



The Antique Arms Gazette

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A Message From a Fellow Gun Owner

“For the sake of public safety, we need to make firearms illegal in this country & we need to put that *right* in the criminal code. And if someone wants to own one of these things, we need to make sure they’ve passed a rigorous licensing process first. We need to make sure they’ve passed in-depth background checks. We should make them go through training in the requirements on safe handling and storage so they know the law. We should make sure they don’t have a history of violence & we should make sure their spouses are aware they’re trying to get a gun license. We should make sure we build a mandatory waiting period into this process so there’s a time for cooling off. We should make sure we call two people known to each applicant and use them as character references to make sure there aren’t background issues we need to know about. We should make sure these licenses expire every five years and require that each and every one of them goes through this entire in-depth vetting process again to ensure they’ve stayed above board.

We should make sure these people have behaved themselves and continue to not be a danger by checking each and every one of them against the criminal records database every 24 hours, 365 days a year. If one of them is convicted of a criminal offence, we should make sure the police are sent to their house so those firearms can be seized.

And, because all of this would expensive to administer, we should make sure that these guys bear the costs and have them pay the tab on this stuff with their fees.

We can’t just have guns sitting around in side tables either, or being carried around in car glove boxes, or sitting in drawers. We should make sure there are strict laws on storage and transportation so that these things are locked up all the time and can’t be accessed by children, by people without the proper training, by people wanting to hurt themselves or others, or by people wanting to steal them.

We need to have strict limits on magazine capacities, with modifications required that physically limit how much any magazine can hold.

We should make sure that there are laws that say ammunition can only be purchased by those who have these licenses.

We should make it so the police can go to their homes and inspect what they have and how it’s stored to make sure we’re all safe.

And we can’t just have people carrying these things around, or going around with these in their vehicles. We should make sure that firearms we are concerned about have extra restrictions, and that they can only be taken from their locked storage to go straight to places like the range for practice or to a gunsmith for repair and then be put right back afterward. And the person needs to have approval for that transportation beforehand.

We should make sure there are stiff penalties for violating any of these laws, including prison time.

Do these seem like good measures to institute? Or maybe does this seem a bit heavy-handed? Well, **each and every one of these items is already the law in Canada, and is already in place.**

It’s worth mentioning at this point that Faisal Hussein, the Danforth shooter in Toronto did not have a firearms license. He used a handgun that was already prohibited in this country. That handgun cannot be purchased legally in Canada, so it could not have been given to him by someone who owned it legitimately, or been stolen from a legitimate owner. It was smuggled across the border from the US and obtained illegally by Hussain. His obtaining of that gun was already illegal, his possession of that gun was already illegal, his use of that gun to hurt and kill people was already illegal. Our existing laws could not have prevented this tragedy. Any amendment to our laws, including making handguns totally and utterly illegal to own or use would not have prevented this.

We use laws for various reasons, including establishing the boundaries of safety. But the

problem of evil in the world isn’t something we can legislate away. It’s be something we need to attack at its source before it begins. Ensuring poverty and the effects of poverty are diminished, ensuring that there are economic opportunities for the disadvantaged, ensuring proper resourcing for law enforcement, ensuring that people struggling with mental illness can access the care they need. Basically, problems that take decades and a solid commitment of financial resources to resolve. Big picture things that tend not to be readily understood by the individual voter because the problem’s so vast the solution is vast as well. Things that require a resolve longer than most people’s memory, and most governments’ mandates. Things, fundamentally, that can’t be fixed in one term in office. So, we end up with emotion-based, knee-jerk band-aid measures that buy votes rather than fix problems...

Cheers, Jimmy”

Couldn’t have said it better myself...

These are difficult times for gun owners.

All the negative publicity guns have received recently is bad news for us law-abiding citizens and bonafide collectors and owners: Montreal and Toronto are considering banning ownership of all hand guns, and our brown-nosing, anything-for-a-vote Prime Minister and his pals are throwing around the idea that we should ban handguns right across the country. I’m not one to get on a band-wagon, but I am afraid that if we do not speak up, we will be thrown under the bus – all of us. I have been a gun owner for some 41 years, and the laws have become more prohibitive ever since – not that they had any effect on crime rates, as we can clearly see from recent events. It should be noted that these restrictive laws ALL came from the Liberals...

We need to remind them that a national ban on handguns would be Political SUICIDE! It’s the only language they understand...

