

## **QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE FIREARMS PROGRAM: THE SYSTEM IS WORKING**

Claims that the Firearms Program is costly and without value are simply untrue. The police have said time and time again that the Firearms Program including the gun registry provides valuable tools for keeping Canada safe. As of 2011, the system is being used by police an average of 17,402 times a day,<sup>1</sup> and police report many cases where it has been used to prevent tragedies or solve crimes.<sup>2</sup>

### **Most gun owners are now licensed and most guns are now registered<sup>3</sup>.**

As of September 2011, 1,886,057 valid firearms licences are in effect (representing 90% of all Canadian gun owners). In 2010, a total of 342,219 licences were renewed or issued to individuals.<sup>4</sup> Our current licensing procedures ensure all firearms users are qualified to possess or acquire a firearm.

- From 2005-2010, a total of 14,968 firearms licences were refused (18%) or revoked (82%) by Chief Firearms Officers (CFO) for public safety reasons (and 17,125 as of Oct. 1, 2011). Most often, the reasons cited by the CFO to refuse or revoke these licenses were that the person had received a court-ordered prohibition order, or was on probation, or was deemed to pose a risk to themselves or to others. Other reasons include: a history of violence, mental illness, a history of domestic violence, unsafe firearm use and storage, drug offences and providing false information.
- 4,612 registered firearms have been removed from the possession of individuals whose licenses were revoked due to public safety concerns.<sup>5</sup>
- According to the RCMP, as of 2009, 279,104 individuals have been prohibited from possessing firearms through prohibition orders (cumulative data).<sup>6</sup>

Nearly 7.9 million firearms are registered in the gun registry, representing 90% of all firearms in Canada. Most of these (7.1 million) are non-restricted firearms such as rifles and shotguns. Gun registration is a one-time only procedure, which is essential to: ensuring that gun owners are kept accountable, helping prevent diversion to illegal markets, and assisting police in their investigations.

### **Use of the Canadian firearms registry**

Law enforcement officers query the Canadian Firearms Registry On-line regularly.<sup>7</sup>

- The gun registry is consulted by police in average 17,402 times a day, and has helped in efforts to take preventive actions, as well as in several investigations.<sup>8</sup>
- The number of affidavits produced by CFP (Canadian Firearms Program) for legal proceedings has continued to increase over the past few years. More than 17,900 affidavits were provided by the CFP between 2003 and 2008 to support the prosecution of firearms-related crime and court proceedings; it produced 5,118 affidavits in 2008 alone.<sup>9</sup>

### **Facts on the costs of the long-gun registry**

Eliminating the long-gun registry will not refund the financial investment to set it up, nor will it save billions of dollars in the future.

- The auditor general reaffirmed in May 2010 that the program is now well managed. The bulk of the costs of the Firearms Program are for licencing gun owners and screening them for risk factors of violence and suicide.
- The old system (Bill C-17 in 1991) cost \$50 million annually and was deeply flawed. While setting up the current system cost more than expected, the money spent on the registry is a sunk cost. Going forward, the principal costs are for screening and licensing gun owners, not for registering guns.
- The costs of maintaining the registration of rifles and shotguns are modest. An independent cost-benefit analysis for the RCMP has estimated that scrapping the registry would save less than \$4

million per year.<sup>10</sup> The Deputy Commissioner of the RCMP has confirmed that the long-gun registry makes up approximately 20% of the workload.<sup>11</sup> Ending the long-gun registry will increase the cost of police investigations, because essential information in the trail will be lost. Police will be less likely to trace guns to their source and this will compromise their investigations. In addition, it will reduce their ability to take preventative action.

- Police associations have given evidence that it is approximately the cost of maintaining the long-gun registry equals to the cost of a complex murder investigation and public health advocates have argued that it is dwarfed by the annual costs of firearm death and injury, estimated at \$6.6 billion annually in 1995. According to the 2006 Small Arms Survey, the decrease in gun injuries and deaths since the inception of the Firearms Act are worth nearly \$1.4 billion annually.<sup>12</sup>
- Since 2006, the government has waived fees given up associated with gun licence renewal, estimated at \$21 million in lost revenues in 2011 alone.<sup>13</sup>

## **The Conservative amnesty for those who failed to renew their licenses or register their guns puts police officers at risk, weakens public safety.**

In 2006, the federal government declared an amnesty for gun owners who failed to renew their licenses or register their firearms. In 2009 the House of Commons passed a Bloc Quebecois resolution asking that the amnesty end on April 22, 2009. In March 2011, the Conservatives announced their plan to renew the amnesty for a fifth time.<sup>14</sup> It is estimated that the government's decision to renew the amnesty and waive fees amounts to a loss of revenue of \$21 million annually.<sup>15</sup>

