



SUBMISSION ON:

**REDUCING VIOLENT CRIME: A DIALOGUE ON HANDGUNS AND
ASSAULT WEAPONS**

OCTOBER 2018

SUMMARY

The BC Wildlife Federation is opposed to further limiting access by law-abiding licensed firearms owners to:

- 1) Handguns; and
- 2) Semi-automatic firearms (true assault weapons are already prohibited in Canada).

The On Line Engagement Survey is not considered a scientifically valid and legitimate survey instrument and any data collected lacks validity and credibility.

Canada has a gang problem, not a gun problem.

THE BC WILDLIFE FEDERATION

The BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF) is the leading conservation organization in British Columbia. The BCWF promotes the conservation and wise use of British Columbia's fish, wildlife and their habitats, and is recognized as such by stakeholders' province wide. You should be aware that the BCWF provides the necessary training and safe use of firearms for its members and the public at large through our government approved Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Education (CORE) program.

CANADA HAS A GANG PROBLEM NOT A GUN PROBLEM

Canada has a gang problem, not a gun problem. Criminal violence is driven by a small number of repeat offenders, not by the millions of Canadians who legally own firearms. For this reason, high-quality, peer reviewed research by criminologists and economists have consistently shown that firearms legislation focused on general ownership fails to reduce rates of criminal violence. See - Langmann, C. Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on Bill C-71.

In 2016, Statistics Canada reported there were 223 firearms-related homicides; the bulk of the which (141 of the 223) were gang related. As well, there are many instruments available to commit murder for those so inclined. Statistics Canada reports that knives are used about as frequently as guns to commit murder. See Homicide in Canada, 2016. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/54879-eng.htm>

All reputable research indicates that gang crime is driven by smuggled firearms that are part of the illegal drug trade. Analyses of guns recovered from criminal activity in Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver and the Prairie Provinces show that between two-thirds and 90% of these guns involved in violent crime had been smuggled into Canada. See - Mauser, G. Bill C-71 is a Red Herring. Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on Bill C-71.

SERIOUSLY FLAWED ON LINE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

The online engagement survey is not a legitimate form of polling as it is a classic example of a “push poll”. A push poll is one where the pollster has already made up their mind and is intentionally designing a poll to give them the desired statistics to justify their actions. Throughout the survey it is implied that law-abiding gun owners are a source of violent crime. Cracking down where the problem isn’t is not a solution it’s a diversion.

The survey states that “The Government of Canada has committed to get handguns and assault rifles off our streets” *It is illegal to carry a gun in Canada so this “commitment” eliminates any need to further restrict law-abiding firearms owners since their guns are not on the street to begin with.*

Which brings us to the Liberals latest gun control agenda, to ban all semi-automatic weapons and all handguns. This effort is now being pursued with a public-opinion poll to “determine” what Canadians want. The poll is introduced with an impossibility caused by reality colliding with official rhetoric. The Liberals claim the “online engagement” will lead to “an examination of a ban on handguns and assault weapons in Canada, while not impeding the lawful use of firearms by Canadians”. *How is it possible to ban handguns and semi-automatics and not impede their lawful use?*

A Look at the Questions

Question - Should more be done to limit access to handguns?

The question assumes that limiting handguns will somehow impact violent crime. Also unstated is the inference that it is legal handguns we are talking about (illegal handguns are already 100% banned, access is illegal, which means 100% limited access). More limited access would impact hundreds of thousands of Canadian gun owners and a wide variety of shooting sports.

Question - Should more be done to limit access to assault weapons?

The US Department of Justice has used the following description: “in general, assault weapons are semiautomatic firearms with a large magazine of ammunition that were designed and configured for rapid fire.” (This definition is from the American Assault Weapon Ban which proved entirely useless as a crime fighting tool and was abandoned).

Assault weapon is a very controversial term. Originally it was a military definition for a carbine size rifle shooting an intermediate power cartridge and capable of automatic or semi-automatic fire. The term has since been adopted by anti-gun groups to mean all semi-automatic rifles. The definition used in the survey would include all semi-automatic firearms since a larger magazine can be added to any gun and a semi-automatic design always included the possibility for rapid fire.

Question - Where should we focus efforts to limit handguns?

- a. Legally-owned handguns – An invitation to punish millions of law-abiding citizens for the actions of a few criminals. No mention of how this is supposed to reduce crime.
- b. Illicit handguns – they are already illegal, are we going to make them doubly illegal?

- c. Both legally-owned handguns and illicit handguns - sounds like a total gun ban, however since illicit guns are already illegal it's another invitation to fight violent crime by restricting the law-abiding.
- d. Neither legally-owned handguns nor illicit handguns – All handguns are eliminated from the choice, so how does one limit the non-existent?

