

PolySeSouvient / Poly Remembers

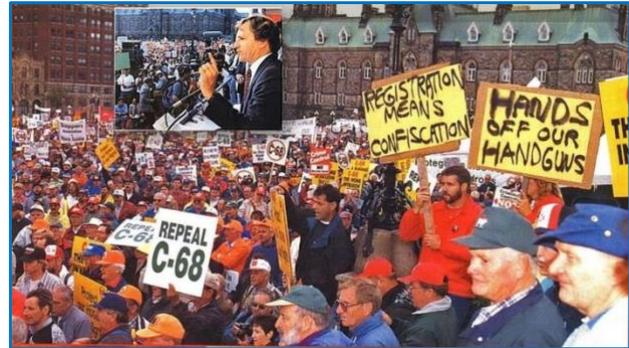
Étudiants et diplômés de Polytechnique pour le contrôle des armes
Students and Graduates of Polytechnique for gun control

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The Liberal Party's Shift on Gun Control 2012 - 2021

Bill C-68 as adopted on December 5, 1995. The legislation brought forward by Justice Minister Allan Rock consisted of a comprehensive set of measures that included major changes such as licensing all gun owners and registering all guns. Minister Rock fought long and hard for the bill, meeting gun owners across the country and confronting angry protesters on Parliament Hill. This was the last time the Liberal Party achieved substantial progress on gun control.



This testimony from the VP for External Affairs of the Dawson Student Union summarizes what many are feeling with respect to the government's response, not only to the Dawson school shooting (2006), but also to other mass shootings like the killing of three Moncton RCMP police officers (2014), the Quebec Mosque massacre (2017) and the murders of two officers and two civilians in Fredericton (2018): *"Our politicians have let us all down."*

2012

- When he was running for the leadership of the Liberal Party in 2012, Justin Trudeau called the long-gun registry **"a failure"**, despite plummeting numbers of **murders** and suicides committed with long guns (the firearms that were subject to new controls) as well as a **glowing evaluation** by the RCMP. Ever since, the Liberal Party has sustained the political animosity towards the concept of registering long guns (simultaneously referring to non-existing gun-related "rights") by repeatedly specifying in news releases, government documents and election platforms that the party will **"[protect] the rights of hunters and farmers by not bringing back the long-gun registry"**.

2015

- In their 2015 election platform, the Liberal Party promised to **"get handguns and assault weapons off our streets."** However, between 2015 and 2019, **nothing was done to reduce the growing number of handguns or assault weapons** circulating in Canada. Rather, for months, both **Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale** and **Prime Minister Justin Trudeau** evaded the subject by referring to the RCMP – while

Polysesouvient est un groupe de citoyens bénévoles, dont de nombreux témoins, survivants et familles des victimes du massacre du 6 décembre 1989, qui oeuvrent pour un meilleur contrôle des armes et dont les objectifs sont endossés par l'Association des Étudiants de Polytechnique, l'Association des étudiants aux cycles supérieurs de Polytechnique, le CA de l'Association des diplômés de Polytechnique, l'Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec, le Réseau des ingénieurs du Québec, l'École Polytechnique, l'École de technologie supérieure et plusieurs associations étudiantes de génie du Québec.

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the agency continued to approve new models of assault weapons, including many non-restricted versions, in accordance with the outdated criteria in the law.

