Firearms Program*). Making a Difference: The Firearms Act.