

# PolyRemembers

Students and Graduates of  
Polytechnique for Gun Control



www.polysesouvient.ca ❖ polysesouvient@gmail.com ❖ @polysesouvient ❖ 514-816-7818 ❖ 4529 Clark, #102, Montreal, H2T 2T3

Press Release  
For Immediate Release

## *Federal Election:*

# Only One Party Proposing Effective and Urgent Gun Control Measures at the Federal Level

**Montréal, October 15, 2015** – With only a few days to go before Election Day, the group **PolyRemembers** wishes to inform voters that are concerned about the public safety of the various campaign promises regarding gun control. **PolyRemembers (PolySeSouvient** in French) represents graduates, survivors and victims' families who have been fighting for better gun control since the 1989 massacre at the **École Polytechnique**.

*“Given the daily reminders from south of the border about the consequences of a lack of gun control — more than one mass shooting per day<sup>1</sup>, or 47 school shootings this year alone<sup>2</sup> — Canadians should be particularly interested in election promises related to the strengthening or weakening of our own gun control laws,”* says **Nathalie Provost, a graduate of the École Polytechnique who survived the 1989 massacre and spokesperson for PolySeSouvient.**

*“Even though we are talking about reasonable controls for extremely dangerous objects, it is fair to say that the Liberal Party’s stand on gun control is commendable and courageous. The Liberals have put forward important measures to effectively strengthen our debilitated gun laws, measures that will undoubtedly provoke the ire of the gun lobby,”* continues **Ms. Provost.** *“The Liberal Party would reverse almost all the damage wrought by the Conservatives over the last ten years — that is, they would reinstate all the measures that were weakened or eliminated by the Harper government except for the long-gun registry. In short, the election platforms of Justin Trudeau’s party represent the best prospects of fixing a large part of the damage to our gun control laws inflicted by the Harper government.”*

According to **Heidi Rathjen, also a graduate of Polytechnique and coordinator of PolySeSouvient,** the absence of any mention of gun control in the **New Democratic Party’s** platform is clearly disappointing, given the party’s historical support for the range of measures needed to ensure effective gun control. *“The lack of a clear NDP position on gun control is distressing, not only because of the importance of this issue for Canadians’ safety and quality of life, but especially given the recent mixed messages<sup>3</sup> about its stand on registration.”*

In its French platform<sup>4</sup>, the **Green Party** proposes to ban handguns and assault weapons, but there is no mention of such a measure in the English version. Its platform contains much “gun-friendly” language and some misrepresentation of the current situation<sup>5</sup>. However, the party supports the fulfillment of Canada’s obligation under international agreements to mark all imported firearms.

As for the **Bloc Québécois**, it denounces the destruction of the long-gun registry and promises to demand the Quebec data as well as monetary compensation for the **Government of Quebec** in connection with the establishment of its own long-gun registry.

*"No one will be surprised by our vigorous condemnation of the Conservative Party's record and election platform, which promises to counter any effort to restore the long-gun registry".* The **Conservative** platform also boasts of mandatory minimum penalties for offenses involving firearms — but fails to mention that these sentences were ruled unconstitutional and ineffective by the **Supreme Court of Canada**<sup>6</sup>. *"During his tenure as Prime Minister, Stephen Harper has led Canada several decades backwards in terms of protecting the public from gun related crime and violence. The next government — whoever it may be — will have much to do to repair the damage wrought by the Conservatives in past years,"* says **Ms. Rathjen**.

*"The best we can hope for is that voters are well informed of the political commitments on gun control. It is easy for us to heap scorn on the daily carnage plaguing our American neighbors, but the fact is that Canada has less and less reason to feel superior. There's no doubt the impact of the recent major setbacks to our gun laws will materialize over the next several years,"* adds **Ms. Provost**.

