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Advocates Say Launch of National Buyback Program Represents Another Concrete Step Towards Making Canadians Safer from Risk of Mass Shootings

Groups warn that sales of SKS must end before the compensation payments start flowing to gun owners, citing the findings of the final report of the 'expert advisory panel on firearms'

Montreal/Toronto/Ottawa/Quebec City, January 17, 2026 – The [launch of the national buyback program](#) for prohibited assault-style weapons is a win for public safety in Canada, say leading gun control advocacy groups and women's organizations. These firearms are not reasonably used for hunting and pose substantial public safety risks due to their design and capabilities, such as rapid rates of fire, self-loading mechanisms, ability to accept detachable magazines and incorporation of tactical designs. Such weapons are commonly used in mass shootings and the killing of police officers.

The groups highlighted that by implementing the program, the federal government is acting on a [key recommendation of the Mass Casualty Commission](#) (the public inquiry into the 2020 **Nova Scotia** mass shooting) to prohibit semi-automatic assault-style weapons and to take steps to rapidly reduce the number of these uniquely lethal firearms in circulation in Canada.

The organizations, representing survivors and family members of victims of mass shootings, as well as physicians, students and women's groups, also stressed public opinion polling over many years has consistently found a [majority of Canadians, including gun owners](#), support a ban on assault weapons.

However, they warned that for Canada to have a true ban on assault-style weapons and for the buyback to be a success, the government must quickly act to end sales of new models of the **SKS** – before compensation flows to gun owners participating in the program. This call-for-action is consistent with a recommendation by the **Expert Advisory Panel on Firearms** which was tasked by **Ottawa** to review firearms classification with special attention to the **SKS**. In its January 2025 [final report](#), the panel wrote that this model was designed for military use and has been upgraded by manufacturers to give newer models the same characteristics as currently prohibited weapons, making them capable of inflicting "substantial harm to the public and law enforcement." The **panel** pointed to the **Kodiak Defence Scorpio SKS-15** as one example. The **SKS** is the model that in recent times [surfaces most often](#) as the firearm used to commit mass shootings and kill police officers. If the government fails to ban new sales, taxpayer-funded buyback money could be used to purchase such weapons, rendering the buyback a failure.



The organizations also expressed concern with respect to the ongoing disinformation campaign carried out by the gun lobby in the hopes of derailing the success of the buyback program. They have framed the prohibition of assault-style weapons and their removal from circulation as a “gun grab” and “hunting gun ban”. The fact is that [close to 20,000 non-restricted makes and models \(equating at least 127,000 variations of firearms\)](#) remain legal for hunting and sport shooting in Canada. These firearms can be purchased with the buyback money by owners who surrender their assault weapons within the program’s timeframe to receive fair compensation for the value of the prohibited firearm.

Pro-gun lobbyists also claim that the buyback “will not stop gun crime” saying most criminals use illegally smuggled handguns, not legally owned long guns. However, the purpose of banning assault weapons is not to solve all gun crimes but rather to prevent mass shootings, which are typically committed with legally acquired firearms. The gun lobby claim that most gun crimes are committed with illegal handguns smuggled from the US is contradicted by [RCMP data](#) which found that 73 per cent of seized guns are were imported legally or manufactured in Canada.

Quotes:

“The survivors and families that make up PolySeSouvient/PolyRemembers are encouraged to see the Carney government act to deliver on their election promise to quickly launch and complete the buyback program. The buyback will provide owners of prohibited assault-style weapons with fair compensation while keeping Canadians safer from mass shootings, such as the recent massacre at Bondi Beach in Australia.”

However, “PolySeSouvient warns that the buyback will be a failure and waste of taxpayers’ money if the federal government fails to immediately end the sale of new models of SKS semi-automatic rifles to ensure gun owners cannot use financial compensation from the buyback to buy a new assault weapon.”

- **Heidi Rathjen, Coordinator, PolyRemembers (witness to the massacre at Polytechnique)**

“While gun violence is preventable, deaths and lasting trauma to victims of firearms remain much too common in Canada. The buyback program is an important step toward systemic change aimed at decreasing the risk of future mass shootings, tragedies like those that occurred in cities like Montreal, Moncton, Fredericton, Toronto, Edmonton, towns like Renfrew and Penticton, and rural communities like Mayerthorpe (AB) and Portapique (NS).”

- **Ken Price, Danforth Families for Safe Communities (father of a victim of the Danforth shooting)**

“Assault-style weapons, designed to kill as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, are uniquely lethal. This prevention measure will save lives. It will also reduce the cost to the health care system of treating victims of gun violence and protect the mental health of first responders and clinicians who are indirectly impacted by such extreme gun violence.”

- **Dr Najma Ahmed, Trauma Surgeon and Chair of Canadian Doctors for Protection from Guns**

“Polls consistently show strong support for banning civilian ownership of assault-style firearms, with support comparatively higher amongst women. On behalf of the [#Women4GunControl Coalition](#), a group of more than 30 women’s organizations fighting for stronger gun control laws, the National Association of Women and the Law is pleased to see the launch of the national buyback program to remove these lethal weapons from our communities. This important and long-awaited measure will reduce the risk of mass

femicides like the one that occurred at Polytechnique where 14 women were murdered in an anti-feminist attack, in addition to other mass shootings.”

- **Suzanne Zaccour, Director of Legal Affairs, National Association of Women and the Law**

“The cost of the buyback program is an investment in the public safety of future generations. For young people across Canada, it represents an insurance policy that US-style gun culture, with daily mass shootings, will never be normalized in Canada. We don’t want assault weapons in our schools, we don’t want these weapons in our communities.”

- **Thomas Prévost, Vice-President, External Affairs, Polytechnique Student Association and spokesperson for the Student Movement NOT_HERE**

“The buyback program is a crucial investment in the safety of Canadians from gun violence, today and for generations to come. It will save lives, protect our quality of life and reduce devastating injuries to victims of mass shootings and other gun violence. Today’s launch represents another concrete step towards keeping Canadians safer from mass shootings. However, the Minister must act on the findings of the expert panel and put an end to the sales of SKS rifles before financial compensation is paid to owners of prohibited assault weapons.”

- **Boufeldja Benabdallah, Spokesperson for the Quebec Mosque**

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