

MP Talking Points

Issue: Federal Ban and Buyback of Semi-automatic Long Guns

Background

The Canadian minority government has promised to bring in a ban and "buyback" program for "military-style" assault weapons in their upcoming mandate.

Definition of Banned Weapons

There is no clarity around which guns will be defined as "military-style" assault weapons and therefore banned. A large share of civilian firearms (both shotguns and rifles) are semi-automatic (the gun reloads automatically, but pulling the trigger only fires one shot). True military assault rifles are capable of firing as a full-automatic and have been prohibited to civilians since the 1970s.

"Buyback" Program

This program will enable the government to confiscate legally purchased firearms and compensate owners at a rate the government deems "suitable." Only owners who can document their legal ownership will be compensated, and non-compliance will be a criminal act. Unauthorized possession of a prohibited weapon is punishable by imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

Owners of soon-to-be-confiscated firearms must be identified and notified. It will be challenging to identify the owners of semi-automatic firearms that are "non-restricted". In New Zealand, the government's recent "buyback" program included 22 calibre and centre-fire rifles and some shotguns, as well as pump-action and lever-action firearms.

Prohibiting and confiscating an estimated 250,000 firearms is a complex undertaking and would involve considerable government resources. Budget estimates for the program start at \$600 million and could end up costing well over a billion dollars.

Key Messages

- Firearms use is already strictly regulated in Canada. The firearms community supports responsible ownership and use and is opposed to any level of firearms violence.
- All of the firearms to be confiscated by this program were legally purchased by Canadians who the RCMP screened and approved.

- Firearms diverted from law-abiding owners are not the source of guns used in most violent crimes. Gangs and criminals acquire illegal firearms across the US border.
- Illegal firearms activities by organized crime is a problem which will not be solved by further regulating legal firearms use.
- Any confiscation or ban in Canada is an attack on law-abiding firearms owners who are not the problem.
- The cost of the proposed ban and buyback program is a waste of time and effort and may well cost taxpayers billions of dollars.
- Reconsider investing the money in programs and measures to combat crime and support at-risk youth initiatives and community programming.