



A Review of Key Liberal Gun Control Promises (2015-2021): “The Devil is in the details”

This is a selection of key election promises made by the Liberal Party since 2015, meaning those had the greatest potential for public safety. It should be noted that the vast majority of these measures have not yet been implemented, including most of those resulting from the 2015 promises.

2015 election promises

“We will take action to get handguns and assault weapons off our streets.”

Between 2015 and 2019, the Liberal government did not pass any legislation that would remove handguns or assault weapons from private hands, and certainly nothing close to anything resembling a ban. Rather, both the [Public Safety Minister](#) (Ralph Goodale) and the [Prime Minister](#) distorted the issue when asked about banning assault weapons, referring to the RCMP’s job of approving new models (this, while the RCMP continued to approve new assault weapons, [including many non-restricted versions](#), in accordance with the criteria set out in the law). When public pressure increased to ban handguns and assault weapons after the Danforth and Fredericton shootings, the Border Security Minister (Bill Blair) launched a [public consultation](#) that [did not include](#) the options of banning either types of firearms, was disproportionately concerned with potential impacts on gun owners, was [unscientific and unreliable](#), produced [no new information](#), and took so long to complete that it rendered any legislative action before the next election virtually impossible.

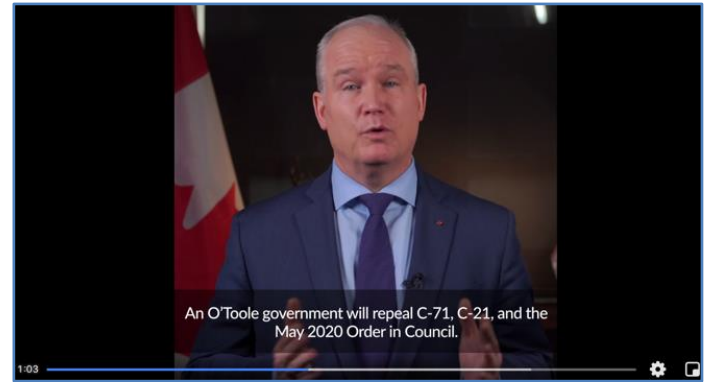
“Require purchasers of firearms to show a license when they buy a gun, and require all sellers of firearms to confirm that the license is valid before completing the sale”

This has still not yet been implemented.

The first part of this promise has been met, with recently [proposed regulations enabling C-71](#) specifying that a buyer of a non-restricted firearm must provide a seller with “the prescribed information” (which the proposed regulations specify as “all the information set out on the front of the transferee’s licence”). The seller also has to check the photograph on the licence. But **this is largely already the case**, as sellers currently need to believe a buyer has a valid licence (“[has no reason to believe that the transferee is not authorized to acquire and possess that kind of firearm](#)”). Both approaches rely entirely on the good faith of a seller.

However, the second and most important part of this promise [has not been met](#), despite [Liberal talking points](#) still claiming that it has: verification of the validity of a licence. This verification can only be done by the Registrar of firearms (RCMP). In fact, **there is no explicit requirement in the law nor in the proposed regulations for a seller to provide the Registrar with any specific information regarding a potential buyer’s**

licence (unlike for restricted weapons like handguns, where regulations do specify a list). This [has been confirmed](#) by Public Safety officials. Yet without a licence number, it is impossible for the Registrar to confirm that a licence is counterfeit, revoked or stolen. The Registrar need only be “[satisfied that the transferee holds and is still eligible to hold a licence](#)”. This is a massive loophole. One can only imagine what this subjective mindset (“satisfied”) will mean under a future Conservative government whose leader has promised to repeal Bill C-71...



The government can argue that the RCMP could reasonably request licence information before granting a reference number authorizing a transfer. This is true, in the same way that Chief Provincial Firearms officers could decide to conduct community background checks for all licence applicants. **The point is that this is discretionary and not required by law.** A future government aligned with the gun lobby could just as well instruct officials to rubber-stamp such requests, thus the necessity of specifying such details in the law.

All told, the law does *not* require that the RCMP actually confirm the validity of prospective buyers' licences.

“We will repeal changes made by Bill C-42 that allow restricted and prohibited weapons to be freely transported without a permit”

The Liberals' Bill C-71 (2019) reinstates authorizations for only 3.5% of all transport purposes. The vast majority of transport purposes (96.5%) are NOT affected.

Mr. Rob O'Reilly (Director, Firearms Regulatory Services, Canadian Firearms Program, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):

The only thing I would add in relation to your question is that prior to 2015, when the regime existed, where there were no authorizations to transport automatically added as a condition on the firearms licence, everyone was required to apply for an authorization to transport for many purposes, but including the two purposes that you've given, namely, transportation to a gunsmith and transportation to a gun show.

In 2015, we issued approximately 143,000 authorizations to transport, and 96.5% of those were for the two purposes that remain under Bill C-71. We had approximately 250 ATTs issued for going to a gun show and 131 issued for going to a gunsmith, so it did not represent a significant number of authorizations to transport that were issued

More importantly, the bill maintains the loophole introduced by the Conservatives' Bill C-42 (2015) that allows the transport of restricted guns (without specific authorization) to and from *any* gun club and *any* gun range in a province—even if one is not a member and has no legitimate reason to be there. This means that **as long as handgun owners are somewhere between their home and any gun club/range in their province, they aren't technically in violation of law**, as they can claim to be on the way to club X or Y, whichever can be used as a destination in a made-up itinerary.

