

COALITION FOR GUN CONTROL

October 18, 2019

Dear Fellow Canadian,

The election is upon us. And gun control is definitely a key issue. With hard work, we have managed to keep it on the agenda. And, as we approach the 30th anniversary of the Montreal massacre with your help we may finally achieve what we set out to do: the **Liberals have proposed banning civilian possession of military assault weapons and a buyback program** a measure we have lobbied for over three decades.

And we have made other progress. We managed to get Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms, passed despite virulent opposition. It made modest improvements to the screening processes and reinstated 1977 provisions requiring gun sellers to record sales of rifles and shotguns. But it did not fill the loopholes concerning handguns or military assault weapons. We were also able to support passage and implementation of legislation in Quebec requiring the registration of rifles and shotguns a measure that will ensure that Quebec continues to have one of the lowest rates of gun violence in the country.

Thanks to relentless pressure over the past thirty years, the Liberals have promised to ban military assault weapons like the AR-15 and to institute a buyback program. Predictably, the Conservatives oppose the ban and have pledged to roll back even the modest provisions in Bill C-71. The Bloc Quebecois supports the ban and while the NDP

and Green Party positions are less clear they are likely to as well.

But we need more. **We need decisive action on handguns.** The loopholes introduced by the Conservatives have not been filled and handguns continue to proliferate. When Paul Martin proposed a national handgun ban in 2006, there about 340,000 legally owned restricted handguns. Now there are almost **one million legally owned restricted handguns.** And the numbers continue to grow. Handguns are now the guns most often used in homicides. A substantial proportion of crime guns, like the gun used in the Danforth shooting, come from Canadian sources. While proposals to enable cities to ban handguns (with provincial agreement) signal understanding that this is an important issue, health care experts, victims, women's organizations and the mayors of major cities across the country are united in calling on for a **national ban on handguns.**

It is unclear how a municipal ban would work - guns would likely flow from outlying areas. Moreover, handguns are no more useful in rural areas than in urban areas: they not used for hunting or by farmers. And we have seen troubling trends that suggest, contrary to law Canadians, are now arming for self-protection. And politicians of all stripes have been talking about gun owner "rights" even though the Supreme Court of Canada has made clear, there is no such right in Canada. But politics is about politics and who has the loudest voice. The gun lobby is very active and mobilized. Even though gun owners are 8% of the population in Canada, more than 50% of those responding to Minister Bill Blair's consultation on banning handguns admitted to being gun owners. Along with Canadian gun lobby groups, the American NRA has continued to publicize the issue and one individual gun owner admitted to responding more than 30,000 times.

We have to get Canadians more actively engaged. Working with the Danforth families and others, our petition attracted a modest 20,000 signatures which is only a start. We are approaching the tipping point, from which there is no return. All Canadians, whether they live in rural or urban areas, deserve to be safe. In spite of the preoccupation with smuggled guns, we know that a substantial proportion of the crime guns that are traced originate with Canadian sources. Legal guns are most often used in domestic violence, in suicide, in the murders of police officers and in mass shootings – Polytechnique, the Vernon massacre, Dawson College, the Quebec Islamic Centre – were all perpetrated by individuals who were "law abiding" until they pulled the trigger.

Gun control is only part of the solution - but the evidence is strong worldwide that industrialized countries with strong laws are safer from gun violence. Canadians have been lulled into a false sense of security, congratulating ourselves on being better than the USA. That is a pretty low bar. We are fourth among OECD countries in the rates of gun death. While Australia and the UK have comparable rates of homicide without guns, they have a fraction of the gun murders we see. In 2016, the UK, with twice the population of Canada, had fewer than 30 gun murders! **The Coalition for Gun Control relies on your support to continue to be an effective citizen voice on the issue of gun violence.** Please get in touch if your organization can help us in the fight for a safer Canada.

We need your help to:

- Share our creative assets within your networks on social media - <https://www.triggerchange.ca/> and <https://www.dodgethebullet.ca/>
- Encourage people to get involved - <https://www.triggerchange.ca/>
- Encourage your friends & family to write their MPs, talk to the candidates and tell them gun control matters.

It's hard to believe that it's been almost thirty years since the Montreal massacre. Shocking to realize that I have spent nearly half my life as a volunteer working to strengthen our gun laws. While at time it feels like we are moving backwards rather than forwards, in recent months there has been a palpable shift, not just in Canada but around the world.

Recent articles of interest:

- **Doctors at Liberal event urge Trudeau to strengthen gun laws**, by Michelle Zilio, Marieke Walsh and Janice Dickson – The Globe and Mail
- **At Trudeau event, GTA mayors say they support a national handgun ban**, By Ed Tubb - Toronto Star

Yours truly,



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