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## **Private Member's Bill to Dismantle Gun Registry and Relax Controls on Restricted Weapons (Handguns and Semi Automatic Assault Weapons) and Prohibited Fully Automatic Assault Weapons**

Conservative MP Gary Breitkreuz introduced the Private Member Bill C-301 on February 9, 2009 aimed at eliminating the registration of long guns, extending the length of licenses for all firearms and weakening other controls on restricted and prohibited guns. All guns are potentially dangerous: Allowing more unregulated guns in circulation, particularly in stressful times when risks of violence and suicide are increased, is a serious threat to public safety. Bill C-301 proposes to:

**1) The bill would repeal the ban on the Authorizations To Transport (ATT) prohibited long guns (military assault weapons including fully automatics such as the AK-47)** by proposing to allow fully automatic machine guns, prohibited handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons to be taken to civilian ranges.

- Fully automatic assault weapons have been prohibited since 1978; semi-automatic firearms which could be converted to fully automatic fire and converted automatic firearms were prohibited by the Conservatives in 1991; semi automatic military weapons were prohibited in 1995;
- While these guns were banned because they are "not reasonably" used in hunting, owners were allowed to keep them. There are 210,407 prohibited firearms in Canada including prohibited handguns;
- Military assault weapons are not designed for hunting or target shooting but for killing people during combat;
- Currently, as per the 1995 legislation, prohibited semi-automatic assault weapons were allowed to be taken to civilian target shooting ranges on a one off basis as per the Special Authorization to Possess (which ceased to be issued around 2004). All other prohibited long guns were not allowed for target shooting except on Department of Defence Ranges.

**2) The bill relaxes controls on owners of handguns and semi-automatic weapons** Although many Canadians support stronger controls over these guns since 2005, 60,000 more handguns and other restricted weapons have been registered in Canada. Many semi-automatic military and tactical weapons not suited for target shooting, which are banned in other countries are being sold to civilians in Canada. Not only does this bill eliminate many controls on rifles and shotguns but it relaxes the controls on these weapons. Specifically:

- It allows licensed owners to get as many handguns and restricted semi-automatic tactical or military weapons as they want over a period of 10 years without the requirement to receive approval from the Chief Firearms Officer (CFO);
- It removes the requirement to obtain CFO's approval to transport restricted guns;
- It will increase sale of handguns and restricted firearm such as the Beretta CX4 Storm used at Dawson College sales and increase the potential for diversion to illegal use through theft or other diversion methods.
- Currently there are 450,635 restricted guns (handguns and semi-automatic tactical and military weapons). Handguns which were at one time legally owned in Canada account for about 1/3 of handguns recovered in crime including the high profile murder of Jane Creba on Boxing Day 2005;
- Legal restricted gun owners have been implicated in many high profile shootings- the 1992 Concordia University shooting, several domestic violence cases including the 1996 Vernon (B.C) massacre, the 2006 Dawson College shooting and the shooting of John O'Keefe on Toronto's Yonge St. in January 2008.

**3) The legislation extends the term of the all gun license to 10-12 years for all gun owners (including owners of restricted and prohibited firearms).**

We renew driver's licenses, health cards, passports and even dog licenses, regularly to ensure that information is kept up to date. Maintaining current information about firearm owners is critical to maintaining public safety. Screening and regular renewals of firearm licenses are key to:

- Keeping guns out of the hands of individuals who represent a threat to themselves or others through spousal notification, a reference check and assessment of risk factors associated with violence;
- Ensuring that the information on record in the registry – name, address etc. - is accurate. Failures to do so have had tragic consequences (for example in the case of Laval police officer Daniel Tessier);
- In an economic crisis, when people face more stress, they are more at risk for domestic violence and suicide which makes the licensing program even more important;
- Extending the term of license undermines data integrity as noted above. The Auditor General has expressed concerns over data integrity in the past;
- The licensing and renewal process accounts for the bulk of the costs associated with the firearms program, in part, because \$56.5 million in fees have been waived or refunded by the Conservatives<sup>1</sup>.

#### **4) Abolish the registration of long guns such as rifles and shotguns.**

While handguns are a major problem in urban centres, rifles and shotguns are the firearms most often used to kill, particularly in rural areas. These are the guns most frequently found in homes and the guns often used in domestic violence incidents, suicides, murders of police officers. In spite of the focus on handguns, rifles and shotguns account for a significant proportion of guns seized in crime (for example 241 crime guns in Toronto in 2006). Almost 5000 guns are stolen annually in Canada.<sup>2</sup>

Registration is required to:

- Increase gun owner accountability;
- Reduce the chances legal guns will be diverted to illegal markets;
- Allow police to remove guns from people who are a threat;
- Support police investigations – for example tracing a gun recovered at the murder of four RCMP led to the conviction of two men for second degree murder<sup>3</sup>.

