

**News Release May 18, 2006**

**Government takes action to eliminate the costly and ineffective long-gun registry**

OTTAWA, May 17, 2006 - The Honourable Stockwell Day, Minister of Public Safety, today announced the Government's plan to eliminate the long-gun registry and to better meet law enforcement needs while reducing burdens on law-abiding long-gun owners.

"Eliminating the long-gun registry is a promise this government made to Canadians and is a promise we are going to keep. Promise made, promise kept," said Minister Day. "Canada's new Government is putting its emphasis on getting tough on crime and developing a truly effective firearms control program, not punishing responsible long-gun owners."

The Government is moving ahead today with the implementation of the following measures:

- \* transferring responsibility for the Firearms Act and regulations to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), taking over from the former Canada Firearms Centre;
- \* reducing the annual operating budget for the program by \$10 million;
- \* implementing licence renewal fee waivers and refunds;
- \* eliminating physical verification of non-restricted firearms;
- and
- \* introducing a one-year amnesty to protect previously-licensed owners of non-restricted firearms from prosecution and to encourage them to comply with the law as it currently stands.

As well, the government will table legislation to repeal the requirement to register non-restricted firearms.

Any legislative and regulatory changes will continue to require the safe storage of firearms, safety training, a licensing program including police background checks, a handgun registry (as has been the case since 1934) and a ban on those classes of firearms currently identified as prohibited.

"This new Government will not continue to fund ineffective programs. Instead, we will invest our resources to better protect Canadian families and their communities by putting more police on our streets, funding crime prevention initiatives and supporting the victims of crime," Minister Day concluded.

For more information, please see the attached Frequently Asked Questions or visit the Canada Firearms Centre website at [www.cfc-cafc.gc.ca](http://www.cfc-cafc.gc.ca).

For further information:

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## **Fact Sheet**

### **The Long-Gun Registry: Costs and Crime Statistics**

#### **Costs**

. In 1995, the previous government told Parliament that the firearms program, most specifically the long-gun registry, would involve a net cost of just \$2 million (Auditor General's Report 2002, Chapter 10).

. In May 2000, the previous government admitted that the costs had actually ballooned to at least \$327 million (Auditor General's Report 2002, Chapter 10).

. By March 2005 the net cost of the firearms program was \$946 million. Today they exceed \$1 billion. The Auditor General states that Parliament was misinformed about many of these costs. (Auditor General's Report 2006, Chapter 4).

. Neither the costs incurred by provincial and territorial agencies in enforcing the legislation, nor the costs borne by Firearms owners and businesses to comply with the legislation have been calculated. (Auditor General's Report 2002, Chapter 10).

. Two Library of Parliament studies estimate that the enforcement and compliance costs are substantial, running into hundreds of millions of dollars. (Compliance Costs of Firearms Registration, 10 October 2003; and, Estimates of Some of the Costs of Enforcing the Firearms Act, 20 March 2003).

#### **Crime Statistics**

. There are nearly 7 million registered long-guns in Canada. Yet of 549 murders recorded in Canada in 2003, only 2 were committed

with long-guns known to be registered (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics).

. The Vancouver police report that 97 percent of firearms seized in 2003 were illegal guns smuggled in from the United States, usually by organized crime (Vancouver Police, Strategic Plan 2004-08).

## **Backgrounder**

### **The Government's Commitment to Effective Gun Control**

Canada's new Government is committed to effective firearms control that targets criminals, while maintaining the highest standards of public safety.

Firearms owners will still be subject to measures that are designed to help ensure public safety, even during the amnesty period.

### **Thorough Background and Safety Checks**

- When you apply for a license, background safety checks will continue to be administered to screen for certain criminal convictions and incidents of violent behaviour.
- The Government is determined to strengthen measures to keep firearms out of the hands of criminals and individuals who have been prohibited from possessing them.

### **Safety Training**

- The Canadian Firearms Program strives to reduce firearm-related deaths and injuries by requiring that applicants for a Possession and Acquisition License (or PAL) or for a Minor's License to have an adequate knowledge of firearm laws and safe-handling practices.
- For this reason, all applicants for a PAL or Minor's License must meet specific safety training standards in order to be eligible. This safety training will continue.

### **Safe Storage Requirements**

- All firearms owners will continue to be required to store their

firearms safely so as to protect public safety.

- Safe storage laws help to prevent accidents and possible access to firearms by persons unauthorized to possess them.

### **Licensing Requirements:**

- The Government intends to move toward a simpler and more cost-effective lifetime licensing system that eliminates waste and avoids unnecessary burdens on firearm owners.

- Under this system, the police will still be able to know and verify who is authorized to own legal firearms and who is not.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Changes to the Firearms Program**

#### **AMNESTY**

Q1. What is an amnesty and who is protected?

A1. The amnesty protects individuals from prosecution for possessing a non-restricted rifle or shotgun without a valid licence or registration certificate if:

- a) they were licensed to possess that class of firearm in the past but their licence has expired since January 1, 2004; or
- b) they currently hold, or have held, a firearms licence but have not yet registered the firearm.

Q2. Why is there an amnesty?

A2. The current system is broken. The confidence of many Canadians in our firearms control system has been shattered. Tens of thousands of licences are not being renewed even though individuals continue to possess firearms. We want to do everything we can to encourage law-abiding Canadians to come back into the legal system.

It will take time to make some of the legislative changes that are necessary to reform the Firearms Act. In the meantime, the amnesty gives owners of non-restricted rifles and shotguns time to comply with current licensing and registration requirements without fear of prosecution.

Q3. Why do I still need a licence to possess non-restricted rifles and shotguns if the Government is planning to abolish the long-gun

registry?