Question - Where do you believe efforts to limit assault weapons should be focused? (What about not limiting them?)

- a. Legally-owned firearms -another invitation to punish the law-abiding for the actions of criminals.
- b. Illicit firearms – already illegal
- c. Both legally-owned firearms and illicit firearms – a restatement of the attack on the law-abiding since the illicit are already illegal and totally banned.
- d. Neither legally-owned firearms nor illicit firearms – all firearms are eliminated from the choice, so how does one limit the non-existent?

Question - With respect to limiting handguns, assault weapons, and other firearms in the illicit market, in which of the following areas do you think efforts (more laws!) should be focused?

- a. Theft from businesses and individuals – already illegal.
- b. Straw purchasing (i.e., a legal purchase that is then diverted to the illicit market) – already illegal
- c. Smuggling – already illegal, in a big country with open borders ending firearms smuggling is a logistical impossibility. It remains in the discussion because acknowledging the realities would undercut the “restrict the law-abiding to prevent theft” argument for gun bans.

The possibility that firearms in the hands of the law-abiding would have an intimidating effect on criminals and reduce crime is not even considered.

This controversial gun ban proposal is doubtless being proposed as a distraction from the government's failure to deal with crime gangs, gang violence and terrorism.

There are also technical problems with the administration of the survey:

- 1) Anyone in any country can respond to the survey – why is government allowing outside opinions to influence Canadian legislation?

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- 2) There are no controls to prevent someone from answering more than once – so how do we know there are no robot responders providing thousands or millions of responses?

WHY THE BCWF IS OPPOSED TO FURTHER LIMITING ACCESS BY LAW ABIDING LICENSED FIREARMS OWNERS

The BCWF is opposed to further limiting access by law-abiding licensed firearms owners to handguns and semi-automatic firearms for the following reasons:

- 1) It will do nothing to address the real causes of the vast majority of violent crime involving firearms which are:
 - a. Criminal Gangs
 - b. Gang Violence
 - c. Smuggling
 - d. Terrorism
 - e. Mental illness
- 2) Canadians are already subject to onerous background checks in order to legally possess firearms – licensed firearms owners are not the problem. Licensed firearms owners are much less likely to commit a violent crime than the average Canadian.
- 3) Licensed firearms owners are currently subject to “continuous eligibility screening” and as such, are subject to continuous verification every day by the RCMP (<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/fire-feu-eva/pg6-2-eng.htm>).
- 4) The proposal to ban handguns and semi-automatic firearms (assault weapons) is based on false assumptions and a lack of data. **See Appendix for details.**
- 5) It will put jobs at risk in the Sporting Goods industry.
- 6) It will result in financial harm to licensed firearms owners and/or their estates through devaluation of their property, and ultimately, confiscation of property.

BCWF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCING VIOLENT CRIME

“Limiting” firearms is a diversionary tactic from the real problems of gangs, smuggling, gang violence, terrorism and mental illness. Limiting legal firearms will have zero effect on gang crime, gang violence, drug profits, and terrorism, as these groups have a complete disregard for any laws.

A firearm is a metal tool, nothing more. If you do not recognize the problem, you will not solve the problem. Efforts that concentrate on mitigating the actual problems will be effective. Any other efforts are a waste of time, energy, and taxpayer’s money – money that could be spent helping the police in their efforts to combat the actual problem.

The BCWF has the following recommendations for reducing violent crime are:

- 1) Recognition by the Canadian Government of the real problems, which are gangs, smuggling, gang violence, terrorism and mental illness.
- 2) Allocate adequate resources to police forces and the Canada Border Agency to enable them to stop/reduce smuggling and deal with criminal gangs, gang violence, and terrorists.
- 3) Invest funds to develop strategies that combat gang crime, gang violence, drug profits, and terrorism.
- 4) Provide additional funds aid, resources, funding and training for Police, RCMP, CSIS, and Canada Border Service so that the problem can be addressed at its roots.
- 5) Invest in adequate funding to treat mental illness, and put in place real, workable systems to ensure that those diagnosed with mental illness and pose a threat to others are identified and reported to the RCMP before they engage in violence.

APPENDIX

FIREARMS LICENCE HOLDERS HALF AS LIKELY TO COMMIT A HOMICIDE

Hunters and sport shooters do not participate in, or further violent crime; on the contrary, we contribute to public safety through many and diverse positive ways, including teaching firearms safety. See - Professor Gary Mauser. A Presentation to Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, the Senate of Canada.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255728414_A_Presentation_to_Senate_Committee_on_Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs_The_Senate_of_Canada

Professor Caillin Langmann's article shows that licensed firearms owners are half as likely to commit a homicide as others, even though they have easy access to firearms.

