

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM23.12	ACTION			Ward:All
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Request to protect the data on non-restricted firearms registered to Ontarian owners - by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Adam Vaughan

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, seconded by Councillor Adam Vaughan, recommends that:

1. City Council reaffirm its long-standing support for the registration of all firearms as a means to address gun violence and stop the diversion of legal guns to the illegal market.
2. City Council write to the Premier of Ontario, with copies to the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, asking the Province to do everything in its power to stop the deletion of the data on non-restricted gun ownership to Ontario owners.
3. City Council request the City Solicitor to seek ways to intervene to stop the deletion of this data on the more than 287,000 non-restricted firearms registered in the Greater Toronto Area.
4. City Council share this resolution with the Mayors of large cities across Canada and encourage them to do everything in their power to stop the deletion of the data on non- restricted gun ownership.

Summary

Bill C-19, which received Royal Assent on April 5, 2012, orders the deletion of the data on 7.1 million non-restricted firearms currently registered. This decision runs contrary to international treaties that require record-keeping to reduce illicit trafficking.

Under this Bill, there will no longer be a required record to indicate what non-restricted firearms were sold to whom or how many. This change will remove the means to prevent individuals from stockpiling firearms and provide a tracing tool when a non-restricted firearm is used in crime. There will be no record-keeping when long-guns are transferred, and no mandatory licence checks to ensure only those with valid licences may purchase firearms. Law enforcement will no longer have the tools to effectively remove all firearms from dangerous individuals or have the ability to enforce prohibition orders and take preventive action.

Most firearm-related deaths are caused by rifles or shotguns. These are also the type of firearms most commonly used in domestic violence and when police officers are shot on duty. Strong controls reduce the risk that legal firearms will be misused or diverted to the illegal market.

Murders with rifles and shotguns as well as rates of firearm death and injury have declined significantly since the implementation of the Firearms Act and its regulations. All firearms must be regulated to reduce the risk of misuse, and to ensure accountability and responsibility. Five public inquests in Ontario have recommended the licensing of gun owners and registration of all firearms to reduce the risk of further tragedies. Having the tools to remove guns from potentially dangerous or suicidal people is critical to the safety of residents. The Canadian Association for the Chiefs of Police have testified that this data can be a useful investigative tool for firearm tracing purposes and destroying it will cripple the ability to trace any non-restricted guns to their last legal owners if they end up being used in crimes. City Council is responsible to approve the Operating Budget of the Toronto Police Service. Dismantling the long gun registry and deleting the data it contains will add significant costs to police investigations, costs which will be downloaded to the police service and lead to delays in gaining investigative information. There are more than 287,000 “non-restricted” firearms registered in the Greater Toronto Area. Safety experts have warned that deleting the data will create a terrible precedent and may be a further cost to taxpayers.

On August 25, 2010, City Council endorsed and declared September 15, 2010 as the National Day in Support of the Long Gun Registry, in conjunction with cities and police boards across Canada. Toronto City Council was also an intervenor in defence of the firearms registry in front of the Alberta Court of Appeal and of the Supreme Court of Canada. Over the years, the Toronto Police Services Board, the Toronto Chief of Police, the Toronto Medical Officer of Health, as well as city-based community groups, and victims of gun violence have fought hard to defend sensible gun control measures.

Other provincial and municipal governments have also taken a stance against Bill C- 19. The Government of Quebec is challenging Bill C-19 in front of the Quebec Superior Court and has filed an injunction against the deletion of the data. On December 14, 2011, Mississauga City Council passed the unanimous motion 0294-2011 urging Ottawa to rethink Bill C-19 and, at a minimum, save Ontario’s data.

(Submitted to City Council on May 8 and 9, 2012 as MM23.12)

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM23.12