

Gun stats disputed

Re: Illegal guns sourced in Canada are surging, compared to those smuggled from the U.S., July 24

At the risk of being a pedant, definitions matter. And police claims made in this article have some problems with definitions.

The increase reported by police stems from a change in the definition of "crime guns," not from any verifiable change in where criminals get their guns. The Toronto Police claim that there has been an increase in the number of guns obtained legally in Canada but which are then sold to people who use them for criminal purposes. But this is not supported by Statistics Canada.

According to Statistics Canada, only nine per cent of firearms involved in homicides were registered (135 out of the 1,485 firearms homicides from 2003 to 2010) — just nine per cent at the height of the long-gun registry. Moreover, this percentage has declined recently with the demise of

the long-gun registry.

Thanks to the intervention of MP Bob Zimmer, Dennis Young and I were able to see a confidential RCMP report and discovered that the "increase" was based on expanding the definition of "crime guns." For the first time, "gun crimes" are defined as including paper crimes (such as, an owner letting his firearms licence expire, or the police finding an unattended firearm at a location where someone committed suicide); the older definition was limited to the criminal misuse of a gun and did not include paper crimes.

The police also use "domestic source" as if it means the holder of a firearms licence. This is false.

There is a large pool of firearms in Canada with questionable legality. When firearm licensing was introduced in 2001, between one-third and one-half of then-law-abiding Canadian gun owners declined to apply for a firearm licence. Official estimates of civilian gun owners ranged from 3.3 million to over 4.5 million in 2001, but fewer than two

million licences were issued. Many gun owners remain outside the system.

Canadians are legitimately concerned about the value of gun control; I trust these definitions will help keep the discussion a bit more rational than it usually is.

Gary Mauser, Professor Emeritus, Institute for Canadian Urban Research Studies, Simon Fraser University

Child benefit is more fair

Re: Better way to help families; Canada child benefit rises but low-cost daycare would help more, Kevin Carmichael, July 25

If the purpose of subsidized daycare is to get mothers out of the home, it is a resounding success.

However the purpose of any funding to daycare should not be about mothers but about kids. The state is funding care of children and in that regard, funding the Canada Child Benefit is a much fairer and more in-