

Gun Control News: 20 years after the Montreal Massacre

Coalition for Gun Control

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www.guncontrol.ca

Canada's Gun Control Law

Following the murders of 14 young women at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal, the families of the victims, students, public health and safety organizations, women's groups and individuals across the country pressed for stronger gun control laws. In 1991, the Conservatives passed a law which made some improvements, but did not go far enough. The struggle continued and in 1995, the Firearms Act became law. It:

- requires all gun owners to have a renewable license
- requires all guns to be registered to its owner's name
- increases the restrictions on handguns
- bans many military assault weapons and some handguns (but allowed current owners to keep them)

"The Firearms Act is a monument to the memory of the victims of the Montreal Massacre." —Suzanne Laplante-Edward, mother of Anne Marie killed Dec. 6 1989

Gun Control: Improving Public Safety

The evidence shows that stronger gun laws help reduce gun related death, injury, violence and suicide.

- 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.
- The number of women murdered with firearms decreased from 85 in 1991 to 32 in 2005. In contrast murders of women without firearms declined only slightly during the same period.
- The rate of homicide with handguns has remained constant over the past decade as many of the guns used are smuggled.

The "Gun Registry" is Used Daily

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Police Association, major safety and health groups from across the country have reiterated their support for the system.

- Police officers access the gun registry 10,818 times a day, both during investigations and to take preventative action.
- The registry has been used to remove guns from dangerous people (including a potential copy cat shortly after the Dawson College shooting).
- Many high-profile crimes have been solved thanks to Canada's gun law.

Support for the Law Continues to Be Strong

All major public safety groups in the country including policing, public health, women's groups, and victims of gun violence continue to support the gun registry.

Thank you to the many groups that took the time to write letters to politicians and issue press releases in 2009- visit www.guncontrol.ca to read some examples.

Tories Renew Amnesty

In May, the Conservatives renewed their amnesty for gun owners who haven't bothered with the legal requirement to register their guns and renew their licenses, and enabled those with an expired licence to apply for a new one. This, even though the House of Commons passed a Bloc Quebecois resolution asking that the amnesty end on April 22, as it prevents the prosecution of people with illegal guns. This occurred in two cases where guns were allegedly supplied to individuals who later murdered police officers. Every day the information in the registry becomes less reliable, putting police and the public at risk.

Harper Vows to Weaken Gun Controls

"We are still you know we believe that you go after the people who use guns to commit crimes. We are still trying to get rid of that registry. (...). We need to get a mandate so we can get that thing passed. (...)"

– Prime Minister Stephen Harper in Sault Ste Marie, ON, September 2009.

During the last parliamentary session, the Conservative government introduced **3 pieces of legislation aimed at dismantling the gun law (C-301, S-5 and C-391) through unconventional means** (two Private Member's Bills and one Senate bill). The Conservatives have well documented ties with the gun lobby. Stephen Harper mobilized gun lobby members to pressure their MPs to abolish the long-gun registry in his speech at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters' Annual Meeting in April 2008.

C-391 Passes Second Reading, Proposes to Weaken Controls on Ruger Mini 14

Following an extensive series of radio advertising campaigns by the Conservative Party, targeting opposition MPs in rural areas, Bill C-391 passed its second reading vote in the House of Commons as 12 NDP, 8 Liberals and one Independent MPs cast their votes with the government on November 4th. The bill will now be sent to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. It proposes to eliminate the need to register rifles and shotguns, a one-time only procedure that:

- makes gun owners accountable for their firearms and enforces the licensing provisions of the law. Registration also makes it more difficult for straw purchases and illegal sales by legal gun owners to occur.
- is key in taking preventive action, enforcing prohibition orders and removing all firearms where there is a risk.
- helps police investigations.
- allows police to differentiate between legal and illegal firearms. Without information about who owns firearms legally and the firearms they own, police cannot charge individuals with illegal possession.
- allows police to trace firearms easily.
- reduces the chances that legal guns will be diverted to illegal markets.

This Bill proposes to repeal the requirement to register long guns – a category which includes the Ruger Mini 14 rifle used in the Montreal Massacre. Long guns are the firearms most often used to kill women, children and police officers in this country. 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 because a registered rifle was left on the scene of the crime. The bulk of the cost of the firearms program is associated with licensing and screening of risk factors. The RCMP estimates, that if the registration of rifles and shotguns were discontinued, it would save only \$3 million per year.