*"Gun control is a critical issue for the safety of our communities, and we hope Canadians will consider where the various political parties stand on this issue when they cast their vote on October 19."*

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#### Information:

- Heidi Rathjen : 514-816-7818 (text messages preferable to voice messages) or [polysesouvient@gmail.com](mailto:polysesouvient@gmail.com)
- Nathalie Provost : 514-796-0142

## APPENDIX: PARTY POSITIONS ON GUN CONTROL

### CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Over the last ten years while it was in power, the **Harper government** has:

- dismantled the long-gun registry (C-19),
- destroyed the data on more than 5 million long guns, rejecting the Quebec government's request to obtain the Quebec data in order to set up its own registry (C-19),
- eliminated the obligation to verify the validity of a buyer's license in the case of long guns (C-19),
- abolished the requirement for gun businesses to keep records of sales and inventories,
- eliminated regulations to increase safety at gun shows,
- weakened provisions regarding possession and acquisition licenses (C-42),
- increased access to military-style assault weapons for private citizens (including overturning RCMP decisions regarding the classification of thousands of semiautomatic weapons as prohibited), and
- weakened controls on the transportation of handguns and other restricted weapons (C-42).

As part of its election platform<sup>7</sup>, the **Conservative Party** promises to:

- continue to fight any efforts to bring back the long-gun registry, and
  - ensure the approval of more firearms instructors.

### LIBERAL PARTY

The **Liberal Party** introduced the Firearms Act (1991 and 1996) as well as the initial list of banned assault weapons (1995). Liberal MPs voted unanimously against **Bill C-19** in 2012<sup>8</sup> (the **Conservative** legislation abolishing the long-

gun registry), as well as against **Bill C-42**<sup>9</sup> in 2015, which further weakened remaining controls. As part of its election platform<sup>10</sup>, the **Liberal Party** promises to:

- repeal changes made by Bill C-42 that allow restricted and prohibited weapons to be freely transported without a permit,
- put decision-making about weapons restrictions back in the hands of police, not politicians,
- require purchasers to show a license when they buy a gun, and require all sellers to confirm that the license is valid before completing the sale,
- require firearms vendors to keep records of all firearms inventory and sales to assist police in investigating firearms trafficking and other gun crimes,
- modify the membership of the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee to include knowledgeable law enforcement officers, public health advocates, representatives from women's groups, and members of the legal community,
- immediately implement the imported gun marking regulations and insuring that Canada becomes a signatory of the Arms Trade Treaty,
- provide \$100 million each year to take illegal guns off our streets and reduce gang violence,
- invest in technologies to enhance our border guards' ability to detect and halt illegal guns from the United States entering into Canada, and
- not put into place a new long-gun registry to replace the one that was abolished.

## NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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The **New Democratic Party** supported the introduction of the 1991 and the 1995 legislation; the majority of its MPs voted against **Bill C-19** in 2012 and they all voted against **Bill C-42** this year. As part of its election platform<sup>11</sup>, the **NDP** is silent on the issue of gun control. During the leaders' debate in French, its leader argued as follows<sup>12</sup>:

NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair ... argued that the gun registry, abolished by the Conservative government, was a "failure" and committed himself to not to create a new one if elected as Canada's Prime minister. "*An NDP government would allow Quebec to keep [the information contained in the old, abolished registry], but the registry was such a failure that it is out of the question to bring back a registry,*" he said. This is a complete reversal for the NDP, since last December Mr. Mulcair announced that if brought to power, he would establish a new mechanism to "track of all firearms in Canada", a mechanism he promised would be lighter and less bureaucratically cumbersome. [Our translation]

## BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

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The **Bloc Québécois** has consistently supported the introduction of new controls in 1991 and 1995, and unanimously voted against **Bill C-19** in 2012 and against **Bill C-42** in 2015. As part of its platform election<sup>13</sup>, the **Bloc Québécois** promises to:

- require from the next federal government financial compensation for the Quebec government with relation to the establishment of its own registry, as well as the transfer of Quebec data from the old federal registry.<sup>14</sup>
- The party adds: « *The dismantling of the Canadian Firearms Registry and the programmed destruction of the data by the federal government consists of unfathomable silliness. This tool, much appreciated by the police, allowed lives to be saved, and the money invested to set it up was wasted. Its survival is the subject of a broad consensus in Quebec, from police chiefs to the Bar association, including the National Assembly.* » [Our translation]

## GREEN PARTY

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The leader of the **Green Party** voted against **Bill C-19** in 2012, and both Green party MPs voted against **Bill C-42** in 2015; however, **Bruce Hayder** voted in favor of **C-19** as an **NDP** MP in 2012. As part of its election platform<sup>15</sup>, the **Green Party** promises to:

