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[crumbling](#) Matt Gurney: No one 'needs' a gun. And no one 'needs' an iPod.

[case for](#) Posted: September 20, 2008, 12:21 PM by Kelly McParland

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This column has been a long time coming, but it took a school shooting, irate radio talk show callers, and more babble from the Delusional Duo of McGuinty and Miller to finally bring it to life. As no doubt everyone is the city is now aware, Toronto had a banner week for shootings, capped off by a dramatic lockdown of four North York schools after a student was shot in the chest just outside the Bendale Business and Technical Institute.

As soon as I heard the news that a student had been shot, I reflected back to the last federal election campaign, which was also marred by the shooting of a Toronto youth; Jane Creba, fifteen, was killed by a stray bullet while shopping near crowded Dundas Square on Boxing day of 2005. Paul Martin quickly made a national handgun ban a plank in his party's unsuccessful platform, while Stephen Harper insisted - [as he still does](#) - that Canada's current gun control measures are sufficient, and that the problem of gun crime is better addressed by taking action in other areas: tightening bail conditions, and tougher sentences for those guilty of a gun crime.

I've been surprised by the rather muted response to this most recent spate of shootings in Toronto. Stephane Dion reiterated his commitment to banning military assault weapons, but not handguns, apparently unaware that fully automatic rifles are already impossible for a Canadian civilian to legally acquire. Dion's unfamiliarity with firearms is manifestly apparent, as he seems to think that the Beretta CX4 Storm Carbine is an assault weapon. As is explained so well [here](#), it's far from that, not being an automatic weapon and being able only to fire relatively weak handgun-caliber rounds. I'm forced to conclude that the Liberals' definition of a military assault weapon is any gun that looks dark and scary. NDP leader Jack Layton has called for a ban on handguns within cities[2], a proposal so toothless and naive to be hardly worth addressing, unless he has invented some sort of magical forcefield that would prevent guns from moving from out of the 905 across Steeles Avenue and into Toronto. And I'll consider the Green Party's stance as soon as they sort out what it is.

You can always count on [McGuinty](#) and [Miller](#)], of course, to trot out their beloved handgun ban proposal when gun crime strikes Toronto, and they don't disappoint...well, I should say they don't surprise. After all, making my World War Two-era British Army revolver illegal is a much more politically expedient way to tackle crime than addressing the fact that some parts of Toronto have become gang- and drug-infested war zones.

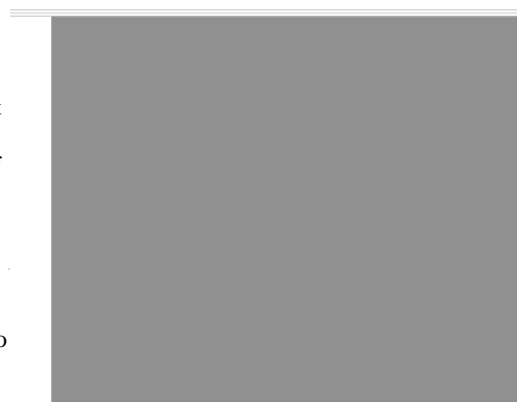
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Podcast



11/03/09: In Ottawa, MPs are worried about job security - their own. Conservative MPs are calling for protection from their own riding associations while Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff is

threatening to make Liberal protection conditional. For once, the Full Comment podcasters agree: Our MPs shouldn't be protected from democracy.

While listening to some AM talk radio in Toronto last night, I heard a number of emotional callers on both sides of the issue. Owners of legally registered guns complained bitterly about being scapegoated; I certainly share their frustration, but will ruefully concede that responsible Canadian firearms owners would benefit from more articulate spokesmen. What always upsets me the most, however, isn't the scapegoating, or even the willful blindness to very real socio-economic issues in certain Toronto neighbourhoods. It's two of the arguments most often used by those in favour of a handgun ban, including Miller and McGuinty: handguns are only meant to kill people, and no one needs them. I won't bother bogging this column down with statistics; for every study I could find in favour of handgun ownership, my ideological opponents could produce one that supports their perspective. So instead, I offer a few comments, in turn pragmatic and philosophical.

