

Effective Gun Control Does Not Require a Registry

Problems with the Federal Firearms Act

It appears that a major area of confusion has arisen in the general population over the *firearms registry* and *gun control*. It must be understood that they are two quite different things. The federal government have intentionally equated them to confuse and confound Canadians. This has resulted in the rational arguments of the responsible firearms community to be lost in the ensuing shouting match between those who desire to have the registry "at any and all cost" and those who instead desire public safety, fair, and effective legislation.

1. Responsible Firearms Owners support Gun Controls!

First and foremost, as a responsible firearms owner *I do believe in gun control!* I believe wholeheartedly in **licensing** firearms owners, and the requisite **safety** program and background checks prior to becoming licensed. This is not any more onerous than our current traffic safety regulations, and moreover, could have been handled by the same bureaucracy had the Firearms Act not been so cumbersome in its scope, and thus so controversial.

Safe storage regulations are another good idea to protect our children, as are the **safe transportation** guidelines which require firearms to be transported safely, and out of reach for the purpose of "road rage" incidents or accidental discharge, and moreover aid in preventing unauthorized access. All good ideas.

2. Will the Criminals License and Register?

The long gun registry has been lauded by the government and anti firearms groups advocates as an aid to public safety. It turns out that handguns, the weapons of choice for the violent crimes which have recently so concerned Canadians, have been required by law to be registered since 1934. Somehow, no one seems to have gotten the message across to the criminals, since the most of those firearms are unregistered, and are invariably illegally imported and obtained in any event.

What seems to be lost on the registry advocates, that it is the process of **licensing** the *shooter* rather than **registering** the *firearm* which is the where the public safety is actually served!

3. My kid has a BB-Gun — will I go to Jail?

The long gun registry and regulations pertaining to the Firearms Act will require all sporting

firearms, including many types of pellet and BB-guns to be registered. Failure to register a BB-gun could result in criminal prosecution and penalties up to and including a five year prison sentence. These penalties, mind you, apply to those individuals licensed to own firearms, and to use them in accordance with the laws. The only "felony" here, is failure to register. Oddly, criminals don't seem to fear prosecution, but the law abiding citizens do!

4. I thought we were equal under the Charter!!

Actually, worse than the registry requirement for children's toys, are the provisions under the firearms act which circumvent a number of rights under the Charter which protect against unreasonable search and seizure and even the *presumption of innocence* under the law. This makes responsible citizens into second class citizens, merely by their ownership of firearms. The act also provides for federal officers to enter one's home *at their pleasure* in order to inspect your premises, and to ensure compliance with a myriad of federal regulations under the Mines Act, the Firearms Act, Criminal Code or anything else.

5. J'accuse!

A simple traffic stop for a moving violation has become worrisome for firearms owners because the CPIC database terminal in each police cruiser identifies them as a *potential criminal* by legally possessing firearms. The opportunities for abuse by law enforcement officials has just increased immeasurably. Don't make the officer mad, for he/she has the power to lay a simple charge which will result in a presumption of guilt under the Firearms act, automatic suspension of license, confiscation of firearms, and a whole mess of

legal expenses and trouble, with the onus entirely upon the law abiding owner to disprove. Only in Canada — pity!

6. Why do they treat me like a criminal?

The federal government consistently refers to sporting firearms as *weapons* and treats their ownership under the Firearms Act and regulations and criminal code as if one has actual criminal intent. I doubt that responsible firearms owners have any other than peaceful intent, and the word *weapon* should not be used in that context.

7. Big Brother is watching!

It should be pointed out that in addition to having a firearms license for firearms deemed to be restricted, one must also possess an **Authorization** to transport that firearm to a restricted gun club, and only for the purpose of target shooting. Should I require service on my firearm, I must contact the federal firearms office, and obtain a "special" authorization to take it to a gunsmith. A separate authorization is required to make the return trip home.

8. Doesn't work? Costs a lot? — We don't Care!

The bureaucracy required merely to process transport authorizations keeps a small army of functionaries busy. One might reasonably expect that the required *license* of the appropriate class would by implication be sufficient to allow for "legal" transport for "legal" purposes of the firearms that you are "legally" allowed to possess.

The application of this regulation is sinister, indeed. Again, I don't see the criminals phoning up the Firearms office for an authorization to transport down to the local night club for a night of "fun".

9. Only the Police and Military should have guns!

I'm not sure that a rational or any argument will be clear to those who do not understand the sporting use of firearms. Suffice it to say that the long gun registry flies in the face of statistical evidence gathered since 1934 (the inception of the handgun registry, which has YET to solve a crime), and moreover makes second class citizens out of millions of law abiding citizens. That alone makes it unconstitutional. Licensing and safe storage regulations on the other hand are cost

effective, and useful measures.

10. If this is the price of safety — then by all means, YOU pay it!

The **long gun registry** is not **gun control**, it is merely a draconian overreaction to a perceived problem which does not exist. Given that its total cost will never be known, as even the Auditor General gave up on trying to account for it, and that it can never improve the public safety, and given the pressing need for cash in the health care sector, one must wonder at the reason that the government risks censure and flaunts Parliamentary procedures to fund it? Can you say — *confiscation*?

11. The Means Justifies the Means ... A slippery Slope

Clearly, this is a first attempt to proscribe the safe and legal private ownership of firearms by responsible citizens. It has a great deal to do with a misguided political agenda, and very little to do with rational thought. Gun control is generally a **GOOD THING™**, judiciously applied, but the current incarnation of the Canadian Firearms Act goes far beyond reasonable measures.

If the money spent on the long gun registry and managing transport authorizations were instead spent on actually policing the *real* felons, then perhaps all of Canada would *really* be a little safer.

12. What Should be done?

- The firearms act should be immediately amended to eliminate the unconstitutional sections.
- The regulations should be rationalized with respect to public safety rather than punitive measures designed to harrass legitimate firearms owners.
- The long gun registry should be disbanded, and the funds used instead to battle crime in the streets of our cities. The hard pressed police forces can certainly use the assistance, and that would in no small measure actually increase the public safety!