

## **Guns kept away from criminal hands**

Toronto Police Service

October 28, 2009

Police found a huge cache of unlicensed and unsafely stored weapons, as part of a Service-wide project to rid of the city of illegally owned guns.

Gun and Gang Task Force investigators found 58 illegally owned firearms, including a machine gun and submachine gun, 17 handguns, 25 rifles and four shotguns following a search of a residence.

They also found 36 high-capacity magazines, over 6,000 rounds of ammunition, 10 pounds of gunpowder, two starter pistols and one pellet rifle.

The guns were found in a two-bedroom apartment, some on display, in an area of the city with a history of violent crime and drug activity, police said.

"There were enough weapons to start a war in that part of the city," Chief Bill Blair said, standing among the seized firearms.

Of the seized weapons, 25 had once been registered, but never re-registered under the current Canadian Firearms Information System (CFIS), in place since 1998. The man had not been properly licensed to possess firearms since 2002.

No charges have been laid, as the investigation is ongoing.

"The value of the information in that registry helps keep our community safe, as is apparent today," Chief Blair said.

"We're fortunate the criminals did not find out before we did," he said, of the concern the guns could be stolen and used in violent crimes.

The Chief said that the information in the gun registry led to the seizure of the weapons. As president of the Canadian Chiefs of Police, Chief Blair said the registry is a vital tool.

At present, a new bill is currently before Parliament to scrap the gun registry.

Project Safe City has, so far, muzzled hundreds of illegally possessed guns, in an effort to prevent violence in the city.

The Gun and Gang Task Force project, which began early this year, has resulted in the seizure of over 400 guns that had been illegally licensed or registered.

"We can guarantee the firearms seized are not going to be crime guns," Chief Blair said, of the deadly weapons that can't fall into the hands of criminals.

These people were less than vigilant about registering and licensing their firearms and may have been equally lax in storing them.

Of the 500-plus crime guns seized by police this year, 30% had a domestic origin while the other two-thirds were smuggled into the country.

Police have seized an AK-47, shotguns and handguns including Colt .45s and Smith & Wesson .38 Specials.

None of the owners was criminally charged and police encourage anyone in the city who wishes to get rid of their illegally possessed gun to contact the Gun and Gang Task Force at 416-808-2500. The guns will be destroyed.

"We look at this as a preventative process, as well as an educational one," Chief Blair said, noting many people don't know they are breaking the law in keeping an unregistered firearm.

He said licensed gun owners who register their weapons are safer because they are well educated on the laws around how to properly store their weapons.