

15 years after Montreal Massacre, Families Continue to Fight for Gun Control Law

As the 15 anniversary of the Montreal massacre approaches, the families of the victims find Canada's gun law is still under attack from opponents despite the measurable improvements in public safety.

Catherine Bergeron of the December 6 Foundation said: "Almost 15 years ago, a man walked into a Montreal University, separated the male from the female students, and shot 24 people killing 14 women. One of them was my sister. Since then, we have had to continually fight to ensure that their deaths were not in vain. We have worked to prevent violence against women and we have worked to ensure that Canada has one of the strongest gun control laws in the world. No one said it would be easy. And it has not been. But it has been worth it. This law is a lasting memorial to the memory of my sister, of the other women who died that day and to the victims of gun violence."

Suzanne Laplante Edward said "It is hard to believe that 15 years after the massacre, and 9 years after Bill C-68 became law, we are still fighting to protect a law which most Canadians want and the police and violence prevention experts need. In spite of the costs, polls show the majority of Canadians support the law. Still politicians threaten to dismantle the system and promise to protect the "right" to own guns. We have fought for this law and will not waver in our support. I am disgusted at those who play politics with the lives of our children."

Sylvie Haviernick, President of the December 6 Foundation, said "It is true gun control is not cheap. But neither is gun violence. If we look to the United States we can very soon see the costs of inadequate controls on firearms. Rather than catering to the opponents of the law, who will never be satisfied until gun control is dismantled, we need political leaders who are prepared to address the myths head on, state the simple facts: Gun control works. It is a good investment. Despite the opposition and the roadblocks put in the government's path, most gun owners are now licensed. Most guns are now registered. What sense would it make to dismantle it now? What would the opponents put in its place? What would that cost us? Not only in dollars and cents but also in terms of human lives and suffering?"

Wendy Cukier, Professor, Ryerson University and volunteer President of the Coalition for Gun Control noted: "In 1989 there were almost 1400 gun deaths in Canada. In 2001 (the last year of data) there were 842. In 1989, there were 218 homicides with guns. In 2002 there were 149. In 1989 there were 131 homicides with rifles and shotguns, in 2002 there were 43. The number and rate of firearms death is the lowest it has been in 30 years. Homicides of women with guns have dropped by more than 50%. Robberies with guns have fallen by 60%. We still have a problem with smuggled handguns but that does not negate the progress we have made, particularly in stemming the misuse of rifles and shotguns. People complain about the costs but the old system was also expensive - at \$30 million a year and it was a system that 6 separate inquests showed was flawed. Police are using the new system 1500 times a day and cite many occasions when it has allowed them to take preventative action or solve crimes. We are safer today than we were 15 years ago."

Catherine Bergeron's sister Genevieve, Suzanne Laplante Edward's daughter, Anne Marie and Sylvie Haviernick's sister, Maud, were all murdered December 6, 1989.

	1989	1995	now
Total firearm deaths (homicide, suicide and accident)	1367	1125	842
Homicides with firearms	218	176	149
Homicides with rifles and shotguns	131	61	43
Homicides with other guns	87	115	106
Homicides without guns	439	412	433
Homicides of women with firearms	74	43	32
Robberies with firearms	6,442	6,692	3,472

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