- fulfill Canada's obligation under international agreements (United Nations Firearms Protocol and the Organization of American States Firearms Convention) to mark all imported firearms, as recommended by the Canadian Association of Police Boards and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police,
- review the registry for restricted firearms in consultation with First Nations, and with gun sports and hunter organizations, and ensure law-abiding citizens do not have their firearms unreasonably confiscated,
- provide increased support for Integrated Border Enforcement Teams in their gathering of intelligence and arresting of gun smugglers, and put strict measures in place for those who attempt to cross the Canada/U.S. border with illegal firearms, and
- ensure that gun crime charges are not dropped to facilitate convictions on lesser charges.

<sup>1</sup> 294 en 274 jours depuis le début de l'année; "Mass shooting" est défini comme impliquant 4 personnes ou plus, incluant le tireur, blessées ou décédées.

"Shooting in Oregon: So far in 2015, we've had 274 days and 294 mass shootings", *Washington Post*, 1er octobre 2015.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2015/10/01/2015-274-days-294-mass-shootings-hundreds-dead/>

<sup>2</sup> « A Breakdown of the 47 School Shootings So Far This Year », *ABC News*, 9 octobre 2015. <http://abcnews.go.com/US/breakdown-47-school-shootings-year/story?id=34372809>

<sup>3</sup> "Reality Check: Would the NDP or Liberals bring back the long gun registry?", *Global News*, 26 août 2015. <http://globalnews.ca/news/2187322/reality-check-would-ndp-or-liberals-bring-back-the-long-gun-registry/>

<sup>4</sup> **Parti vert du Canada**, plateforme électorale, octobre 2015. <http://www.greenparty.ca/fr/politique/vision-verte/personnes/justice/armes>

<sup>5</sup> "Legal handguns are virtually banned for most uses or users." There are over 725 000 restricted weapons in private hands (**RCMP** <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/facts-faits/index-eng.htm>), most of which are handguns; "There are stringent regulations for firearms dealers, and for firearms storage, handling and transportation." Gun dealers no longer have to keep inventory or sales records, and don't have to verify the validity of a buyer's license in the case of a sale of a long gun. Transportation of restricted weapons has been considerably weakened through C-42.

<sup>6</sup> "The government has not established that mandatory minimum terms of imprisonment act as a deterrent against gun-related crimes... Empirical evidence suggests that mandatory minimum sentences do not, in fact, deter crimes.", **Chief Judge Beverley McLachlin**, as reported by *CBC News*, « Supreme Court quashes mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes », April 14th 2015. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/supreme-court-quashes-mandatory-minimum-sentences-for-gun-crimes-1.3031847>

<sup>7</sup> **Conservative Party of Canada**, election platform, October 2015, page 159. <http://www.conservative.ca/media/plan/conservative-platform-en.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Votes for and against C-19, February 15th 2012. <https://openparliament.ca/votes/41-1/128/>

<sup>9</sup> Votes for and against C-42 (no recorded votes at Third Reading), April 20th 2015. <https://openparliament.ca/votes/41-2/376/>

<sup>10</sup> **Liberal Party of Canada**, election platform, October 2015. <https://www.liberal.ca/realchange/guns/>

<sup>11</sup> **New Democratic party**, election platform, October 2015. <http://www.ndp.ca/platform>

<sup>12</sup> As reported by « Débat des chefs : Armes, niqab et Sénat à l'ordre du jour », *Le Devoir*, 3 octobre 2015.

<http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/canada/451691/debat-des-chefs-armes-niqab-et-senat-a-l-ordre-du-jour>

<sup>13</sup> **Bloc québécois**, election platform, October 2015. <http://www.blocquebecois.org/engagements/familles-et-citoyens/>

<sup>14</sup> There remains one copy of the Quebec data : « Quebec gun registry data handed over to Federal Court », *CBC News*, June 24th 2015.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/quebec-gun-registry-data-handed-over-to-federal-court-1.3124171>

<sup>15</sup> **Green Party of Canada**, election platform, October 2015. <http://www.greenparty.ca/en/policy/vision-green/people/justice/guns>