<https://www.facebook.com/caillin.langmann/posts/10156537056191006>

Organized hunters are the unheralded heroes of conservation and not just for quarry species but for entire habitats. It is not widely known, but hunters founded the North American model of wildlife conservation early in the 20th century.

The result is that North America has the most successful conservation policies of any continent and this success can be traced to the popularization of hunting and widespread civilian firearm ownership. Hunters are motivated to provide the bulk of the funding for wildlife conservation, not just because they love the outdoors and want to preserve the wilderness, but also because they view themselves as part owners of wildlife. Hunting in Asia, Europe, and Africa is limited to the elite, which in turn limits the commitment of most people to protecting wildlife or wildlife habitat. This has resulted in destructive practices that threaten wildlife on those continents.

RCMP HAVE NO RECORDS TO SUPPORT CLAIMS OF 'STRAW PURCHASES'

Statements have been made that suggest that 'Straw Purchases' are a major part of the problem. This is a false statement. Unfortunately, news agencies repeated the falsehood before checking on the facts.

June 14, 2018 – CBC NEWS: "It's the main source of how firearms are being purchased and how they come into people's hands on the streets nowadays," said Sgt. Eric Stewart, head of the Guns and Gangs unit for the Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT)."

In actuality, there are only anecdotal incidences where straw purchases might have been made. September 13, 2018 – RCMP Access To Information and Privacy (ATIP) RESPONSE: "Based on the information provided, a search for records was conducted in Edmonton, Alberta and Ottawa,

Ontario. Unfortunately, we were unable to locate records which respond to your request."
<https://dennisyoung.ca/2018/09/13/no-records-to-support-rcmp-claims-of-straw-purchases>

“CRIME GUNS” DO NOT COME FROM POSSESSION AND ACQUISITION LICENSE (PAL) HOLDERS

Despite police innuendo, hunters and sport shooters are not a major source for gangsters’ firearms. Criminals do not get their firearms from law-abiding Canadians, either by stealing them or through straw purchases. At the height of the long-gun registry, only 9% of firearms involved in homicides were registered (135 out of the 1,485 firearms homicide from 2003 to 2010), Statistics Canada revealed in a Special Request. To put this another way, just 3% of the 4,811 total homicides involved registered firearms during that time period.

See - Professor Gary Mauser. Presentation to the Canadian House of Commons, Standing Committee on Public Safety, C-19.

https://www.academia.edu/16655133/Presentation_to_the_Canadian_House_of_Commons_Standi ng_Committee_on_Public_Safety_C-19

Do “crime guns” come from PAL holders? Toronto Police Service (TPS) statistics undermine the claim that law-abiding gun owners are the source of Toronto “crime guns.” No more than 12% – 14% of “crime guns” were seized from PAL holders, while at least 25% were smuggled from the US, according to the Toronto Police Service tables that TPS gave to Dennis Young in response to his ATI request on 24 August 2018. POSTED BY: BCWFPAA - SEPTEMBER 9, 2018
<http://justiceforgunowners.ca/do-crime-guns-come-from-pal-holder>

In other words, the phrase "Crime Gun" means whatever the Toronto Police says it means.

<https://dennisyoung.ca/2018/08/30/toronto-police-release-crime-gun-stats-2007-2017/>

THE LATEST STORY USED TO JUSTIFY GUN BANS? IT'S NOT TRUE

The Toronto police's own data do not show a surge in guns being linked to domestic sources
National Post View - September 7, 2018 <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/np-view-the-latest-story-used-to-justify-gun-bans-its-not-true>

MORE THAN A THIRD OF TORONTO POLICE ‘CRIME GUNS’ AREN’T FIREARMS

TheGunBlog.ca — Data show 469, or 65 percent, of the 726 “crime guns” seized by Toronto police in 2017 were counted among the three classes of firearms in the Firearms Act: “Non-restricted,” “Restricted” or “Prohibited.” That leaves 35 percent that weren’t firearms regulated by the Firearms Act. THE GUN BLOG - SEPTEMBER 15, 2018 [READ THE REST OF THIS ANALYSIS]
<https://thegunblog.ca/2018/09/15/more-than-a-third-of-toronto-police-crime-guns-arent-firearms/#more-18961>

POLICE HAVE REDEFINED “CRIME GUNS” TO CREATE FAKE NEWS

The Police have redefined “crime guns” to include ‘any firearm illegally acquired.’ This means guns **not** used in criminal violence are included as “crime guns.” “Crime guns” now include firearms apprehended from homes of widows, suicides, and any Canadian who forgets to renew his or her PAL - hardly “gang members.”

The new police definition is much broader than the traditional definition of “crime guns” that was limited to firearms used (or suspected of being used) in violent crimes. See - Mauser, G. Bill C-71 is a Red Herring. Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on Bill C-71.