A3. The Government is committed to continued firearms licences to control the criminal or unsafe use of firearms. For example, persons acquiring licences for the first time must meet safety-training requirements to help to ensure public safety. Background checks help to screen out criminals and others who are likely to be a danger to public safety.

Q4. I received a notice from the Registrar that my registration certificates were revoked because my licence had expired. Am I still required to take action to obtain a licence or dispose of my firearms?

A4. Until Parliament changes the law, current requirements remain in force. However, the amnesty gives you until May 17, 2007 to meet the requirements of the law.

Q5. I have never held a firearms licence; would the amnesty protect me if I apply now?

A5. Although the amnesty does not specifically protect people who have never had a licence, the Government does not intend to penalize those who are trying to bring themselves into compliance with the law unless particular circumstances warrant it. Every effort will be made to help people comply. If you have firearms and do not have a licence, we urge you to submit an application for a license as soon as possible.

Q6. How long does the amnesty last?

A6. The amnesty deadline is May 17, 2007. This should give affected firearm owners plenty of time to meet the safety training requirements and obtain a Possession and Acquisition Licence (PAL).

Q7. During the amnesty, do I still need a licence to buy ammunition for my non-restricted rifles and shotguns?

A7. Yes.

## **FEE WAIVER AND REFUNDS**

Q8. If I apply for a licence now, will I have to pay a fee?

A8. You will have to pay a fee if this is your first licence under the Firearms Act, or if you had a minor's licence but are now applying for a PAL. The fee for a PAL is \$60 for non-restricted firearms only, or \$80 for any combination of non-restricted and restricted firearms. The fee for a minor's

licence is \$10 for up to one year, \$20 for up to two years, or \$30 for more than two years.

You will not have to pay a fee to renew an existing licence, replace an expired licence or change your licence privileges - for example, by upgrading from a Possession Only Licence (POL) to a PAL or adding privileges for restricted firearms.

Q9. I have already paid to renew my licence/upgrade my licence privileges; will I get a refund?

A9. You will get a refund if your licence was issued. You will not get a refund if your application was refused.

Q10. How long will it take to get a refund?

A10. It will likely take a few months to determine who is eligible for a refund and to issue a cheque. The refund will be mailed to the address indicated in our records. If your address has changed, it is important to let us know. Address changes can be made online through the Canada Firearms Centre's website at [www.cfc-cafc.gc.ca](http://www.cfc-cafc.gc.ca) or by calling 1 800 731-4000.

Q11. Do I still have to pay to replace a lost, stolen or damaged licence, and if so, why?

A11. There is still a fee of \$25 to replace a lost or stolen licence. The fee waiver for licence renewals and upgrades was intended to make compliance as easy as possible for firearm owners and users. Once they have their licence, individuals have a responsibility to protect it from loss, theft or damage.

Q12. Why would I have to pay a fee if my application to renew or upgrade a licence is refused?

A12. The licence fee is a processing fee. Applications that are refused generally require more investigation, and consequently, incur more costs.

## **VERIFICATION**

Q13. How will telephone verification affect the quality of data in the registration database?

A13. There will be little or no effect. When firearm owners call a Verifier, they will need to provide a detailed description of the firearm. The information provided will be compared to information in the Firearms Reference Table of known firearms. If there are any problems confirming the existence, identity or classification of the firearm, a physical examination by a professional verifier, such as a firearms officer, may be

requested.

Restricted and prohibited firearms will still have to be verified physically by a trained, professional verifier.

Until Parliament changes the law, current requirements remain in force. However, the amnesty gives you until May 17, 2007 to meet the requirements of the law.

Q14. Can police, firearms businesses or shooting clubs still verify firearms for individuals?

A14. Yes, if they have an approved verifier on staff, they can choose to provide this service, and they can examine the firearms physically.

### **TRANSFERRING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FIREARMS ACT TO THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE (RCMP)**

Q15. Why is responsibility for the Firearms Act and regulations being transferred to the RCMP?

A15. The transfer of responsibility for the Firearms Act and regulations, including the firearms registry, to the RCMP will provide a cost-effective firearms program that will meet the Government's commitment to accountability. The transfer will also make it easier for Canadian police authorities to co-ordinate gun control activities with other crime control measures.

Q16. Will the transfer of responsibility to the RCMP increase the risk of prosecution for people who let their licence expire?

A16. The transfer to the RCMP will not impact on the current consequences of allowing a firearms licence to expire. As stated earlier, the amnesty protects individuals from prosecution for possessing a non-restricted rifle or shotgun without a valid licence or registration certificate if:

- they were licensed to possess that class of firearm in the past but their licence has expired since January 1, 2004; or
- they currently hold, or have held, a firearms licence but have not registered the firearm.

Q17. Is the gun registry information useful for police officers to know whether a firearm is at a particular location?

A17. The fact an individual has a firearms licence will still be known to the police. They will know whether a legal firearm is at a particular location by virtue of the fact that an individual has a licence. The abolition of the long-gun registry doesn't affect that. Even so, it is the illegal firearms that police are usually

the most concerned about.

Q18. How can you say that the gun registry is a useless criminal justice tool when the police use it 6,500 times per day?

A18. The "6,500 hits" figure for the Canadian Firearms Registry On-Line (CFRO) is misleading. Whenever police officers access the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) for any reason, such as for a simple address check, an automatic hit is generated with CFRO whether the information is desired or not. This is the case, for example, with the Toronto Police Service (5,000 officers), the Vancouver Police (1,400 officers), and the BC RCMP (5,000 officers).

### **NEXT STEPS**

Q19. What are the next steps the Government is looking at?

A19. The Government will draft legislation which will eliminate the long-gun registry and will be consulting with provinces to set-up effective firearms control.