



CANADIAN
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION

FONDATION
CANADIENNE
DES FEMMES

Honourable Bill Blair
Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
Canada K1A 0A6

November 16, 2018

Dear Minister Blair:

RE: Reducing violent crime: A dialogue on handguns and assault weapons

As Canada's only public foundation for women and girls, the [Canadian Women's Foundation](http://www.canadianwomen.org) approaches reducing violent crime with a gender lens. Since 1991, we have supported nearly 30,000 women and girls to move out of violence, out of poverty and into confidence and invested more than \$18 million in violence prevention programs across Canada.

We invest in programs along a continuum of violence prevention and rebuilding lives, including programs which build the community and capacity of organizations working to end gender-based violence. Through our work, we've learned that ending domestic violence creates safer communities for everyone: when mothers are safe, their children are less likely to grow up experiencing violence in their own lives.

In Canadian households, the presence of firearms is the single greatest risk factor for lethality of domestic violence. In the first eight months of 2018, 106 women and girls were killed in Canada, primarily by men.¹ On average, this means a woman or girl is killed almost every other day in this country.

With online organizing by men involved in violent misogyny on the rise, it's time to move swiftly and surely to strong regulation of firearms in Canada to increase protection for women and girls. For the Canadian Women's Foundation, strong regulation includes banning handguns and assault weapons.

Firearms figure prominently in violence against women. When firearms are present in the home, women and their children are more likely to die.² With almost half of femicide victims killed in their homes, women are at greatest risk where they should feel safest. Shooting is the most common method of killing where cause of death is documented, and Indigenous women and girls continue to be overrepresented in violence against women.

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In Canada, shooting is now the most common means of homicide, and handguns account for 58% of shooting homicides.^{3 4} For the third consecutive year, 2016 saw an increase in both the number and rate of firearm-related homicides in Canada, the highest rate since 2005.⁵

While the Canadian Women's Foundation acknowledges that guns alone do not cause violence, we also know that easy access to firearms elevates risk of harm, and of lethal harm, in domestic violence, gang violence, and suicide.⁶ All of these forms of violence impact women.

Under current firearm regulations, the Ruger Mini-14, used in the mass femicide at L'École Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989, remains unregulated. Handguns and assault weapons have no legitimate purpose in Canadian life: they are not used in hunting by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and other Canadians.⁷ Assault weapons are used in mass killings and provide the capacity to carry out mass killings.

Canada has the fourth highest rate of gun deaths among OECD countries and is one of few developed countries to have loosened its gun laws in recent decades.⁸ Industrialized countries with more guns have higher rates of firearms crime and gun-related deaths. For Canada, the UK, Australia and the US, rates of homicide without guns are fairly comparable, but rates of homicide with guns differ dramatically, based on differences in firearm regulations. The UK, which banned handguns in 1996, experienced only 27 gun murders in 2016. Statistics from the UK, Australia and Japan show that strict gun control laws lead to dramatically lower gun homicide, crime and death rates.^{9 10 11}

Along with the majority of Canadians, the Canadian Women's Foundation supports a ban on assault weapons and a ban on handguns, as part of our commitment to make the lives of women and girls safer.^{12 13}

We thank you for the opportunity to bring our concerns to your attention and look forward to the government's next steps on reducing gun violence.

Sincerely,

Paulette Senior,
President and CEO

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- ¹ <http://www.violenceresearch.ca/who/cfoja-update-106-women-and-girls-were-killed-canada-august-31-2018-0>
- ² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11805/11805-2-eng.htm>
- ³ <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/gn-crm-frrms/index-en.aspx>
- ⁴ Statistics Canada. (2018). Firearm-related violent crime, 2009 to 2017. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-28-0001/2018001/article/00004-eng.htm>
- ⁵ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/171122/dq171122b-eng.htm>
- ⁶ Canadian Paediatric Society. (2018). The prevention of firearm injuries in Canadian youth. Retrieved from <https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/the-prevention-of-firearm-injuries-in-canadian-youth>
- ⁷ W.Cukier. The Feasibility of The Feasibility of Increased Restrictions on the Civilian Possession of Military Assault Weapons at the Global Level. Ploughshares. <http://guncontrol.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/wpMAW.pdf>
- ⁸ Grinshteyn E, Hemenway D. Violent death rates: The US compared with other high-income OECD countries, 2010. *Am J Med* 2016; 129(3):266–73. Retrieved from [https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343\(15\)01030-X/pdf](https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343(15)01030-X/pdf)
- ⁹ Harvard Injury Control Research Center. 2011. Bulletins 'The Australian Gun Buyback', Issue 4. Retrieved from https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1264/2012/10/bulletins_australia_spring_2011.pdf
- ¹⁰ Chapman, S., Alpers, P., Agho, K., and Jones, M. (2006). Australia's 1996 gun law reforms: Faster fall in firearm deaths, firearm suicides and a decade without mass shootings. *Injury Prevention* 12:365-72.
- ¹¹ Alpers, Philip and Marcus Wilson. 2018. Japan — Gun Facts, Figures and the Law. Sydney School of Public Health, The University of Sydney. [GunPolicy.org](https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/japan). Retrieved from <https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/japan>
- ¹² <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2018/gun-control-still-a-key-issue-for-centre-left-voters/>
- ¹³ Ekos Politics. 2017. Here's a Simple Idea: Most Canadians Want a Strict Ban on Guns in Our Cities. Retrieved from <http://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2017/12/heres-a-simple-idea-most-canadians-want-a-strict-ban-on-guns-in-our-cities/>

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