

Gun Registration --  
The Billion Dollar Boondoggle  
by  
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Firearm registration is a waste of money. Even its supporters concede it won't reduce violent crime. How could it? Registering cars hasn't eliminated drunk driving or keeping criminals from using cars to rob banks. How could registering firearms stop criminals from shooting people?

At last count, Ottawa has already squandered at least \$800 million of our hard-earned tax dollars on trying register firearms. Canadian Alliance MP, Garry Breitkreuz has estimated that sometime later this year, Ottawa will have spent a billion dollars on firearm registration. Of course, very few firearms have been registered. I wonder how long will it take the Canadian Firearms Centre to spend their second billion?

It's hard to believe now that, back in 1995, then Justice Minister Allan Rock promised that firearm registration would cost only \$85 million. And now spending is reaching towards a billion dollars. How could this happen? According to standing Government of Canada policy, "regulatory authorities must ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs." This was never done with firearm regulations. The excuse used by Chretien is that the regulations give "enhanced security." Security? Even though it's generally conceded to be useless.

One reason Ottawa is still spending your and my tax dollars on trying to register guns is that the Federal Liberals see this program as a "honey pot." Security justifies a never-ending stream of jobs and contracts to their friends and hangers on. A few examples will give you a taste of Ottawa: The Public Works Department paid \$330,000 for work that was never done to Montreal-based Groupaction Marketing for a "communications strategy" for the firearms act. But the Justice Department never got it. The same firm is under investigation by the RCMP for billing taxpayers three times – for \$1.6 million – for nearly identical reports. And not delivering. I wonder if Groupaction or its principals donated much money to the Liberal Party of Canada? Another example is that the CFC recently scrapped 50 brand new laser scanners that they paid almost \$1,000 each for. They wasted \$50,000 of your hard-earned tax dollars on useless scanners.

With all these problems, it may surprise you, but, early next year, I predict Ottawa will declare that firearm registration is a success. Of course, Ottawa will do so even though many hunters or target shooters will not bother to register their guns. And, of course, registration won't make a dent in criminal violence. But Ottawa will claim it's a success.

Firearm registration is obviously a big failure. But that won't matter. Ottawa will still claim that it was a success. They have to. Their jobs are on the line. You may even see

expensive TV ads -- paid for with your tax dollars, of course -- triumphantly proclaiming that almost all of the guns in Canada have been registered. Unfortunately, it'll be a lie.

A few years ago, Ottawa claimed that licencing gun owners was a success too. Remember? Early in 2001, Ottawa reported that over 90% of gun owners in Canada got a firearm licence prior to the deadline. That was false. Less than 50% actually did. Ottawa deliberately cooked the books. Even 70% of the owners of registered handguns apparently have failed to get a valid firearms licence. The Restricted Weapons Registration Service shows that 429,316 people have handguns, but according to the Canadian Firearms Registration System there are only 124,941 handgun owners.

How could Ottawa claim success? They faked the numbers. Last year, Ottawa announced that 2 million people applied for or got a firearm licence by the deadline of January 1, 2001. They boasted about this success because it was over 90% of all gun owners. Unfortunately, they fudged the statistics. They were able to reach this conclusion because they claimed that only 17% of Canadian households have guns, or just 2.2 million individual Canadians.

This was the lowest estimate found of any survey taken during the 1990s. If we average the findings of the twelve best surveys conducted during the 1990s, and make corrections for obvious errors, we find that roughly 33% of Canadian households have guns. This works out to be about 4.5 million individual Canadians.

However, Ottawa knew that if they announced that 2 million out of 4.5 million owners got licences, it'd sound too much like admitting failure. So the CFC decided to shrink the number of gun owners down to 2.2 million. That's right, by fudging statistics, more than 2 million Canadian firearm owners disappeared. That's a lot of people who didn't get a firearm licence.

Here's how Ottawa will claim that registration is a success. They'll underestimate the number of guns in Canada, just like they did with the number of owners. Ottawa's surveys show that on average, each Canadian gun owner has 2 guns. If there are 2.2 million owners, that means that there are only 4.4 million guns to register.

That just doesn't sound right to me. My friends own more than two guns each. I'd say that the number of guns owned by the average owner would be closer to three than two. Here's how I figure. Most of my friends own at least one .22, one hunting rifle, and one shotgun. That's three guns each. Many have one or two handguns as well. That's more than three guns each. It wouldn't take much to have more than three guns. More importantly, I doubt that people would honestly tell a telephone pollster the correct number of guns in the house. I'd bet they'd 'forget' a few. What do you think?

But if there are 4.5 million gun owners, and each owner has 3 guns on average, then there would be 13.5 million guns in private hands in Canada. That's more than 3 times as many guns as the CFC estimates. I think that is much closer to being realistic.

It gets worse. If we use import/export figures, rather than telephone surveys, we get an estimate closer to 30 million guns. This approach relies upon the official records given to the government by importers and exporters. However, import/export estimates are notoriously inaccurate, because the Canadian government requires more documentation for firearms being imported than those being exported. Therefore, these figures probably over-estimate the true number of legal guns in the country. To sum it up, the best estimates show there are between 13 and 30 million guns in private hands in Canada. And of course, we're only talking about legal guns. There is no way the CFC would be able to know about, or actually register guns in the hands of criminals.

In 2003, when you hear the CFC announce that 90% of all guns in Canada are registered. Don't believe it. Look closely, and I'll bet you'll see that they've cooked the books. The key will be how many guns they claim exist. If their estimate is less than 13 million, you'll know they are lying.

Government is discovering what we told them years ago that trying to register firearms is an impossible task, and it's useless.

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