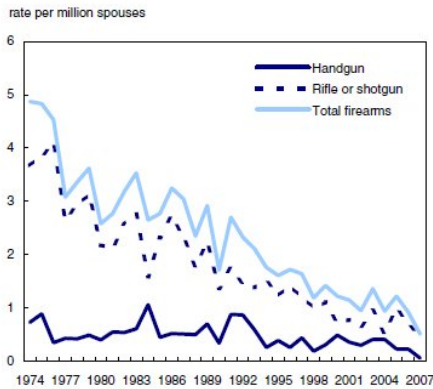
"Bill C-391, is intended to gut the gun registry, and to make it impossible for law enforcement officials to have access to the information. The same type of information, that enabled us to seize 58 illegally owned firearms in October 2009 -- and frankly, make our cities safer. [The registry] helps keep communities safe, along with the police officers who work in them." -- Toronto Chief of Police William Blair, President of the Canadian Association of the Chiefs of Police

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Gun Control Essential to Women Safety
 Women's groups and front-line shelter workers continue to support the Firearms Act because they see firsthand that it works. Access to firearms increases the likelihood that a domestic homicides will become murder-suicides, and that there will be multiple victims. It is the fifth highest risk factor that predicts whether a woman will die in domestic violence situations. Most women killed with guns are killed with legally owned guns- particularly rifles and shotguns because they are the firearms that are most readily available.

Spousal Homicide with Firearms 1974-2007



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

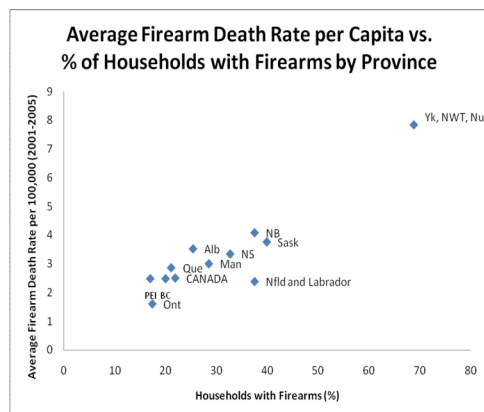
"Duck Guns" Are Also Dangerous

Rifles and shotguns are the guns most often used to threaten women and children, and the weapons of choice in murders of police officers. Many are stolen from legal owners and are also seized from gangs.

- A man armed with a high-power rifle held 9 employees of the Edmonton Worker Compensation Board hostage for 10 hours on October 21, 2009.
- Heidi Ferguson was shot by her estranged husband at her Orangeville (ON) home in September 2009. An avid hunter and gun collector, it is believed that he later turned the gun on himself.
- In July 2009, Joan Hanson, her daughter and granddaughter were shot by her estranged husband who then turned the rifle on himself at her rural home in northern Alberta. Financial pressure is believed to have been a motive.
- In February 2009 in Kingston (ON), Nadia Gehl was shot at a bus stop close to her home. Waterloo police apprehended her husband and two of his friends.

More Guns = More Deaths

In spite of perceptions that guns are an urban problem, where there are more guns, and thus more opposition to gun control, there are also higher rates of firearm death and injury. In 2008, RCMP in rural Alberta noted an increase in the number of gun-related calls.



Ruger Mini 14 Should be Banned

In 1995 our gun law banned most semiautomatic assault weapons. We had a firm commitment that a few others would also be prohibited. However, since then hundreds of new types of military and tactical guns have been imported to Canada, often as restricted weapons available to target shooters and collectors. These weapons have features that should make them prohibited. The list of prohibited weapons **should be updated and include the Ruger Mini 14 used to shoot 14 at l'École Polytechnique**, the AR 15 used to permanently disable Toronto's Louise Rousso and the Berretta CX4 Storm used to kill Anastasia de Sousa.

Mothers for Gun Control Campaign

On Mother's Day, mothers of victims of gun violence launched a campaign calling on Canadians to join them to stand up for gun control and let the government know that they oppose any measures taken to weaken gun control. Some of the Mothers for Gun Control released a video where they shared their stories and states their position. View it at www.guncontrol.ca

Homicide with Long Guns Decreased Since Law Passed

CANADA	1995		2008	
	#	Rate per 100,000	#	Rate per 100,000
Homicide	586	2.01	611	1.83
Homicide with firearms	176	0.6	200	0.59
Homicide with long guns	61	0.21	34	0.1
Homicide with handguns	95	0.32	121	0.36

Canada Backtracks on International Gun Control

On November 27, 2009 the Harper government postponed once again the implementation of the marking and tracing for imports and exports of firearm which are required under our international obligations.

"Disarm Domestic Violence" Campaign

On June 21, Canadian groups join others in 85 countries to mark the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence. It was the first international campaign aimed at protecting women from gun violence in the home, to ensure that people with a history of domestic abuse are denied access to firearms, or have their licenses revoked. Rebecca Peters, Director of International Action Network on Small Arms said: *"That Canada, home of the Landmine Ban Convention and world leader in peace building, should consider moving its gun laws against the global trend towards stricter regulation looks both foolish and irresponsible. Licensing and registration is a crucial step in preventing men who have a history of domestic violence from committing femicide or armed sexual violence in the home."*

COALITION for Gun Control

Founded in the wake of the Montreal massacre, 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 Canadian Federation of University Women, the Canadian Bar Association, the Dawson College Gun Control Committee, the YWCA of Canada, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, the Canadian Jewish Congress, just to name a few.

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