Transporting and using prohibited firearms or restricted firearms

- **19 (1)** An individual who holds a licence authorizing the individual to possess prohibited firearms or restricted firearms may be authorized to transport a particular prohibited firearm or restricted firearm between two or more specified places for any good and sufficient reason, including, without restricting the generality of the foregoing,
 - (a)** for use in target practice, or a target shooting competition, under specified conditions or under the auspices of a shooting club or shooting range that is approved under section 29; ...

(1.1) In the case of an authorization to transport issued for a reason referred to in paragraph (1)(a) within the province where the holder of the authorization resides, **the specified places must** — except in the case of an authorization that is issued for a prohibited firearm referred to in subsection 12(9) — **include all shooting clubs and shooting ranges that are approved under section 29 and that are located in that province.**

“Require firearms vendors to keep records of all firearms inventory and sales to assist police in investigating firearms trafficking and other gun crimes”

The Liberals’ Bill C-71 does reinstate the requirement for businesses to keep sales records (also not implemented). However, **they severely hindered their accessibility by requiring police to obtain a search warrant in order to see them, a condition that did not exist from 1977 to 2012.** This judicial obstacle completely undermines the purported goal of “[assisting] police in investigating firearms trafficking and other gun crimes” as this obstacle will make it *harder* to trace guns.

“Immediately implement the imported gun marking regulations that have been repeatedly delayed by Stephen Harper”

Despite its promise to “immediately” implement [firearms import marking regulations](#) in line with Canada’s obligations under two international treaties to combat trafficking, **the majority Liberal government (2015-2019) twice delayed their implementation, in 2017 and in 2018,** while on [November 20, 2020](#), the minority Liberal government (2019-2021) delayed it once again, until Dec. 1 of 2023. They also [dropped this promise](#) in their 2019 election platform.

2019 election promises

“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.”

Survivors and families of victims endorsed the Liberals in the 2019 election based on their platform, because it was the “strongest of all parties” based on the buyback of “all” newly prohibited assault weapons (unlike three other parties who generally supported a ban). The Liberal Party not only used this endorsement [in their campaign materials](#), but also [referred to our press release](#) that specified *why* it was the “strongest”: *precisely* because of the mandatory 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 Liberal government did prohibit over 1,400 models of semi-automatic assault-style weapons on May 1, 2020, allowing current owners to keep them while the buyback program was being developed. At the time, the party

referred to the AR-15, a weapon. "specifically designed to inflict mass human casualties and [has] no place in Canadian society." However, Bill C-21, introduced on February 16, 2021, abandons the promise to buyback all existing weapons (like New Zealand) and instead offers owners the option to keep their weapons, though adding that they would not be "permitted" to shoot them.

Tracey Wilson @TWilsonOttawa · Feb 11
Looks like they will just demand it be stored and not used.

A.J. Somerset @ajsomerset · Feb 11
As long as you keep them locked up and never use them. Big win.

Justin Barrett @JustinBR1987
Replying to @ajsomerset and @BrooksTyrel
They'll sit in my safe until the next con govt overturns this nonsense. We can we finally admit this was never about public safety? Thanks for coming out

Erin O'Toole @erinotoole
As PM, I'll scrap the politically-motivated ban announced by Trudeau today and will focus on working with border and law enforcement on stopping illegal gun smugglers.

Tracey Wilson @TWilsonOttawa
KEEP YOUR GUNS
The Liberal government is walking back an election promise to buy back "all" military-style assault rifles in Canada, opting instead to allow current owners to sell their guns to the government or to keep them under grandfathering.

Fastcat @fastcat7 · Feb 11
What are the odds the next CPC will reverse this ban?

Tracey Wilson @TWilsonOttawa
Replying to @fastcat7
100% - I'll see to it.

Legislation to establish assault-style gun buyback program expected s...
The Liberal government is expected to table a bill in the coming days that will set up a program to buy back assault-style weapons that wer...
cbc.ca

5:57 PM · Feb 11, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

3:17 PM · May 1, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

7:53 PM · Feb 11, 2021 · Twitter

"We will address the problem of gender-based and intimate-partner violence head-on, by working with provincial and territorial partners to introduce legislation that would temporarily suspend firearms licenses to people who are suspected of posing a danger to themselves or others – including their partners or kids"

Bill C-21 proposed to "Introduce a new 'red flag' regime that would enable anyone to make an application to a court for an order to immediately remove firearms, for up to 30 days." However, orders prohibiting the possession of firearms already exist. Indeed, anytime a potential victim, relative or neighbour is worried about someone in possession of a gun, all they need to do is call the police, and it is the officers' duty to assess the situation and to remove guns if they have reasonable grounds to believe "it is not desirable in the interests of the safety" for a person to possess them. There are no judicial orders required. This system is far superior to the American "red flag laws" where family members need to convince a judge to override a potential aggressor's right to own guns (many applications are denied, and in some states most are filed by police).

The "red flag law" in Bill C-21 would introduce a slower, more cumbersome, and more costly process that expects victims to go to court themselves and convince a judge to act where the police did not. Yet it is completely unrealistic to expect, for example, victims of domestic violence (many of whom have fled their abusers and are residing in a shelter) to go to court and argue for the removal of their aggressor's guns – an action that may put them at even higher risk. Worse, they would have to argue their case under *the same criteria and broad discretionary power* that have been identified as problematic by several coroner's inquests and investigative media reports, where police had been alerted about potential risks but did nothing to remove the guns, e.g. [Mark Jones](#), [Gabriel Wortman](#), [Lionel Desmond](#), [Cory Lewis](#) and [Kevin Runke](#).