

Stronger Leadership Necessary to Prevent Costly Failure of Buyback

“Poor delivery of the \$742 million government program contradicts Prime Minister Mark Carney’s election promise ‘to quickly reinvigorate’ and ‘complete’ the buyback of assault-style firearms and leaves communities at greater risk of mass shootings.”

MONTREAL, March 26, 2026 - PolySeSouvient issued the following statement as the end of the buyback registration period approaches:

“The poor participation numbers for the buyback program designed to remove privately owned prohibited assault weapons from circulation, as [reported](#) last Monday by federal Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree, is a reflection of weak political leadership and a failure to effectively counter widespread [disinformation](#) from the gun lobby, as well as provincial legal and political shenanigans.

The federal government estimated [approximately 150,000 existing firearms](#) are affected by the ban and allocated nearly \$250 million to compensate their owners. However, less than a week before the deadline (March 31), only [51,000 firearms](#) had been declared for compensation.

Weak messaging failed to counter misinformation and disingenuous provincial maneuvering

While the large number of gun owners that have so far held back from registering their prohibited weapons is being celebrated by the gun lobby as some kind of victory, the fact remains that refusing to participate in the buyback does not exempt anyone from the law. It only means gun owners that don’t participate won’t be financial compensated for firearms that will be illegal to possess after October 30, 2026 – no matter the rate of participation in the buyback.

[Alberta, Manitoba](#) and [Saskatchewan](#) have declared their “refusal” to help implement the buyback program, with Saskatchewan going so far as to propose issuing “certificates of exemption” to owners of prohibited weapons so they can keep and store them “on behalf of the province”. Such tactics may have mislead many gun owners to believe they will be exempted from the law, contributing to low participation.

Minister Anandasangaree has not provided gun owners with a realistic perspective regarding the feasibility or constitutionality of such political and legal maneuverings. He should, at the very least and immediately, promise that Ottawa will challenge any legislative tactic that counters the federal government’s authority to prohibit the private ownership of specific weapons.

Compounding the buyback’s poor results is the government’s failure to end sales of the SKS

This weapon is currently classified as non-restricted and remains legal for sale and ownership in Canada, even though its high lethality has been on the government’s radar for years. It was part of the list of weapons the Trudeau government sought to ban [via Bill C-21](#) in 2023 (but failed). More than a year ago, the ‘Expert Advisory Panel on Firearms’ [reported](#) to the government that the SKS

is capable of inflicting ‘substantial harm to the public and law enforcement’. Indeed, this is the model [most often used](#) in mass shootings and the murder of police officers in Canada. The Tumbler Ridge shooter had access to a SKS and [expressed](#) a particular fondness for it (we still don’t know if it was used in the mass shooting because the RCMP continues to refuse to disclose this information).

To help ensure the program fulfills its public safety goals, PolySeSouvient and other gun control advocacy groups have urged [compromise recommendations](#) such as immediately ending new SKS sales while exempting models currently used by Indigenous hunters from prohibition.

Without an end to new sales of the SKS, owners who surrender their prohibited firearms could use the buyback money to purchase new modern SKS assault weapons. This is irrational and counterproductive public policy madness which will ultimately render the ban on assault weapons a failure. Moreover, manufacturers of SKS assault weapons will likely benefit from a huge boost in sales – courtesy of taxpayers’ money – which in turn will strengthen the gun lobby. This is appalling mismanagement of public funds and contradicts the government’s stated public safety goals.

[Public opinion polls](#) show Canadians have consistently supported a ban on assault-style weapons for over 35 years, following the Montreal massacre at the École Polytechnique in 1989, through to the Tumbler Ridge mass shooting this year. While we grieve for the victims, survivors of mass shootings as well as women’s groups, physicians and student associations have fought for decades to ban weapons designed for mass killing.

Most Canadians soundly reject US-style gun culture that results in more mass shootings than days in a year. To date, however, the poor delivery of the \$742 million program contradicts Prime Minister Mark Carney’s election promise to ‘[quickly reinvigorate](#)’ and ‘[complete](#)’ the buyback of assault-style firearms and leaves communities at greater risk of such tragedies. If SKS sales are not ended by the time the buyback money rolls out, the Prime Minister will have failed in his stated mission to [keep Canadians safe](#).”

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