

On March 8, Protect Women's Right to Safety Say NO to Weakening Gun Control

Women survivors of violence with firearms

Legally owned, easily accessible rifles and shotguns are the guns of choice in domestic violence and **women's safety experts and front-line shelter workers have repeatedly said that controlling access to all firearms is crucial to preventing avoidable deaths.**

But the federal government has ignored them, along with survivors, police and other public safety experts, opting instead to pursue a long campaign of misinformation to satisfy a vocal minority who believe they should have the right to own guns with few controls or responsibilities.

The federal government has considerably weakened the arms control measures, among other things, ending the registration of rifles and shotguns - allowing an individual who holds a license to buy as many guns as he wishes, including powerful semi-automatic, without any registration. The government has also weakened the control of the required permit prior sale and eliminated the regulation on gun shows. The police fear that combined with the loss of the registry, it will facilitate weapons smuggling.

And in spite of pleas by police, records on 5.6 million rifles and shotguns (outside Quebec) were destroyed, making it next to impossible for stolen guns or guns recovered in crime, including spousal homicides, to be traced back to their owners. The deleted data included ownership records on guns like the Ruger Mini-14, nicknamed the 'poor man's assault rifle', that in the hands of an unbalanced individual killed fourteen women at Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique, 25 years ago.

Safety experts argue the risks of gun violence facing vulnerable women and children have increased with these changes. Without registration and with sellers needing only to have "no reason to believe" a gun buyer isn't licensed, it is much easier for the 17,000 Canadians who have had their gun licence revoked or application refused since 2005 to buy a gun, including outwardly 'respectable' abusers sellers may be less likely to challenge.

With Bill C-42, the federal government wants to further relax the law on firearms and satisfy the demands of the gun lobby which is powerful and noisy. Among the proposed amendments, Bill C-42 ("The Common Sense Firearms Act") will: weaken controls on handguns and restricted weapons, weaken controls on licensing gun owners. Moreover, C-42 focuses on the application of sanctions after the fact, rather than preventative measures, **which would leave women and children in serious peril from those for whom consequences have little persuasive value.**



March

International Women's Day

Canada's gun laws were heralded worldwide as a model for addressing armed violence against women.

UN Special Rapporteurs have emphasized that countries that do not adequately regulate firearms are failing to meet their obligations under international law, particularly with respect to the safety of women and children.

The UN Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 2117 on September 26, 2013, highlighting the threats posed by the illicit trade in small arms and the importance of action by member countries in order to prevent this scourge. UNSC also recognized the disproportionate impact on violence towards women and girls, noting how the abuse of small arms exacerbates sexual violence and gender-based violence. In light of this particular threat, they urged member nations "to take further measures to facilitate women's full and meaningful participation in all policymaking, planning and implementation processes" and encouraged those involved in related planning and policymaking "to take into account the particular needs of women and children." In addition, UNSC has recently reported that the presence of small arms has a significant impact on violence against women.

The fight has now turned to courts

The battle between the Quebec government and the federal government is currently before the Supreme Court. The Coalition intervened to support the Quebec government in order to help keep the registry's provincial data. The Supreme Court is expected to rule in a near future.

Moreover, last December, during the commemorations of the 25th anniversary of the Polytechnique massacre, **several politicians, including Prime Minister Philippe Couillard, have formally committed to take action to strengthen gun controls.**

This March 8 join the fight for important safety protections for all women and children.

Act Now!

- 1. Distribute this handout to people around you and on your social networks.** Encourage others to get involved and educate them to the risks associated with the misuse of firearms.
- 2. Write, call and email your Member of Parliament and the party leaders.** Tell them you're paying attention and won't stand for further weakening of our gun laws, and that you will remember the slow dismantling of gun control during the next election. Contact information for your MP is available at www.parl.gc.ca.

× CPC	→ Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper	(613) 992-4211	stephen.harper@parl.gc.ca
× NDP	→ Hon. Thomas Mulcair	(613) 995-7224	thomas.mulcair@parl.gc.ca
× LPC	→ Justin Trudeau	(613) 995-8872	justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca
× GPC	→ Elizabeth May	(613) 996-1119	elizabeth.may@parl.gc.ca

- 3. Get involved in the online campaign, follow us on Twitter:** @CGCguncontrol.
- 4. Donate to the Coalition** and support the continued fight for sensible gun laws in Canada. We accept PayPal donations at www.guncontrol.ca.

Rural Women and Children are Most At Risk

Every year in Canada, more than 100,000 women and children leave their homes to seek safety in a shelter. Gun violence is present in many of these cases, though intimidation, control and homicide. **Studies have shown that rates of homicide in domestic violence situations increase significantly when there is a firearm in the home.** "Long guns" — rifles and shotguns — are the guns most likely to be used in domestic violence. While the long-gun registry is often portrayed as a rural versus urban issue, rates of deaths with guns is higher in rural and northern areas, where access to guns is higher, and it is women and children living in these regions who are facing the greatest increased danger with the weakening of gun control in Canada.

Facts

- Most firearm-related deaths in Canada are caused by rifles or shotguns, and these are the guns most commonly used to threaten and injure. All firearms are lethal, and any gun in the wrong hands is dangerous. **We need controls on ALL guns.**
- When women are killed by their spouse using a gun, it is **a long gun in 72% of cases.** Since 1995 when controls on all firearms were first introduced, **spousal homicides with rifles and shotguns have decreased by 69%.**
- **A firearm in the home dramatically increases the risk of death in domestic violence situations.** Coroners' inquests have consistently identified access to firearms as one of the top risk factors determining whether a woman will die in domestic violence situations.
- Referring to the **7.1 million** registered **non-restricted guns** as just "duck guns" minimizes the threat they can pose to public safety. This category includes many powerful rifles and shotguns, such as the Montreal Massacre's Ruger Mini 14 and .50 caliber military guns designed to pierce armor.

« Hunting rifles and shotguns are the weapons used most often to threaten women and children. Threats made with firearms are not counted in the statistics, but the damage they do is very real. How many women in shelters have told us that the simple fact of there being a hunting rifle beside the door was a constant threat to their safety! » - *Manon Monastesse, Quebec Federation of Women's Shelters*

« It is clear that there are examples of situations where the Firearms Act has made a difference in the violence against women. A very big threat lies in the hope of weakening the control of firearms. » - *Nathalie Villeneuve, Director of the House Hina (shelter for victims of domestic violence)*

The COALITION for Gun Control

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Founded in the wake of the Montreal massacre, the Coalition for Gun Control is the only national non-profit organization working to reduce gun injury, death and crime in Canada. We are endorsed by more than 300 crime and injury prevention, policing, health, child safety, victims' rights, grassroots and community organizations. These include: the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, Canadian Paediatric Society, YWCA of Canada, City of Toronto, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, just to name a few. CGC was recipient of the Canadian Labour Congress 2011 Making a Difference in People's Lives Award.