Handguns are only to kill people? That's ridiculous. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians own handguns, and yet the overwhelming majority of us have never killed someone, let alone with a pistol. We collect them for their historical value, we shoot them at gun ranges as an exciting hobby, and some select few of us become skilled enough with their firearm to compete internationally in target shooting events. Are these collectors, enthusiasts and athletes simply using them wrong, or is it possible that handguns can have non-violent applications? Obviously guns of any type can be dangerous, but I fail to see why a handgun that is never used in anger is somehow more inherently deadly than a tool, such as a knife or hatchet, that is. To deny that a gun can kill is asinine, but to suggest that it must kill because it can is to invest in it some mythical power to circumvent the free will of whomever has their finger on the trigger. The criminal chooses to kill, the gun is the tool he uses to do it. Besides, who among us, if being attacked by a madman with a hammer, would take comfort from the fact that the hammer is an object possessed of many legitimate, everyday uses?

The common declaration that no one "needs" a handgun infuriates me even more. I can't deny it – it's true. No one needs a handgun, short of the obvious exceptions of police officers, military personnel, and a few select other professionals. I'll grant that right now. But what I want to know is this: why does that matter? I would argue that I don't need most of my material possessions, if we're defining "need" as only those items required to keep me alive. I need food, I need water, I need oxygen, and in this climate, I need shelter for more than half the year. Everything else beyond that is a "want."

I think most of us would agree that clothing, education, and medical care are pretty universal "wants", but go much further than that and the argument bogs down as personal opinions diverge. I don't need meat, I could survive quite well on a vegetarian diet, as several friends of mine have chosen to do. I don't need a car, there's public transportation in my area, and many in my neighbourhood rely on it exclusively. I don't need any of the little luxuries I treasure so: my nice big TV, my beloved laptop computer, my constantly used iPod. Indeed, some might argue that I'd in fact be better off without these modern "conveniences."

I know many will say that these items aren't comparable to handguns, and I'm not blind to the differences, but, let's face facts. I bought my handgun legally, paid all necessary taxes on the transaction, and registered it in accordance with the law. What it's for is irrelevant: I own it, it's mine. For all of those who wish to see me stripped of it, I offer this proposal. You can take my handguns, but I want unrestricted access to your home, so that I can remove from it any items that I deem you can live without. Maybe it's just the libertarian in me, but I suspect that most of handgun ban types wouldn't appreciate that kind of intrusion into your personal lives. May I please have the same courtesy? Sorry to trot out a cliché like "freedom", but before we go down the path of stripping people of their possessions because they're unpopular among certain political circles, perhaps we should take a minute first to ponder the broader implications?



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The father of a dear friend of mine, a warm, thoughtful man, is an experienced martial artist. He owns an impressive sword collection. No one "needs" a sword, and swords are built for killing people. Is he the next target for ban-happy politicians, or can we once again place the blame for violent crime back where it belongs - on the violent criminals?

Matt Gurney is a responsible firearms owner and a graduate student at Wilfrid Laurier University, soon to complete his Masters in History, with a specialization in military history.

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by KC34

Sep 20 2008
1:46 PM

Very well put Matt. As a lifetime firearms owner and collector I have never killed anything with my many handguns but have enjoyed 50 years of competitive shooting with a lot of other responsible shooters.

Having some dipstick Mayor in Toronto take my guns away will in no way solve his gang banger problem. Big jail time and then deportation back to where they came from is what will work.

by freebel

Sep 20 2008
2:12 PM

Well put!

But please, you are a citizen, a gun owner; NOT a 'law abiding' citizen or 'responsible' gun owner.

It's like saying, I'm an 'honest' accountant; or even, an 'honest' politician - stating the obvious is to insult your audiences judgment and to cast doubt as to who you are. Your conscience is clear, stop apologizing - if it's because of the likes of Miller, McGuinty and Cukier, who think poorly of you because of their bigotory or indifference, perhaps it's they who should be apologetic of not being better informed before they make judgment of you.

by ogie76

Sep 20 2008
3:12 PM

good read.

