

Facts to keep in mind as the Liberal government unveils its new gun control package

The Trudeau government is about to table new gun control legislation.

According to recent media reports (CBC, Canadian press and CTV), current owners of semi-automatic military-style assault weapons could “choose not to surrender their weapons ... but will have to comply with strict requirements”, e.g. grandfathered weapons would need to “be stored securely and never used”.

- ➔ This is a reversal of the Liberal party’s election promise to “initiate a buyback program for all assault weapons” with 250 millions \$ budgeted to buyback an estimated 250,000 weapons.
- ➔ Survivors and families of victims wrote it was the “strongest of all parties” precisely because it included no grandfather clauses (unlike three other parties who generally supported a ban). The Liberal party not only used this quote in their campaign materials, but referred to the press release that specified it was the “strongest” only because of the mention and scope of the buyback program.



Taking action to ban military style assault rifles

Canadians are tired of excuses and know that “thoughts and prayers” are not enough. Too many Canadians are killed or injured because criminals have chosen to use military-grade assault rifles – guns that have no place in Canada. Building on the important measures we passed into law through Bill C-71, a re-elected Liberal government will continue to take serious, common-sense action to strengthen gun control:

- ➔ We will ban all military-style assault rifles, including the AR-15. These weapons are specifically designed to inflict mass human casualties and have no place in Canadian society;
- ➔ We will initiate a buyback program for all assault rifles legally purchased. Owners will be offered fair market prices for their weapons. We will also give law enforcement agencies the resources they need to properly administer the buyback program;
- A two-year amnesty will be put in place while the program is being set up;

- **The Bloc, the New Democratic Party and the Green Party would support stricter control in general as well as a ban assault weapons.**
- **The Liberal Party would also support general improvements, in addition to a ban on assault weapons. However, the party stands out based on the precision and scope of the proposed measure, by specifying that it would be a total ban (covering all assault weapons), a complete ban (without grandfather clauses), and accompanied by a very substantial financial commitment to buy back existing models, which shows a genuine political will to get it right this time. Together, these elements make the Liberal gun control promises the strongest of all the parties.**

To justify this change of course, a “[senior government source](#)” cited the New Zealand buyback program, which was followed by a reference to a New-Zealand gun lobby group who is asserting that less than a third of an estimated 170,000 semi-automatic weapons in circulation have been recouped and calls the program a failure.

- ➔ **Why would a Canadian government representative refer to the unsubstantiated opinion of a gun lobby group that is vigorously opposed to the NZ ban, when [New Zealand’s auditor general conducted a thorough evaluation of the buyback program and gave it high marks](#)?** He concluded that “the Police managed the scheme effectively; the Police communicated with the public well; determining the level of compliance with the scheme is difficult because of uncertainty about the number of prohibited firearms; the scheme was supported by good systems and processes; compensation payments did not exceed what was appropriated”.
- ➔ **The advocacy group “Gun Control NZ” was notified of the reference in the CBC article and issued [this statement](#) in response.** Media can contact spokesperson Philippa Yasbek via info@guncontrol.nz.
- ➔ **University of Sydney professor Philip Alpers has [published extensively](#) on both the New-Zealand and Australian gun control experience. Coordinates to reach him are included in his [professional web page](#).** Professor Alpers also co-authored a chapter in the book “[Successful Public Policy: Lessons from Australia and New Zealand](#)”, which discusses Australia’s “national mandatory buyback of banned firearms” during which 659,940 newly prohibited assault weapons were purchased from their civilian owners at market value and destroyed, at a cost of \$500 million.
- ➔ **Under a volunteer buyback program, countless fully functional assault weapons would remain in circulation**, which could be stolen or used by their current owners for violent purposes. **For example, Corey Hurren was a [licensed owner](#) of at least one of the newly prohibited weapons, [part of the arsenal he was carrying](#) when he rammed his truck through the gates of Rideau Hall last July seeking to “arrest” the Prime Minister because of COVID-19 restrictions and the May 1st, 2020 OICs. He [left behind a letter](#) in which he said “he hopes his children would understand his actions”.**
- ➔ **If grandfathered weapons are never to be used, then why not take the next logical step and render them inoperable?** (ex: pouring lead down the barrel). As there would be no circumstance in which a single bullet could be discharged, any bullet fired would be illegal anyways. Then why allow the possibility?
- ➔ **The gun lobby has already counselled its members to [keep their newly prohibited weapons](#) until a future Conservative government can [overturn the ban, as O’Toole promised to do](#) within an hour of the May 1st announcement. When that happens, we will be back at square one.**
- ➔ **Note that banning assault weapons is not aimed at combatting gun crime generally but about preventing mass shootings: [Most mass shooters are carried out by legal gun owners](#) (Polytechnique, Concordia, Dawson, Quebec Mosque, Moncton, Fredericton, Vernon, etc).**

The [CBC article](#) says the bill is expected to: “Include provisions allowing police, doctors, victims of domestic abuse and families to be able to raise a red flag on those with guns who pose a risk to themselves or an identifiable group; introduce stricter secure storage laws to help prevent the theft of firearms; open the door to more resources and stronger penalties for police and border services officers to help stop the flow of weapons over borders and target the illegal trafficking of firearms; include new penalties for gun purchases by a licensed buyer on behalf of an unlicensed one; maintain current magazine limits, which are generally five bullets for hunting rifles and shotguns and 10 for handguns, but crack down on the sale of magazines that can be modified to hold more cartridges.”

- ➔ **Doctors, victims of domestic abuse and families can already notify police of displays of violent or suicidal behaviour.** The problem is that in too many cases, including when they have been warned by family members, police allow individuals at risk to keep their guns anyways. The problem regarding preventative prohibition orders is less one of “raising red flags” than it is about the failure of the authorities to take many warnings seriously (high profile cases: [Mark Jones](#), [Lionel Desmond](#), [Cory Lewis](#), [Kevin Runke](#)).
- ➔ **The Supreme Court has recognized that strong penalties have not been shown to be effective in deterring crime.** The [likelihood of getting caught](#), however, is vastly more effective as a deterrent. Yet as long as it’s difficult if not impossible to trace non-restricted firearms (the vast majority of guns in Canada), as they are no longer registered, the ability of detecting [straw purchases](#) will remain deficient. At the very least, police should have easy access to all commercial sales records (once Bill C-71 is implemented, sales records will mandatory again, but contrary to the past (1979-2012), access will require a search warrant).
- ➔ **The current magazine limits of five and ten include a [smorgasbord of exemptions and loopholes](#).** For example, according to the RCMP “[magazines up to 110 shot capacity are available](#)”.
- ➔ **If modifiable magazines currently in circulation are not subject to some kind of “sunset clause”** (ex: need to be out of circulation in 5 years), **then they will continue to** represent a risk, as they have been [used and modified by at least four mass shooters](#).
- ➔ A bill that grandfathers assault weapons, allows handguns to remain legal, allows 10-bullet magazines to remain legal and fails to phase out currently owned modifiable magazines **would change NOTHING with respect to [the circumstances](#) that led the Quebec Mosque massacre.**

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