

# LeBlanc confirms government moving forward to ban existing assault weapons and large capacity magazines

*“There is reason again for optimism following the disheartening failure to ban assault weapons within Bill C-21”*

**MONTREAL, October 23 2023** – The group representing survivors and families of victims of the École Polytechnique massacre say they are once again optimistic regarding the government’s plan to finally deliver on its repeated promises to ban assault weapons and large capacity magazines following today’s testimony by Public Safety Minister, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc.



The Public Safety Minister’s told members of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs who are studying Bill C-21: [Our translation] *“To complement these measures, regulatory changes will be made to impose a mandatory physical inspection by the RCMP of all new firearm models before they enter the Canadian market. ... To address the problem of firearms classification, we are re-establishing the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee to independently review the classification of existing models that fall under the prospective new ‘prohibited weapon’ definition in Bill C-21, and to identify those that qualify as hunting firearms to be excluded from a future Order-in-Council to ban all existing assault weapons. Finally, to complete the measures against assault weapons, we are strengthening regulations on large-capacity magazines to eliminate loopholes and exemptions that allow access to magazines of more than 5 or 10 cartridges, for long guns and handguns respectively.”*

*“The minister’s message to the senators was strong and unequivocal. We are now hopeful that the government will move ahead with banning existing military-style weapons, namely most of the 482 models that were deemed to be assault weapons under the government’s earlier proposed amendments to Bill C-21, which were subsequently withdrawn following a successful disinformation campaign by opponents,”* said Nathalie Provost, a survivor of the Montreal massacre and spokesperson for PolySeSouvient. *“The minister also committed to closing loopholes and eliminating exemptions regarding magazines in order to ensure that Canada actually bans large capacity magazines.”*

*“Given these clear, strong and solid commitments, and the fact that, once implemented, these will achieve our group’s critical measure, that is, a comprehensive ban on assault weapons to prevent mass shootings, PolySeSouvient will once again engage in a collaborative approach with the Trudeau government.”*

## CONTEXT:

### **May 1, 2023, commitments:**

Last May 1<sup>st</sup>, when [the Liberal government unveiled](#) the new amendment on assault weapons to replace the withdrawn [G-4](#) and [G-46](#) amendments with a [new prospective definition of prohibited weapons](#), it also [committed to: consulting the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee on the classification of current models](#) with a deadline of August 31<sup>st</sup> for its recommendations, [banning the sale of modifiable magazines](#), and [requiring a Firearm Reference Table number for new firearm models](#) before they enter the market.

### **No ban as of yet**

PolySeSouvient has long fought for a **comprehensive ban on assault weapons**. This measure was not included in Bill C-21: *“What the government last May called ‘a permanent ban on new assault-style firearms’ in C-21 in reality [changes nothing](#),”* explained Ms. Rathjen, Coordinator of PolySeSouvient. *“The new definition of ‘prohibited weapon’ in C-21 doesn’t ban any existing assault weapons. It only applies to models yet to be manufactured and doesn’t prevent new models from entering the market, as it is easily circumventable. So while tens of thousands of assault weapons including [at least 83,000 AR-15s](#) prohibited in 2020 remain in the hands of their owners awaiting their buyback, Canadians can still purchase any one of the [hundreds of models](#) that were arbitrarily exempted in 2020, as well as [new ones](#) that continue to hit the market. To be clear, Canada does not have a ban on assault weapons. It only has an incomplete list of prohibited models that remain in circulation.”*

### **Need for comprehensive ban on large capacity magazines**

PolySeSouvient has also [called for a comprehensive ban on large capacity magazines](#). The current regulations are so fraught with [loopholes and exemptions](#) they’re almost meaningless. [Many Canadian mass shooters](#) legally bought “modifiable” magazines that they easily converted to illegally hold 30 rounds. Absurdly, if a magazine is not specifically designed for a gun in which it fits, [it’s exempt](#) from the limits. *“The proposed changes should eliminate [all loopholes and inconsistencies](#),”* said Ms. Rathjen.

Measures to ban assault weapons and large capacity magazines [are supported by](#) a large majority of Canadians as well as gun owners. The Mass Casualty Commission [also recommended](#) a ban on ALL models (current and future) as well as a ban on magazines that hold over five rounds for all guns.

### **Need for new preauthorization process**

Finally, the group [has been calling for a new pre-authorization process for all new models of firearms entering the market](#) in order to avoid misclassifications. Such a measure was also recommended by [the Bloc Québécois](#) and [the NDP](#). Examples include the 2015 fiascos related to the [Swiss Arms and CZ858](#) models, in addition to the recent case involving the [Israel-made IWI Tavor](#) of which 245 automatic versions entered the country through three gun companies wrongly labelled as “restricted” when they should have been “prohibited”.

In all the cases, the RCMP noticed the error *after* these models had entered the market. And since the models had all obtained a FRT (Firearms Reference Table) number, requiring such a number prior to entering the market (the “solution” proposed in several [government communications](#)) will not solve the problem. *“The new process needs to include mandatory physical inspection of new models by the RCMP prior to them entering the Canadian market,”* highlighted PolySeSouvient.

### **C-21 in the Senate**

In the meantime, a coalition of groups including police, victims, women’s groups and emergency doctors [are urging the Senate](#) to pass Bill C-21 in its current form, without amendments. *“While incomplete, Bill C-21 contains important measures that will make our communities safer from gun violence, especially for victims of intimate violence. And as we heard directly from the minister today, it is the intent of the government to adopt the key missing measures through regulations,”* emphasized Nathalie Provost. (See here our [compilation of counterarguments](#) to those who oppose C-21.)