

COALITION

for Gun Control / pour le contrôle des armes

www.guncontrol.ca

Myths and Facts on the Gun Registry (Dec. 2011)

“Family guns’, ‘gopher guns’ are harmless”

All guns are lethal, and registering them once is a small inconvenience.

- Most firearm-related deaths in Canada are caused by rifles or shotguns, which are non-restricted firearms.
- They are the guns most often used in domestic violence, suicides, and to kill police officers.
- Rifles and shotguns in the wrong hands are just as deadly as handguns.
- There are currently **7.1 million registered “non-restricted guns”**.¹ This category includes rifles and shotguns such as the powerful semi-automatic Ruger Mini 14, used in the Montreal Massacre, and sniper rifles, including .50 caliber sniper rifles.
- New guns are usually registered at the point of purchase, and **fees have been waived**. Once a gun has been registered, it does not have to be re-registered ever again, unless it is sold or given to someone.
- In communities such as Surrey, York Region, and Ottawa, long guns outnumber handguns 2 to 1 in firearms recovered in crime. Even in large cities, rifles and shotguns constitute a substantial proportion of the firearms recovered in crime.

¹ RCMP. “Facts and Figures – July-Sept 2011,” October 24, 2011.

“Gun crime is a big city issue”

While gun control is not a panacea, it reduces the risk of firearms misuse.

- Gun violence takes many forms. Gang-related homicides and crimes are only part of a myriad of issues associated with the misuse of firearms, such as domestic violence and suicides.
- While gang crime in urban areas makes the news, there are higher rates of gun death and injury in rural areas because of the higher rates of gun ownership.
- Guns that were at one time legally owned are often diverted through theft and illegal sales into illegal markets. Registration holds all owners accountable for their firearms.

“It penalizes rural gun owners for big city problems”

Registering guns does not prevent law-abiding owners from using them for legitimate purposes.

- More gun deaths and injuries occur in rural areas. Between 2004 and 2008, the Canadian average firearms death rate was **2.3 per 100,000**. For that same period of time, the Northern Territories had rates dramatically higher than the average – **Nunavut 16.9; Northwest Territories 5.5; Yukon 4.3**- as seen in the western provinces and provinces with larger rural populations as well - **New Brunswick 4.08; Saskatchewan 3.76; Alberta 3.52; Nova Scotia 3.34; Manitoba 3; Quebec 2.86 (per 100,000)**.²
- Domestic violence, suicide, and murders of police officers with firearms occur more often, on a per capita basis, in rural communities.
- Women experiencing domestic violence in rural areas report threats and intimidation using firearms. Women are more likely to express concern for their safety when the firearms owners are not licensed and the guns not registered or safely stored.
- Unlike car or pet registration that is renewed annually, **guns are registered once** to their owners’ name. Fees have been waived.

² Statistics Canada, *Summary List Cause (2004-2008)*. Ottawa (ON): Statistics Canada.

“It’s useless, handguns have been registered for 30 years but they are still used in crime”

No law prevents all crime, but the evidence shows our gun control is effective.

- The substantially lower rate of handgun violence in Canada compared to the U.S. is a testament to the effectiveness of our gun control program.
- Rates of homicide without guns in the U.S. are only slightly higher (**1.3x**) than in Canada, whereas rates of homicide with handguns are much higher (**7.3x**).³
- At least half the handguns recovered in crime originate in the U.S., in large part because they do not have effective controls.
- The fact that the government is NOT proposing to eliminate the registration of handguns suggests, in fact, that it is effective and useful.

³ Statistics Canada, “Homicide in Canada 2009,” *Juristat* Vol. 30, no.3, October 2010; U.S. Department of Justice. (2010) 2009 Crime statistics, Expanded Homicide Data. FBI.

The Coalition for Gun Control is the only national non-profit organization working to reduce gun injury, death and crime in Canada. We are endorsed by more than 300 crime and injury prevention, policing, health, child safety, victims’ rights, grassroots and community organizations. These include: the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Dawson College Gun Control Committee, the YWCA of Canada, just to name a few.

Twitter: @CGCguncontrol • www.guncontrol.ca • E-mail: coalitionforguncontrol@gmail.com • Tel.: 416.604.0209

Myths and Facts on the Gun Registry (Dec 2011)

"The gun registry is costly"

The system is in place, and the costs of going forward are minimal.

