



## **Last Chance to Strengthen Federal Gun Control Laws as Toronto Gun Violence Spikes**

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Following several recent shootings in Toronto, and on the verge of what might be another “year of the gun” in that city, the Coalition for Gun Control urges Canadians to stand up for stronger gun control. On Tuesday June 5, the federal committee reviewing proposed Bill C-71 will make critical decisions on whether or not to close loopholes that have fueled the flow of illegal guns.

According to the latest police data as of May 28 there had already been 162 shootings in Toronto, which suggests a trend towards one of the highest rates since 2005, the so-called “year of the gun”.

“Unfortunately, the crisis of gun violence on the ground has not sparked a larger public conversation about gun control nor has it lead to bold action from our politicians,” said Wendy Cukier, founder of the national Coalition for Gun Control and co-author of *The Global Gun Epidemic*. “Canadians know about the power of the National Rifle Association, south of the border, but few are aware of the extent to which the gun lobby in Canada has hijacked the public agenda.”

The Toronto data is consistent with trends across Canada. From 2013 to 2016, criminal incidents involving firearms were up 30%, gun homicides increased 60%, and intimate partner and gender-based violence involving firearms was up by one-third. In 2016, 31% of all gun-related homicides involved the use rifles and shotguns, that is, firearms that are non-restricted and no longer registered (except in Quebec).

After decades of decline, firearm suicides have also increased over the last three years. Troubling trends, which the Coalition for Gun Control and public safety experts have linked to the relaxation of gun laws under the Harper Government.

“All illegal guns begin as legal guns. As we strengthened controls over firearms we reduced the risk that dangerous people would have access to firearms as well as the diversion of legal guns to illegal markets,” said Cukier. “As gun laws have been relaxed, this progress seems to have also reversed.”

During their time in government, the federal Conservatives not only ended the firearms registry and destroyed the records of 6 million rifles and shotguns, but also weakened our gun control regime in significant ways. When the government destroyed the registry it did not restore the

requirement that gun dealers record sales of rifles and shotguns, in place since 1977. The Harper government also relaxed controls on handguns and military assault weapons. The shift in focus to the interests of gun owners at the expense of public safety was palpable.

“The Liberal’s gun control legislation makes some improvements but does not go far enough to stop the gun violence that we are seeing in cities and communities across Canada. “This is in part because of the loud and relentless pressure of the gun lobby,” said Cukier

The Coalition along with other safety groups have asked federal politicians to make public safety a priority. At a minimum, three amendments to the proposed legislation are needed:

1. Strengthen licensing screening criteria to reduce the chances that a gun owner is a threat to themselves or others.
2. Amend the requirements for gun sellers. Restore provisions introduced in 1977 that allow police easy access to records to trace firearms (as is the case in the USA).
3. Eliminate loopholes introduced by the Conservatives on the control of handguns and assault weapons. Restrict transportation of restricted and prohibited weapons to between specified locations rather than allowing them to be transported virtually anywhere in their home province.

The federal Standing Committee on Public Security and National Safety will discuss the legislation and hear evidence from witnesses for the final time tomorrow.

The Coalition for Gun Control, the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, Polysesouvient, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and others testified before the Committee calling on improvements to the legislation. Many others - including the Canadian Paediatric Society, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, Women's Shelters Canada, Canadian Women's Foundation, Legal Education and Action Fund and Schlifer Clinc, YWCA of Toronto, and Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime - submitted briefs doing the same.

View the Coalition’s full brief on C-71 here:

[http://guncontrol.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FINAL-ENGLISHCGC\\_BillC-71\\_Brief\\_SEdit-1-1-12.pdf](http://guncontrol.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FINAL-ENGLISHCGC_BillC-71_Brief_SEdit-1-1-12.pdf)

- 30 -

For more information Wendy Cukier, President, Coalition for Gun Control  
[wcukier@compuserve.com](mailto:wcukier@compuserve.com)/ 1-647-994-7829