Stronger controls on rifles and shotguns have improved public safety:

- Police support the “registry” and use it more than 9,400 times each day;
- Gun deaths had declined significantly: 500 fewer Canadians are killed with guns each year than in 1991. The 2007 rate of murders with rifles and shotguns has dropped by more than 78% from 1991. Murders of women with guns have plummeted from 85 in 1991 to 32 in 2004;
- The Conservatives’ amnesty for those who fail to register their guns or renew their licenses has had serious consequences: charges were stayed against a man accused of being an accessory to the murder of police officers in Spiritwood, Sask in 2006.
- Most of the costs of the “registry” are associated with licensing gun owners – the RCMP estimates that eliminating long gun registration save only \$2.9 million a year.<sup>4</sup>

Effective controls on all firearms are part of comprehensive public safety strategies:

- Canada's major public health and safety organizations such as the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Police Association, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canada Safety Council, the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians as well as over 300 provincial and local organizations are united in support of effective firearms regulations.
- The June 2000 unanimous Supreme Court of Canada stated: *“The registration provisions cannot be severed from the rest of the Act. (...) These portions of the Firearms Act are both tightly linked to Parliament’s goal of promoting safety by reducing the misuse of any and all firearms. Both portions are integral and necessary to the operation of the scheme.”*

The Conservatives have focused on catering to the interests of the gun lobby rather than to the experts in policing and public safety:

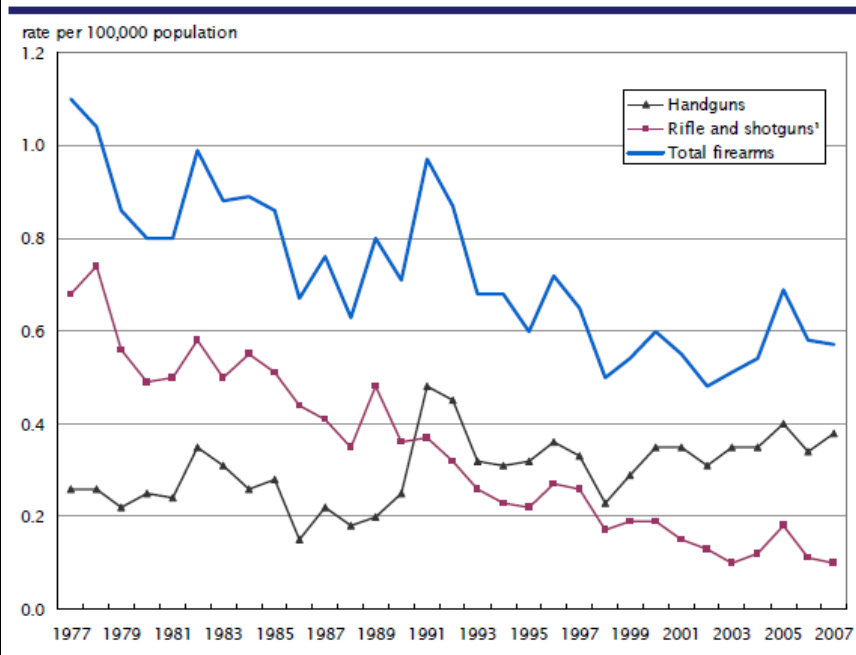
- The Minister’s Firearm’s Advisory Committee was composed exclusively of opponents of the law.
- The Prime Minister is scheduled to speak at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Annual General Meeting and Fish & Wildlife Conference on March 21, a group that endorsed Bill C-301.
- During the last election, the Canadian Shooting Sports Assoc. claims it *“conducted an election poster campaign which was approved by the PMO [Prime Minister’s Office] - posters sent to all dealers, retailers, clubs and businesses<sup>5</sup>.”*

## Gun Death and Crime Statistics

Year	1991	1995	Latest	Change
<b>Total Firearms Death</b>			<b>2003</b>	
Number	1444	1125	792	-45%
Rate per 100,000	5.2	3.8	2.5	-51%
<b>Total Homicide</b>			<b>2007</b>	
Number	756	586	594	-21%
Rate per 100,000	2.7	2.01	1.80	-33%
<b>Homicide with firearms</b>			<b>2007</b>	
Number	271	176	188	-30%
Rate per 100,000	0.97	0.6	0.56	-40%
<b>Homicide with rifles and shotguns</b>			<b>2007</b>	
Number	103	61	32	-68%
Rate per 100,000	0.37	0.21	0.09	-76%
<b>Homicide without firearms</b>			<b>2007</b>	
Number	485	410	406	-16%
Rate per 100,000	1.73	1.4	1.23	-29%
<b>Homicide of women with firearms</b>			<b>2004</b>	
Number	85	43	32	-62%
Rate per 100,000	0.6	0.29	0.2	-67%
<b>Homicide of women without firearms</b>			<b>2004</b>	
Number	185	152	166	-10%
Rate per 100,000	1.3	1.02	1.04	-20%
<b>Total Robbery</b>			<b>2007</b>	
Number	33,225	30,332	29,600	-10%
Rate per 100,000	119	104	90	-24%
<b>Robbery with firearm</b>			<b>2007</b>	
Number	8995	6692	3,281	-63%
Rate per 100,000	32	23	10	-68%

## Homicide with firearms 1977-2007

Chart 5 Use of rifles and shotguns continue to decline in 2007



1. Excludes sawed-off rifles/shotguns.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

<sup>1</sup> Brown, Jim, "Tories refunded millions to gun owner under fee waivers, amnesty," Canadian Press, April 8, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Hung, Kwing, "Firearms Statistics Updated Tables," Department of Justice, January 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Cormier, Ryan, "Men admit to giving gun to Mountie killer," Edmonton Journal, January 19, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Jim, "Day sticks to his guns on registry changes," Canadian Press, November 2, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=3219083173&topic=5930>