

PolySeSouvient / PolyRemembers

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



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NEWS RELEASE ([version en français ici](#))

New public opinion poll: Majority of Canadians want Liberals to keep election promise and buy-back all assault weapons

Montreal, May 20th 2020 — A [new survey](#) by Environics Research for PolyRemembers/PolySeSouvient shows that the majority of Canadians (61%) want the **Liberal government** to follow through with its election promise to buyback all existing assault weapons. Less than one in four (23%) Canadians disagree with the buyback program, while 16% did not express an opinion.¹

During the last federal election the **Liberal Party** promised to ban all military-style semi-automatic assault weapons, such as the **AR-15**, and to [buy back all legally-purchased ones](#) currently in circulation. However on May 1st, as the **Liberal government** [moved to prohibit](#) some 1,500 existing models, it appeared to back out of its election promise as officials indicated that it [may create a program that would instead](#) allow current owners to keep their newly prohibited weapons - although their use, transport and sale would be forbidden.

There is majority support for a buyback program of all legally purchased assault weapons in both urban (62%) and rural areas (55%), with support highest in **Quebec** (74%), **British-Columbia** (62%) and **Ontario** (61%), and lowest in **Alberta** (43%) and **Saskatchewan** (38%). Nearly half (46%) of people living in a gun-owning household also want the government to proceed with a mandatory buyback program. (Polls [consistently show](#) that the vast majority of Canadians support a ban on assault weapons.)

Nathalie Provost, Polytechnique Graduate, survivor and spokesperson of PolyRemembers says: *“A voluntary buyback program that includes an offer to grandfather current weapons is tantamount to no buyback program. Indeed, thousands of weapons grandfathered in the 1990s are [still in circulation](#) today. Without a mandatory buyback program, tens of thousands of semi-automatic military-style weapons will remain in private hands for generations and, with them, their inherent risks to public safety. Indeed, a partial buyback would be huge concession to the gun lobby and a further disappointment in our 30-year battle to finally get these weapons off of our streets and out of our communities.”*

Heidi Rathjen, Polytechnique graduate and coordinator of PolyRemembers adds: *“Our group endorsed the Liberals during the last election precisely because of their strong and precise position on assault weapons, which explicitly included the removal of current ones in circulation, just like what Australia and New-Zealand did. In terms of public safety, there is a world of difference between a complete ban and an incomplete one. Not only were the Liberals elected to power on the very specific promise of a mandatory buyback program, but today it’s clear that a majority of Canadians support this measure.*

“Backtracking on the promise to remove existing weapons would also be a big win for the gun lobby, for several

¹ **Environics Research**, for PolyRemembers/PolySeSouvient. Online survey conducted May 11th to May 14th 2020 among a representative sample of 1511 Canadians aged 18 years and over. Results: http://polysesouvient.ca/Documents/POLL_20_05_11_to_14_Environics_MandatoryBuyBack.pdf ; Question: “During the last federal election one of the platform promises of the Liberal party was to ban all military-style semi-automatic assault weapons, such as the AR-15, and to buyback all those that were legally-purchased and are currently in circulation. Recently the Liberal government appeared to back out of this promise when it indicated that it may create a program that would instead allow current owners to keep their newly prohibited weapons - although their use, transport and sale would be forbidden. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? ‘The Liberal government should keep its election promise and initiate a buy-back program for all legally purchased assault weapons.’”

reasons: First, with a significant number of assault weapons remaining in the hands of current owners, it will be a lot easier for a subsequent government to repeal the ban. In fact, Conservative Party leadership candidates have already pledged to cancel the measure, including frontrunners [Peter Mackay](#) and [Erin O'toole](#). That's why the gun lobby is telling its members to 'keep your guns' and 'be patient'.

"Secondly, grandfathering assault weapons incentivizes current owners to keep them and support the most radical gun-rights organizations, meaning those that defend the interests of assault weapon manufacturers, collectors and 'tactical' sports shooters who all profit from or use military-style weapons. These lobby groups will remain well-funded and energized and will continue to seek to normalize the private ownership of military-style guns along with the American NRA-style ideology associated with them.

"Finally, allowing the continued ownership of assault weapons will pretty much guarantee that this debate will never end. The Liberals will continue to be criticized for not getting the job done when they had the chance to do so, and the Conservatives will [continue to be stuck with](#) an extremist pro-gun base that compels any new leader to embrace a position objectionable to most Canadians. Apart from serving the public good, it seems to us that it's in every party's interests to settle this debate once and for all, and that can only be achieved with a complete and final ban on assault weapons in Canada."

Boufeldja Benabdallah, co-founder of the Quebec Mosque, adds: "In our first appearance before the House of Commons just a few months after the attack at our mosque, we insisted and even implored politicians to enact laws and regulations for a total ban on weapons of war, those commonly referred to as "assault weapons", a request we repeated many times afterwards. Today, we greatly appreciate the concrete progress made by the Trudeau government on the issue of weapons of war. At the same time, we urge it not to backtrack on the mandatory buyback program that was promised to us and to all Canadians. We want a TOTAL ban on Canadian soil. As the Minister of Justice himself recently has said, [weapons designed for the battlefield have no place on our streets or in our communities](#). We totally agree. Now we expect the government to complete this historic first step and protect the public from these weapons of war."

Suzanne Laplante-Edward, mother of Polytechnique victim Anne-Marie Edward: "If the government decides to allow current owners to keep their assault weapons, it would be a great disappointment to me and my family. We were promised a total ban in the last election and that is why my husband and I loudly praised the Liberal platform before all Canadians. Getting a half-measure after all that would feel like a betrayal. We fought long and hard for the comprehensive gun control law that was passed after the 1989 massacre that killed my daughter, yet most of those measures have been weakened or eliminated. Can't we just have one, single, solid measure? Do we still need to wonder if we will ever, in our lifetime, see [the weapon](#) used to kill our daughter and thirteen other young women banned and removed from circulation once and for all?"

Her son, **Jim Edward, brother of Anne-Marie**, adds: "We are optimistic that we can count on the support of the NDP, the Bloc Québécois and the Green party for a mandatory buyback program. They have all [pledged to support](#) a ban on assault weapons and, so far, have not sided with the gun lobby on issues related to the May 1st regulations. We hope this poll will convince them to support what most Canadians want."

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