



May 2, 2019

Respecting Public Health, Voting for Bill C-71

Dear Senator,

I am writing to you on behalf of Canadian Doctors for Protection from Guns to urge you to pass Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms, in its original form.

In February, I had the distinct pleasure of representing our organization at the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence. I must say that this was an enormously gratifying experience. I was impressed by the respect and curiosity afforded to me by the Senators. Thank you for your service to Canadians.

Since then, events at home and abroad – from high profile shootings around the world to the daily devastation caused by guns seen in operating rooms, rehabilitation centres, and psychiatrist offices across Canada – have only strengthened the resolve of my colleagues and I to advocate for common sense gun policy changes.

Common sense gun policy is exactly what this bill represents: better record keeping requirements for gun retailers, stronger background checks, and tighter regulations around transporting a gun. These are modest but important changes that will lessen the risk of preventable gun injury and death and make Canadians safer. It was disappointing to learn the Committee moved to weaken the legislation, but it is not too late.

There is widespread support for the original Bill C-71 within the medical community. A dozen prominent medical associations have endorsed our call for stronger gun laws. More than 1,000 health professionals and medical students in 16 cities participated in a National Day of Action on April 3rd in support of Bill C-71 and a ban on assault weapons and handguns. Beyond the medical community, an April 26 Leger poll indicated more than 80% of Canadians support the key elements of Bill C-71.

Since February, our organization has been subject to the vitriolic ire of Canadian gun lobby groups, including a disturbing [video](#) warning that doctors will “own” responsibility for children being shot and killed if a handgun and assault weapons ban is implemented. This is the discourse and tactics of the National Rifle Association in the United States. We also know the [NRA](#) has been closely monitoring the legislative process of Bill C-71.

Our history, culture, and politics are very different here. Canadians deserve a made in Canada solution – and it starts with accepting that gun violence is a public health issue requiring action.

The proliferations of guns represent a growing public health threat. Statistics Canada reports that firearm-related violent crime has increased 42% since 2013. Canada has the 5th highest rate of age adjusted, standardized firearm mortality among 23 peer countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2018). Women and girls are particularly vulnerable. Shooting was the most common method of their killing in 2018 at 34% according to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. A 2018 position statement by the Canadian Pediatric Society states that guns should not be kept in environments where children live or play. Suicide is preventable death; 75% of gun deaths are suicides and nearly 15% of adolescent suicides in Canada are by gun.

Canadian Doctors for Protection from Guns only interest in this matter is to advocate for the health and wellbeing of Canadians. We ask our policy makers to act with the same resolve.

We must begin to treat guns the way we have treated other issues affecting public health, such as smoking and road safety. We must take comprehensive action. It starts with the simple step of passing Bill C-71 in its original form. There is no time to lose. We hope we can count on your support. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Najma Ahmed
Co-Chair
Canadian Doctors for Protection from Guns