

FIREARMS POLICY IN CANADA



- **OVERHAULING FIREARMS POLICY ISN'T NECESSARY:** Canada's firearms program is one of the most comprehensive and strict in the world. Training, licensing, screening, daily monitoring, as well as strict storage, transport, and use requirements make Canada's firearms policy extremely robust in helping to keep legal firearms out of the hands of individuals that should not have them.
- **FLAWED PREMISES RATIONALIZE FIREARMS POLICY CHANGES:** Bill C-21, May 2020 OIC prohibitions, and Bill C-71 are based on several flawed and unsupported premises. These premises are reinforced by misleading statistics, prey on a lack of public understanding about existing firearms policy, and create unrealistic expectations and a false sense of security about the public safety enhancements that are possible with these policy changes.
- **BANNING LEGAL FIREARMS WILL HAVE NEGLIGIBLE EFFECT ON SUPPLY:** Increasing diversion of legal Canadian firearms (through theft and straw purchasing) has been cited as the rationale for restricting law-abiding Canadian firearm owners; however, robust statistics to support this or an evidence-based connection between these issues and increased gun violence in Canada has never been demonstrated. Meanwhile, we know that gun smuggling from the U.S. continues to be the predominant contributor to illegal firearm supply and makes up most of the illegal firearms seized in Canada.
- **BANNING LEGAL FIREARMS WILL HAVE NEGLIGIBLE EFFECT ON PUBLIC SAFETY:** In addition to having negligible impacts on the supply of illegal firearms, it relies on indirect effects (i.e., less availability of firearms for diversion to criminal use). Focusing policy and resources on actions that have indirect benefits will only achieve marginal return on investment for public safety, if any, especially when the bulk of illegal firearm supply is strongly linked to non-domestic sources (e.g., smuggling from U.S.).
- **BANS OF LEGAL FIREARMS WON'T REDUCE DEMAND OF ILLEGAL FIREARMS:** The amount of attention that legal firearms are getting should be redirected into more effort and investment to reduce the demand for illegal firearms (e.g., organized crime). The root causes of gun violence are much more challenging to address relative to targeting law-abiding firearms owners, but are a long-term investment that is required and morally necessary to treat the problem. Otherwise, Canada will spend far more money and pay a much larger human toll if we continue to only treat the symptoms – especially if we divert focus from the real issues with redundant policy action toward law-abiding Canadians.
- **MORE INVESTMENT NEEDED TO REDUCE DEMAND OF ILLEGAL FIREARMS:** The government has made commitments for investments and policy towards anti-gang and other community programming, but it could be significantly enhanced using the resources that are being spent on banning, buying, and enforcing low-return actions on law-abiding firearms owners.
- **MORE DIRECT FOCUS NEEDED TO REDUCE ILLEGAL FIREARMS NOW:** The focus should be directly on criminal activity related to firearms (e.g., smuggling, trafficking, organized crime) in short-term.

THE TAKE-HOME

Many recent firearm policy proposals work to criminalize legal firearms owners, negatively impact businesses, and do nothing to address gun violence in Canada. There are many actions that can and must be taken to address gun violence and criminals before impeding on the lawful use and ownership of firearms in Canada.