

WHAT DO THE LIBERAL'S MEAN WHEN THEY SAY 'EVIDENCE-BASED' GUN CONTROL POLICIES?

By Dennis R. Young – May 24, 2017

CANADA'S GUN CONTROL REGIME (C-17 & C-68) IMPLEMENTED 'DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF PRECISE DATA'

[In his 1993 report on the Gun Control Program to Parliament, Auditor General of Canada Denis Desautels wrote:](#) “27.3 *As well, our review of the new regulations indicated that important data, needed to assess the potential benefits and future effectiveness of the regulations, were not available at the time the regulations were drafted.*” The Auditor General was referring to Kim Campbell’s gun control regulations in Bill C-17. The Justice Department defended their lack of evidence with this statement: “*In any event, the legislation and regulations were driven by clear public interest considerations, which needed to be acted upon despite the absence of precise data.*” The Auditor General went on to recommend: “27.50 *The Department of Justice should undertake a rigorous evaluation of the gun control program.*” They never did.

In 1995, the newly elected Liberal Government also ignored the Auditor General’s sage advice when it rammed its two-billion-dollar gun registration and gun owner licensing regime (Bill C-68) through Parliament, again *‘despite the absence of precise data.’*

AUDITOR GENERAL: 5,000 HITS A DAY AN INDICATOR OF ACTIVITY - NOT EFFECTIVENESS

[On Wednesday, May 31, 2006, Auditor General Sheila Fraser appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security stating:](#) “*I believe that the indicator of the 5,000 hits a day is more of what we call an activity indicator than an indicator of effectiveness. So those law enforcement people who use the registry would have to give an assessment as to whether or not it was useful to them. There could be 5,000 hits, and they could say yes, it was very helpful and helped me in this way; or they could say no, it wasn't helpful because the information wasn't correct. It takes an additional degree of interpretation or information to assess effectiveness.*” (Page 14)

Despite the Auditor General Frasers’ admonishment, the RCMP Commissioner continues to publish lots of ‘indicators of activity’ about the firearms program but little in the way of ‘effectiveness’. [Here is his latest firearms report to Parliament.](#)

Notice how the RCMP Commissioner reports lots of information and data about monitoring law-abiding, licensed firearms owners but nothing about what the RCMP is doing to monitor the 422,887 convicted criminals prohibited from owning firearms by the courts. Why is that? Because the *Firearms Act* only gives the RCMP the authority to keep track of the addresses of licensed gun owners – not convicted criminals. [For more details please read my last Commentary: LIBERAL'S GUN CONTROL REGIME STILL MISSING THE REAL TARGET!](#)

Over the last twenty-two years, no *‘rigorous evaluation of the gun control program’* has ever been completed by either the Conservative or Liberal Governments. However, in the last election Justin Trudeau gave us all clear indications that the Liberal government would be different under his leadership.

JUSTIN TRUDEAU: “THE ONLY IDEOLOGY THAT MUST GUIDE US IS EVIDENCE”

[On October 6, 2012, journalist Dan Gardner wrote](#), “Announcing his candidacy for the Liberal leadership, Justin Trudeau got a round of applause when he declared that, in seeking solutions to problems, *“the only ideology that must guide us is evidence. Hard, scientific facts and data. It may seem revolutionary in today’s Ottawa, but instead of inventing the facts to justify policies, we will create policy based on facts.”*”

LIBERAL’S PROMISED “EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING”

[The Liberal Party of Canada website states](#): “Government should base its policies on facts, not make up facts based on policy. Without evidence, government makes arbitrary decisions that have the potential to negatively affect the daily lives of Canadians. We need reliable economic indicators and data for sound economic policy, and to provide other governments, businesses, and civil society with the tools to enrich our national life. Unfortunately, Stephen Harper’s Conservatives have allowed ideology to trump common sense, good policy, and evidence about what works. *A Liberal government will ensure the federal government rebuilds its capacity to deliver on evidence-based decision-making.*”

[On August 29, 2014, the Liberal Party of Canada wrote to former Reform MP Inky Mark](#), “A Liberal government led by Justin Trudeau would not reinstitute the long-gun registry, however, like yourself we believe in balanced gun control that prioritizes public safety while ensuring that law-abiding firearms owners do not face undue treatment under the law. *We will spend the time leading up to the federal election developing evidence-based firearms policy that is based on this approach.*”

LIBERAL’S ELECTION PROMISES ON GUN CONTROL

[The Liberal Party website states](#): “We will take action to get handguns and assault weapons off our streets. We will take pragmatic action to make it harder for criminals to get, and use, handguns and assault weapons. *We will: repeal changes made by Bill C-42 that allow restricted and prohibited weapons to be freely transported without a permit.*”

[Prime Minister Trudeau repeated this election promise in his mandate letter to Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale](#) directing him to: “Take action to get handguns and assault weapons off our streets by working with the Minister of Justice to strengthen controls on hand-guns and assault weapons, *including by repealing some elements of Bill C-42.*”

[On February 11, 2016 Minister Goodale added this personal commitment](#): “We want to be an evidence-based government making sound decisions on the basis of hard facts.”

OKAY, SO WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THE REPEAL OF CHANGES MADE BY BILL C-42?

We went looking for the “evidence” to support the Liberals election promise to *“repeal changes made by Bill C-42 that allow restricted and prohibited weapons to be freely transported without a permit.”*

On December 29, 2016 we filed an *Access to Information Act* request with the RCMP asking: “*For the period from June 18, 2015 to present, for each province and territory, please provide copies of reports, evaluations, presentations, briefing notes, Advice to the Minister, Question Period Notes (including draft and final versions) with statistics with respect to Authorizations to Transport for prohibited and restricted handguns showing a comparison between to old ATT issuing legislation, policies and procedures and the new ATT regime under Bill C-42 including: effectiveness assessments, processing times, staff hours saved, tax dollars saved, number of revocations and any other related records*”

[On February 28, 2017, we received a reply from the RCMP stating: “Unfortunately, we were unable to locate records which respond to your request.”](#)

On April 5, 2017, we filed another *Access to Information Act* request with the same wording as above to Public Safety Canada. [On April 28, 2017, Minister Goodale’s department responded: “A thorough search was conducted and Public Safety Canada was unable to locate any records responding to your request.”](#)

If the RCMP doesn’t have the evidence to support their election promises to “***repeal changes made by Bill C-42 that allow restricted and prohibited weapons to be freely transported without a permit.***” and the Department of Public Safety doesn’t have the evidence, who does?