

# Ottawa's "buy back" is a multi-billion boondoggle

In his Mandate letter to Public Safety Minister Bill Blair, Prime Minister Trudeau gave the highest priority to prohibiting and confiscating "military-style assault rifles." Speculation about the cost of this "buy back" has zeroed in on how much owners will be paid for surrendering their guns. CBC reported that Minister Blair claimed the cost for the "buy back" of roughly 250,000 firearms would be between \$400,000 and \$600,000. That is, if owners comply.

The full cost of the "buy back" isn't \$600,000; it's much more. Focusing on reimbursement costs is misleading because it ignores the biggest expense: government staff work. Prohibiting and confiscating 250,000 firearms is a complex undertaking and would involve considerable government resources. It would be impossible to do with the current police resources.

Multi-billion dollar boondoggle.

But how much will taxpayers be billed for this boondoggle? The government has been silent. No budget for the "buy back" program has yet been announced.

My best estimate for Trudeau's confiscation plan is at least two billion dollars. Remember: all of the firearms to be confiscated were legally purchased by Canadians who the RCMP screened and approved. These firearms are being confiscated because they might be used in violent crime. Might be. No firearms in the hands of criminals are involved in this "buy back."

## **Here's a rough outline of the steps involved in the nation-wide confiscation program:**

1. Plans need to be drawn up for the entire project and agreement won from Cabinet,
2. New information processing capacity evaluated, and possibly new computer systems developed,
3. Owners of soon-to-be-confiscated firearms must be identified and notified,
4. Organization the set up for collecting the firearms (e.g., arranging office space for collection points and training the police and clerks who will be accepting the surrendered firearms),
5. Staffing the collection points so that the surrendered firearms may be assessed,
6. Vendors engaged to destroy the collected guns;
7. Cheques written to the former owners, and
8. The collection shipped off to be destroyed, and then destroying the firearms.
9. Plus, of course, there will be a sophisticated advertising program to persuade the public that confiscating legally purchased and legally used firearms will "make Canada safer."

Do not forget the entire process requires serious security measures to prevent both theft and corruption. We've seen news reports of government-collected knives stolen from government collection points. And some government employees may not be honest angels. Or even competent. It would be surprising if everything went as planned. The gun registry was predicted to cost no more than CAD 2 million and ended up costing CAD \$2.7 billion before the Conservatives scrapped it.

A major fly in the ointment is that no one knows how many owners will refuse to surrender their newly prohibited firearms, or if they do decide to submit, how many will simply wait until the

deadline and show up in a last-minute tsunami. A previous Liberal government botched licensing and registration back in the 1990s, so it's not obvious that Justin Trudeau's "buy back" will be any better organized. It could well be worse than Chrétien's.

Accurately estimating the entire budget for the Public Safety Minister's confiscation of thousands of semi-auto rifles is beyond my limited abilities. But I can make a rough estimate of costs for at least one stage in the complex process: the cost of collecting the guns to be surrendered. Hundreds of thousands of firearms will need to be collected from hundreds of thousands of individuals. The experience of the New Zealand Police in 2019 to confiscate scary-looking "military-style" semi-automatic rifles provides a template that Canada might follow.

### **My best estimate**

My best estimate is that confiscating 250,000 firearms would cost the Canadian taxpayer between \$1.6 billion to almost \$5 billion in the first year. My back-of-the-envelope estimate of the governmental costs of collecting 250,000 guns required to be surrendered has been extrapolated from the New Zealand template. The detailed calculations are posted on the website, <https://justiceforgunowners.ca>.

This estimate leaves out travel costs as well as any Ministerial administrators. Remember, this is just part of the costs to the taxpayers for the "buy back." These estimates do not include the \$600 million the government promises to pay to owners who surrender their firearms.

Will Canadians willingly surrender firearms that they purchased legally and have used in a safe and legal manner since they bought them? Refusal will be difficult for owners of registered firearms. Since most of the semi-automatic rifles scheduled for confiscation, the police have the names and addresses of the owners. However, it will be difficult to identify the owners of semi-automatic firearms that are "non restricted".

### **To sum up**

If the government was serious about reducing criminal violence, why would they focus on the most law-abiding segment of society? Why wouldn't they crack down on gangsters, impose longer prison sentences, as well as investing serious money into programs to divert young people from the gangster lifestyle?

Make no mistake: this is a multi-billion dollar boondoggle. Imagine what police, immigration, social services, K-12 education, or hospitals could do with a few extra billion dollars.

*~Article Submitted by Gary Mauser, PhD Professor Emeritus, Simon Fraser University, BCWF Chair Firearms Committee*