- Every day, the information in the gun registry becomes less reliable, putting police and the public at risk. The Conservative government is criticizing a situation - the degradation of the data in the Firearms Registration System - that they themselves created.
- The amnesty prevents the prosecution of people with illegal guns. This occurred in one case where a gun was allegedly supplied to an individual, who later murdered police officers.
- The amnesty prevents screening for risk factors that reveal predispositions to violence and suicide. Licensing gun owners is an essential measure to keep guns away from potentially abusive spouses, and individuals with a history of violence. The license renewal process is essential to allow for re-screening on a regular basis for violence and suicide related risk factors that are not currently in police databases, reducing the chances that dangerous people will have access to guns. For example, a substantial proportion of men who commit domestic homicides do not have criminal records or a history of psychiatric treatment. In many of these cases, other members of the community have known that these threats and acts of violence were occurring. Screening and licensing firearm owners reduces the risks that dangerous people will have access to weapons, and registration is essential in efforts to enforce licensing provisions.<sup>16</sup>
- The amnesty undermines respect for the law. It penalizes the law abiding gun owners who, regardless of their personal views, complied with the legislation in a timely fashion. It also encourages groups and individuals that publicly flout the law. In spite of the Government's amnesty, more than 82% of gun owners have renewed their licenses because their license expired,<sup>17</sup> not because the amnesty incited them to do so. Most gun owners complied with the law and obtained a license in the first place. There is no reasonable explanation why these gun owners would not renew their license.

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<sup>1</sup> RCMP-GRC, "Facts and Figures (April - June 2011), Canadian Firearms Program." Available at: [http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/archives/quick\\_facts/2011/se-eng.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/archives/quick_facts/2011/se-eng.htm)

<sup>2</sup> RCMP-GRC, *Canadian Firearms Program Evaluation*, February 2010. Available at: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/fire-feu-eval/index-eng.htm> particularly at Finding 6 and Appendix C, E and G.

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- <sup>3</sup> RCMP-GRC, *Commissioner of Firearms, 2009 Report*. 2010. Available at: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/rep-rap/2009-comm-rpt/index-eng.htm>
- <sup>4</sup> RCMP-GRC, "Facts and Figures" for the Canadian Firearms Program, for the January - March, April - June, October - December, and July - September 2010 Periods. Available at <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/archives/index-eng.htm>
- <sup>5</sup> Response by Public Safety Minister Vic Toews in the House of Commons in response to Question No. 837 in Edited Hansard, 40th Parliament, 3rd Session, Number 145, Monday, March 21, 2011.
- <sup>6</sup> RCMP-GRC, *Commissioner of Firearms, 2009 Report*. 2010, at Chart 7. Available at: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/rep-rap/2009-comm-rpt/sec5-eng.htm>
- <sup>7</sup> RCMP-GRC, "Facts and Figures (April - June 2011), Canadian Firearms Program." Available at: [http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/archives/quick\\_facts/2011/se-eng.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/archives/quick_facts/2011/se-eng.htm)
- <sup>8</sup> E.g., see RCMP-GRC, "*Canadian Firearms Program Evaluation*, February 2010, at Finding 6. Available at: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/fire-feu-eval/pg10-6-eng.htm>
- <sup>9</sup> RCMP-GRC, *Commissioner of Firearms, 2008 Report*. 2009. Available at: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/rep-rap/2008-comm-rpt/sec4-eng.htm>
- <sup>10</sup> Peter Hall for RCMP Canada/ Canadian Firearms Program. (2009) Risks and Benefits of Proposed Firearms Legislation. Ottawa:PLEIAD Canada.
- <sup>11</sup> Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, November 2, 2006. <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=2470593&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=1&Language=E>
- <sup>12</sup> Small Arms Survey 2006, Chapter 8 The Instrument Matters: Assessing the Costs of Small Arms Violence. Available on-line at <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/A-Yearbook/2006/en/Small-Arms-Survey-2006-Chapter-08-EN.pdf>
- <sup>13</sup> MacCharles, T. "Conservatives give up \$21 million in waived gun fees," Toronto Star, March 25, 2011.
- <sup>14</sup> RCMP, Canadian Firearms Program, 'Extension of firearms compliance measures until May 16, 2013,' and 'Compliance Incentives.' Available at <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/notice-avis/com-con-eng.htm> and <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/fs-fd/ci-mi-eng.htm> The official notice was in the *Canada Gazette*, March 25, 2011. Available at <http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2011/2011-04-13/html/sor-dors102-eng.html>
- <sup>15</sup> MacCharles, T. "Conservatives give up \$21 million in waived gun fees," Toronto Star, March 25, 2011.
- <sup>16</sup> RCMP-GRC, *Canadian Firearms Program Evaluation*, February 2010, particularly at Appendix H. Available at <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/fire-feu-eval/apph-eng.htm>
- <sup>17</sup> See the RCMP-GRC, *Commissioner of Firearms Reports for 2006 through 2008 on the number and percentage of licenses that were due to expire and were renewed in those years, and the 'Renewal Statistics for Licence Holders who have Registered Firearms' Table of "Facts and Figures (April - June 2011), Canadian Firearms Program," for 2009 through 2011. Available at: [http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/archives/quick\\_facts/2011/se-eng.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/archives/quick_facts/2011/se-eng.htm)*