If guns kill people, then i can blame all my spelling mistakes on my pen.

by ZeeBC

Sep 20 2008
3:44 PM

Automobiles kill way more Torontonians than guns do but they are not banned. Gun banning is for feckless politicians who are unwilling to address the real problem. KC34 provided a clue for the dipsticks.

by caljay

Sep 20 2008
4:11 PM

Great article, it's good to see some common sense writing on this subject. Canada should be a country where good, lawabiding citizens should be free from short sighted bans and where it's the criminals who face punishment for their actions. Too often it's the other way around here.

by Griffon

Sep 20 2008
5:14 PM

Well written, a welcome breath of fresh air on a subject that is old and stale. I am so very tired of the anti-ban-guns-[insert any other object here] types.

[Sorry for the previous comment.](#)

-kotter51

[Full Comment](#)

[@noleftturn](#) No way, at a minimum, it would require holy water or some other form of "tribute" to the church, which of course is solely used so god can meet "expen...

-rossbcan

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[Nice little bit of fear mongering there Zoe, but we were already in a paper recession in September. I'm still waiting for the soldiers on every street to happen.](#)

-Sassylassie

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Addressing crime by persuading criminals; what a novel concept.

by Anopheses
Sep 20 2008
7:43 PM

Great article. It seems that common sense is a rare commodity these days.

Fighting crime by banning legal guns is like fighting illegal drugs by banning pharmacies. Both measures only target non-criminals.

by Ambrose99
Sep 20 2008
9:26 PM

The problem with the argument is that it is much less necessary (if such a thing is possible) to own a handgun than to own an automobile. It's sleazy to own a handgun because it's a celebration of a weapon that kills people and that has no other use (unlike knives).

I don't have a right to own a tactical nuclear weapon; why should I have a right to own a handgun?

by Raze
Sep 20 2008
9:42 PM

KC34:

I go to the States. Owning a firearm in Canada is becoming too creepy.

The families of the kids who shoot kids in Canada tend to vote Liberal.

They know that their kids are getting a better deal up here:

- *easy access to illegal guns
- *"sensitive liberal judges"
- *short and lenient jail-house visits

Just remeber you left-wingers:

Those friends your kids are smoking pot with, doing drugs with, and playing rap music with, may show up one day to invade your house.

Tell it to the camera:

"s/he was such a loving, good, happy kid, didn't deserve this...ban handguns in Canada!

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by Raze
Sep 20 2008
9:51 PM

Ambrose:

Dear man, autos kill more people than knives and guns put together.

I absolutely celebrate shooting commies, nazis, pol-pottists, and I would happily shoot a neighborhood sociopath intent on invading my home (before he/they/she slaughters my family).

I would even be happy to stop one of those types from hurting you (the love lives on).

Gosh, tactical nuclear weapons?

Can you even begin to imagine the carnage that would incur from me offing a grizzly bear?

Reminds me of Men-In-Black.

Where can I buy a "Cricket?"

by whitehills
Sep 20 2008
10:02 PM

Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you. As a normal taxpaying Canadian who owns a pistol and likes to shoot it (fairly poorly, I might say) in competition every few weeks, I sincerely appreciate the thought that went into this article, and thank the Post for publishing it.

I mirror your sentiments. Precisely.

by whitehills
Sep 20 2008
10:09 PM

Ambrose99, quite hilarious. Tactical nuclear bombs! Yes indeed old chum. Hur-hur! You've won this argument you have.

You old Oxford scad, you.

Pistols like nuclear bombs. Excellent stuff.

Russian influence?

by whitehills
Sep 20 2008
10:17 PM

Ambrose again, clever man.

Author owns British service pistol, ergo, the right to own tactical nuclear bombs. Nuclear holocaust at his pathological fingers!

BOMBS OUT OF BRITAIN. SAY NO TO THE USAF MISSILES ON BRITISH SOIL!!

...AND BAN HANDGUNS TOO!!

Remember the good old days?

Still handing out pamphlets?

by Raze
Sep 20 2008
10:24 PM

whitehills:

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