<http://justiceforgunowners.ca/bill-c-71-is-a-red-herring/>

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/the-liberals-are-playing-dishonest-games-with-stats-to-crack-down-on-legal-gun-owners>

For good measure, the Police also mix ‘found guns’ with ‘crime guns’ in their stats which adds to the bloat. ‘Found guns’ are guns ‘found’ when the police attend a call for non-criminal matters, e.g., suicides or domestic disturbance where no one is criminally charged, nor was a gun involved in the incident, but it was found on the premises.

<http://justiceforgunowners.ca/finally-we-got-a-copy-of-a-secret-rcmp-report/>

<http://justiceforgunowners.ca/should-crime-guns-include-guns-confiscated-for-administrative-crimes/>

50% OF CRIME GUNS ARE NOT DOMESTICALLY SOURCED

The difficulty is that police can usually trace — at best — less than half of crime guns.

On average, Toronto spokeswoman Meaghan Gray told the National Post in an email Wednesday, “Investigators are able to determine the source of about half (46 per cent).” That’s in part because non-regulated items such as air guns and starter pistols, though still considered crime guns, can’t be traced, and in part because neither can firearms with no serial numbers.

Last year, for instance, Toronto police seized a total of 726 crime guns, but was able to source only 328 of them. Of those, 180 came from the U.S., and 148 from within Canada.

In 2016, of 516 seized crime guns, 99 originated in the U.S., 107 in Canada. But that leaves, respectively for 2017 and 2016, 398 and 310 crime guns unsourced, origin unknown. A reasonable assumption is that the unsourced crime guns likely came from the black market or organized crime.

As Dennis Young, a former Mountie and advocate for legal gun owners, found, the same holds true for the RCMP statistics. Last June, a year after he’d made an Access to Information Act request, he finally got some numbers from the Canadian Firearms Program, contained in a 2014 annual report for the four western provinces and three territories. See - RCMP. 2014 Annual Report Western Region. Canadian Firearms Program. Firearms Investigative and Enforcement Services Directorate. Firearms Operations and Enforcement Unit. Copy received 7 April 2018.

http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/grc-rcmp/PS96-2014-eng.pdf

Astonishingly, the report also says in the executive summary that “contrary to popular perception, the majority of crime guns — restricted, non-restricted and otherwise — were domestically sourced rather than smuggled.” **And yet, much deeper along in the same report, is the telling qualifier:** Of the 783 crime gun “trace requests” made in those western and northern jurisdictions in 2014, only 229 “were successfully traced.” And yes, of those which were traced, the split was about 50-50 U.S./Canadian. But that does not translate to half the guns that are used in crimes originating from within this country’s borders. **At best, it is 12-14%**, and a good percentage of those were not used in any violent crime, as the definition of “crime gun” encompasses 'improper storage', air guns, and other non-violent circumstances.

FIREARMS INDUSTRY SHOOTS DOWN HANDGUN BAN

A handgun ban isn't the answer to curb shootings and will only put jobs at risk, warns Canada's firearms industry. There are 4,500 sporting arms business owners in Canada that employ 25,000 workers, according to the Canadian Sporting Arms and Ammunition Association. Handguns represent 35% of their business. By Kevin Connor - September 10, 2018 <https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/firearms-industry-shoots-down-handgun-ban>

SEMI-AUTOS AREN'T THE WEAPON OF CHOICE FOR 'ACTIVE SHOOTERS'

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that semi-automatic rifles were used in only about 25 percent of such U.S. incidents from 2000 to 2017. The rest of the time, firearms including handguns, rifles and shotguns were the weapon of choice. By Polly Mosendz, Bloomberg News - September 11, 2018 <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/semi-autos-aren-t-the-weapon-of-choice-for-active-shooters-1.1136009>

The attack on Parliament hill in 2014 was not made with a semi-Automatic firearm.

FLAWED DEFINITION OF ASSAULT WEAPONS

Definition being used in this process – “In general, assault weapons are semiautomatic firearms with a large magazine of ammunition that were designed and configured for rapid fire”.

This is a flawed definition. Since large capacity magazines are prohibited in Canada, then “assault weapons” as such are already banned in Canada. If magazine capacity is ignored, this definition could encompass 3/4 of all of the firearms in Canada.

Many semi-automatic firearms in Canada are currently classified as “unrestricted” if they do not look like military assault rifles. Others are classified as restricted or prohibited just because they look like military assault rifles, even though there is no difference in functionality.

Assault weapons are military grade firearms that are capable of both automatic and semi-automatic fire. As such, they require high capacity magazines and barrels designed to sustain high rates of fire over extended periods. These firearms have been banned in Canada for decades.