Interpreting Canadian Antique Gun Law

Before I continue, please note that I am not a lawyer or police officer, and my knowledge of Canadian Antique Gun Law is based strictly on my own experience and observations. The “Regulations Prescribing Antique Firearms” (SOR/98-464) states that a firearm is deemed antique if it is one of the following (I am leaving out shotguns and rifles):

1. A reproduction of a flintlock, wheel-lock or matchlock firearm, *other than a handgun*, manufactured after 1897.

Handguns

2. A handgun manufactured before 1898 that is capable of discharging only rim-fire cartridges, *other than 22 Calibre Short, 22 Calibre Long or 22 Calibre Long Rifle cartridges.*
3. A handgun manufactured before 1898 that is capable of discharging centre-fire cartridges, *other than a handgun designed or adapted to discharge 32 Short Colt, 32 Long Colt, 32 Smith and Wesson, 32 Smith and Wesson Long, 32-20 Winchester, 38 Smith and Wesson, 38 Short Colt, 38 Long Colt, 38-40 Winchester, 44-40 Winchester, or 45 Colt cartridges.*

From the above extract you can see that the rules are quite clear, and anyone who owns or purchases an antique firearm is well advised to obtain an “antique declaration” from the RCMP Firearms Technical Division. Although this process is voluntary, it may prevent future headaches. To recap, let us look at the rules:

1. This rule states clearly that *no* handgun, no matter what sort of ignition system it uses, is considered antique if it was manufactured after 1897. Rifles and shot guns are exceptions.
2. Any rim fire hand gun made before 1898 (and that is January 1, 1898) is deemed to be antique unless it is a .22. Reason being that you can still buy .22 ammo through commercial channels. .22's are never considered antique in Canada, no matter how old.
3. This is the big one: Any center fire handgun made before January 1, 1898 is deemed antique unless it was originally chambered or has been adapted or redesigned to accept one of the following calibers:
 - a. .32 Short Colt
 - b. .32 Long Colt

- c. .32 Smith and Wesson
- d. .32 Smith and Wesson Long
- e. .38 Long Colt
- f. .38-40 Winchester
- g. .44-40 Winchester
- h. .45 Colt (which includes ACP)

It should be noted here that guns firing .25 and .32 centerfire cartridges are already considered prohibited, no matter the age.

It should also be noted that it is the owner’s responsibility to prove the age of the gun to the Technical Division. If they cannot ascertain the gun’s age or caliber with certainty, the application will be rejected. Here are a few helpful facts:

European made guns are sometimes easy to date, because European countries have had state-run proofing houses for several centuries. Belgium is perhaps the best, and most thorough systems. The letters ELG (Epreuve a Liege Garantie, meaning Guaranteed Liege Proof) is the standard state proof mark, in conjunction with an inspector’s mark. Depending on the mark, a gun can be easily dated:

- ELG in an oval, with a capital letter under a *crown* means the gun was made before 1877.
- ELG in an oval with a capital letter under a *star* means the gun was made between 1877 and 1893.
- ELG with a *crown above it*, and a capital letter with a *star* above it on a gun with a rifled barrel means the gun was made in 1893 if it has no other proof marks.
- ELG with a *crown above it* and a capital letter under a *star*, and the letter “R” with a *crown above it* means the gun was made after 1894, and may have been made as late as last week, because this arrangement of proof marks has not changed... the only way you may be able to prove to the RCMP that your gun is antique is if it is marked with a maker’s name and that maker went out of business before 1898.

German, French and British guns are less easy to date based on proof marks, and American made guns are impossible to date this way, because the US do not have a proofing system. Not all is lost, however as it is often easy to date an American or European gun by either the serial number (Colt, S&W and Remington records are still available) or even just the name. For example, the company of Forehand & Wadsworth changed its name to Forehand Arms when Wadsworth retired in 1890.

Therefore, any gun marked “Forehand And Wadsworth” is guaranteed to be antique (if it is in an acceptable caliber). Forehand Arms went out of business in 1898 – so it may be difficult to prove a Forehand Arms gun to be pre-1898. Harrington and Richardson, on the other hand continued to make hand guns until the 1940’s and it depends on the model if it is considered antique or not. Hopkins and Allen is another of these cases where it depends on the model of gun: the XL series was made pre-1898, as were their “Blue Jackets”, however their “Vest Pocket Deringer” was made as late as 1915. So, you can see the collector has to be vigilant, and do his research...

A final note on “conversions”: there are some antique hand guns which were duly converted from one type of caliber or ignition system to another, mostly percussion revolvers converted to either rim fire or center fire cartridges, “back in the day”. They are usually still considered antique, unless the conversion was to a caliber listed above in the “exceptions”. The more serious issue is that of modern conversions, namely the “shaving” of Webley Mk I .445 revolvers to accept .45ACP cartridges. This practice is not only foolish (.45 ACP produces a lot more pressure than the old black powder .445 Webley, and the gun may actually explode), but it is also illegal – the “converted” gun is not only *not* antique, it is prohibited due to its short barrel. I get a lot of requests for these, but I wouldn’t touch one with a ten-foot pole...

As an importer of antique guns from the US and Europe, all my merchandise has to be verified by the RCMP and in due time I do receive the “Antique Declarations” which I always forward to my customers. It is only when I buy at a Canadian show that I may not have the letter, but I can either apply on my customers’ behalf, or they can do it themselves. There is no cost involved.

I hope you find this information useful. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.



A Mariette Brevete Pin-Fire Revolver by Merolla Brothers of Naples, Italy, ca. 1868. The makers’ names prove that it was made before 1898.