

Ref: 2008-M16.1

February 1, 2008

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

City Council on January 29 and 30, 2008, referred the following Motion to the Executive Committee:

M16.1 Request Federal Government to Completely Ban Handguns in Canada

Moved by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Cho

SUMMARY:

In the last two years, Torontonians have experienced two outrageous, tragic acts of handgun violence on Yonge Street in the heart of Toronto's downtown. In late 2005, Ms. Jane Creba, 15, was shot while shopping on Boxing Day, near the Eaton Centre and, last weekend, Mr. John O'Keefe, 42, was shot while walking past a bar just south of Bloor Street. These random victims were innocent bystanders, minding their own business, perhaps chatting to a friend when they were cut down by a stray bullet from a handgun, having their life ended before they knew it, without understanding why. Mr. O'Keefe was shot with a registered, legal handgun by the owner of the handgun. These two incidents are only the most outrageous examples of the many murders that occur in our City.

Violent crime is increasing and the general populous feels less safe on the streets of Toronto than they did in the past. To date, governments have been reticent to follow through on an outright ban of handguns. Making all handguns illegal would reduce their prevalence in our society by providing a clear cut, zero-tolerance law that would both deter criminals before they pick up a handgun and deal with those criminals who act using a handgun. Simply, if there are less handguns available because of prohibition, then less of them will be used. The handguns that are used in crimes or found on persons can be easily ruled as illegal and the source of these illegal guns can be focused upon. There just is not a good enough reason to continue to legally allow handguns in our City, our Province and our Country.

Making all handguns illegal would help make our communities safer. Knowing what we know, we cannot stand on guard to the best of our ability against tragedies on our streets, such as the murders of Ms. Creba and Mr. O'Keefe, without prohibiting handguns across Canada.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That City Council request the Parliament of Canada to prohibit all handguns in Canada, including the sale or purchase and/or possession of any handgun by any Canadian citizen or any person within Canada (excluding police officers and military personnel).
2. That City Council request the Parliament of Canada to institute mandatory sentencing (5 years minimum) of any person found guilty of possession of any handgun(s) or involvement in the sale or purchase of any handgun.
3. That City Council direct the Mayor to deliver this Resolution to the Prime Minister of Canada and to all the leaders of the Federal Opposition.
4. That City Council request the Premier of Ontario to support this Resolution and, working with the Mayor of Toronto, convey that support to the Prime Minister of Canada and to all the leaders of the Federal Opposition.

for City Clerk

M. Toft/cd