2017

- In 2017, the Liberal government chose to implement a six-month grace period for gun owners who failed to renew their licence (a Conservative measure adopted in 2015 under Bill C-42), even though the party voted against that bill and could have chosen not to do so, as there was no deadline attached to the measure and it could have been eliminated under a future bill.
- Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale mirrored the gun lobby's rhetoric by disproportionately focussing the debate on illegal guns and gangs, minimizing the very real harms of domestic violence, suicides, mass shootings and police murders that are mostly committed with legal guns. He provided hundreds of millions of dollars (\$327M over 5 years) to fight illegal guns but failed to provide new resources to improve screening, to train officers and the courts, or for research that addressed the role of guns in domestic homicide and suicide.
- For two years, Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale promised to act "soon" without any perceptible progress. It took a news conference and numerous meetings with MPs organized by four delegations of victims' relatives to prod the Prime Minister to call on his minister to table legislation, which he then did three months later.
- One of those meetings was with Minister Ralph Goodale. During the meeting, Mr. Goodale told the father of a young police officer who was killed with a legal assault weapon by an individual with a known history of suicidal and violent behaviour that his priority in terms of gun control was to maintain a Liberal majority in the next election, with a special focus on rural ridings – which brought the father to tears. Mr. Goodale also insisted that the families of victims (all of whom were killed with legal guns) who were present should focus on criminal gangs and mental health - a top gun lobby argument.

2018

- On March 20, 2018, the Liberal government tabled Bill C-71 despite having conducted no meaningful consultations. Gun control advocates called the legislation "the very bare minimum in order to technically fulfill some of the Liberals' election promises."
- For example, the bill was supposed to:
 - "Require all sellers of firearms to confirm that the licence is valid before completing the sale"—but regulations tabled in June 2021 show that it will do no such thing;
 - "Require firearms vendors to keep records of all firearms inventory and sales to assist police in investigating firearms trafficking and other gun crimes"—however, contrary to what was in place from 1977 to 2012, sales records will only be available to law enforcement officers with "judicial authority" (court mandate), a significant obstacle which prevents quality and compliance checks as well as pooling of data for tracing, detecting suspicious patterns, research and other investigative purposes.
 - "Repeal changes made by Bill C-42 that allow restricted and prohibited weapons to be freely transported without a permit"—and yet the new law reinstates authorizations for only 3.5% of all transport purposes. The vast majority (96.5%) are NOT affected. Moreover, the bill maintains the loophole that allows the automatic transport of restricted guns 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 the 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.

2019

- When public pressure increased to ban handguns and assault weapons after the Danforth and Fredericton shootings, Border Security Minister Bill Blair launched a [cross-country public consultation](#). Yet the [consultation document](#) **did not include as an option a ban on either type of firearm**, 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** (which was likely the goal).
- Minister Bill Blair also bowed to gun lobby pressure and decided to no longer refer to the civilian version of military weapons as “assault weapons” or “assault rifles”, instead [calling them “assault-style rifles”](#) despite the former term being used [around the world](#) to describe semi-automatic guns used in mass shootings.
- While the government did revise the membership of the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee to include police, public health and feminist groups, as promised in 2015, **there was no meaningful consultation**. Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale disingenuously referred to the committee’s work to [justify delays](#), and bureaucrats **prevented the issue of assault weapons from being added to the agenda, prompting one of the vice-presidents to resign**.

2020

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

2021

- In 2020, the Liberal government issued a series of Orders in Council (OIC) that prohibited some 1,500 models of assault weapons [as they promised to do in 2019](#). Current owners could keep their weapons under a two-year amnesty. However, ten months later, in February 2021, **Minister Bill Blair tabled Bill C-21, which [backtracked on the key promise to buy back “all” newly prohibited assault weapons](#)**, and instead offered owners the option of keeping them. Liberal Party insiders and the minister [referred to bogus statistics from the New Zealand gun lobby](#) to justify the reversal.
- **The bill, which was produced without any meaningful consultation, also included measures that would make things worse**, such as an ineffective “reg flag” measure which would place a bigger burden on victims of domestic violence and offload the handgun issue to municipalities who never asked for this power and who actively [oppose the idea of local bans](#). **The Bill was so weak and such an insult to victims** that families and survivors of the Polytechnique massacre [told Justin Trudeau](#) he was no longer welcome at their commemorations.
- The wait for the enabling regulations for Bill C-71 adopted in May 2019 has also been [extremely long](#), with proposed regulations tabled only weeks before the 2021 election campaign was launched. They are yet not adopted and **most of the measures in C-71 are still not implemented**. There is no legal deadline for implementation.