- The Auditor General confirmed that the cost of developing and implementing the entire Firearms Program was \$1 billion over 10 years.⁴ This is a sunk cost, the money has been spent.
- Most of the cost of setting up the program was for licensing 2 million gun owners, and screening them for risk factors.
- **7.1 million rifles and shotguns** have been registered. Registration is a **one-time only procedure**.
- According to the RCMP, abolishing the long gun registry would save between **\$1.5 and \$4 million** per year.⁵ That is a pittance given the costs of gun death and injury in Canada, estimated in 1995 at **\$6.6 billion** per year.⁶ The 2006 Small Arms Survey estimated the decrease in gun injuries and deaths since 1995 equals savings up to **\$1.4 billion** annually.⁷
- Since 2006, the government has waived fees associated with license renewals. It is estimated that this amounts to a loss of revenue of **\$21 million** annually.⁸

⁴ SECU Testimony, May 27, 2010, online at <http://bit.ly/f97alE>

⁵ Galloway, G. "Cost of long-gun registry a fraction of what Tories claim, report shows," Globe and Mail, Nov. 21, 2010. <http://bit.ly/ec3Gev>

⁶ Miller, T. and Cohen, M. "Costs of Gunshot and Cut/Stab Wounds in the United States, with some Canadian Comparisons." *Accid Anal Prev* 1997; 29 (3): 329-41.

⁷ Graduate Institute for International Studies Geneva. Small Arms Survey 2006. August 3, 2006.

⁸ MacCharles, T. "Conservatives give up \$21 million in waived gun fees," Toronto Star, March 25, 2011.

"The gun registry failed, there was another shooting"

No law will prevent all tragedies, but evidence shows that gun control works.

- Prevention is difficult to evaluate, but it does not mean that it is not working.
- In 2010, 574 gun licences were refused, and 2035 were revoked because of public safety concerns.¹²
- **4,612 registered firearms have been removed** from the possession of individuals whose licenses were revoked **due to public safety concerns**.¹³

¹² RCMP. "Facts and Figures - Oct-Dec. 2010," 29 march 2011.

¹³ 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.

"Criminals don't register their guns."

Strong controls over legal guns reduce the chance that they will fall into the wrong hands.

- Licensing gun owners and registering firearms reduces the chance that guns will fall into the hands of dangerous and suicidal people.
- All illegal firearms begin as legal firearms. Controls over legal guns are essential to preventing diversion and choking off the illegal supply. Almost **3000** guns are stolen annually in Canada, by definition ending up in the hands of criminals.
- Only a fraction of firearms used in crime are ever recovered. Among the firearms that are traced, about half of the rifles and shotguns used in homicides are registered.
- The very fact that registered guns are not used often in crime suggests that the system is working – legal guns for the most part are being used by legal owners for legitimate purposes.

"Gun control doesn't work"

Empirical evidence shows that stronger gun control laws have helped reduce gun violence.

- The number and rates of firearm homicides, suicides, and accidents **have decreased** with stronger gun controls.
- The rate of homicide with rifles and shotguns has decreased by **53%** since 1995.⁹ Homicides with handguns have remained relatively stable, as most illegal handguns are smuggled, and are therefore not affected as much by domestic controls.
- When controls on rifles and shotguns were strengthened in 1995, **1125** Canadians were killed with guns; in 2007, the number was **743**.¹⁰
- Studies have correlated the introduction of Canada's gun control law with a significant reduction in gun-related suicide rates (**-43%**), without evidence of displacement.¹¹
- Public health and public safety experts stand firmly behind the gun registry.

⁹ Statistics Canada, "Homicide in Canada 2010," Juristat, October 26 2011.

¹⁰ Kwing Hung, "Firearms Statistics Updated Tables," January 2006; Statistics Canada, Mortality Summary List Cause (2008).

¹¹ For example INSPQ, Brief to SECU on Bill C-391 (May 2010).

"It is useless and full of errors"

Police say the gun registry is useful and essential to their work.

- It is true that the successive amnesties introduced by the Conservative government have undermined the system, but in spite of that, most Canadians have renewed their licenses and registered their firearms.
- While the information may not be perfect, police say it is better to have more information than less. We know that the DNA databank does not have information on all Canadians, still it is used on a regular basis to support criminal investigations.
- Many high-profile crimes have been solved thanks to Canada's gun control law.
- Police consult the Canadian Firearm Registry Online (CFRO) 17,000 times a day.¹⁴
- The information contained in the gun registry is also used, for example, by public health experts when they are preparing release plans for patients at risk of suicide or domestic violence, and to enforce prohibition orders.

¹⁴ RCMP. "Facts and Figures – July-Sept 2011," Oct 24, 2011..