



Jan 28, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister
The Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
Government of Canada
Ottawa (ONT) K1A 0A6

Re: Fourth Anniversary of the Tragedy at the Grand Mosque of Quebec City

Dear Prime Minister,

Dear Minister,

Friday, January 29, 2017, marks one of a growing list of anniversaries that Canadians would rather not have to acknowledge. But acknowledge them we must, out of respect and concern for our future. For Canadians – what happened in Quebec City that day was offensive, and a risk to any and to all of us. A reminder that we need to “do more” and “do better” where gun violence is concerned.

The Danforth Families for Safe Communities stands in sympathy with those who suffered on January 29, 2017, when a licensed gun owner attacked his fellow Canadians, acting on the hatred in his heart and enabled by the weapons he chose – an assault-style rifle and a handgun equipped with high-capacity magazines - the formats of choice for those bent on violence.

And what has happened in the years since that tragedy in 2017, or the one that happened to our families and friends on July 22, 2018 on the Danforth in Toronto? According to the Toronto Police Services¹ published statistics, the last 3 years (2018, '19, '20) show total reported injuries and deaths caused by guns of 229, 284, 217 incidents, respectively. These results are the worst levels of the past decade, in the realm of the infamous “year of the gun” levels in 2005, which had 231 incidents. Your government needs to do more and to do better, to reduce incidents of gun violence and to bring the interest of public safety in better balance with the desire of some Canadians to use guns for sport or for hunting.

You have passed Bill C-71 to formally extend background checks for license applicants, to force sellers to verify the validity of a buyer’s license and to require retailers to keep sales records. These are positive measures, although you need to move much faster to give this law the necessary regulation and budgetary support for them to actually come into effect. So, to us, Bill C-71 falls into a “do better”.

The Orders in Council prohibiting assault-style rifles are also a “do better”. We applaud the May 1st announcement but expect you to pass a bill that changes the legal definition of prohibited weapons in order to make the ban more permanent and to include all semi-automatic assault-

style firearms, like the SKS which has so far eluded the regulations, and to get these weapons out of circulation through a mandatory buyback program.

Then there are areas where public safety requires you to “do more”.

Two major issues that have been exposed by the shooting in Quebec City as well as our own experience and where nothing significant has yet changed: the continued legal availability of handguns for recreational purposes and the continued legal availability of magazines that hold or can be converted to hold more than 5 bullets.

We have been consistent, as have other groups, including families and victims affected by the incidents at the Grande Mosquée of Quebec City, in asking you to ban private ownership of handguns from private hands on a national basis. Your plans on handgun control have been vague, from our perspective. Handguns cause more homicides than other kinds of guns, and they have the least utility for hunting. Clearly the proliferation of handguns can only work against the interest of public safety. We are urging you, until a national ban can be legislated, to cap the number in circulation, by banning the further importation and local manufacturing of handguns.

Please do not wait for a third election to make assurances to Canadians and give them more promises on this file, while they face with an ever-growing number of anniversaries of extreme gun violence and all the personal grief that results from it. These tragedies have been enabled by successive federal governments doing neither as much as they could, nor as well as they could.



Claire Smith and Ken Price
Spokespersons
Danforth Families for Safe Communities

DFSC is a group of survivors, families, friends and community members impacted by the shooting tragedy on Danforth Avenue, Toronto, Canada, on July 22, 2018, where a young girl and a teenager were killed and 13 were shot by a lone gunman. The DFSC have come together in the wake of our tragedy to share our views and experience, in the hope that others will not have to experience anything similar.

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¹ <https://data.torontopolice.on.ca/pages/shootings>

CC: Ms Julie Dabrusin, M.P. Toronto, Danforth;
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DFSC membership