



DFSC Statement on the Second Anniversary of the Danforth Tragedy July 22, 2020

Two years ago, July 22, 2018, a tragedy happened on the Danforth. Time has passed, but for our families and the community, the memories are just as vivid as they were on that Sunday night. Reese Fallon, a teenager, and Julianna Kozis, a ten-year-old girl, were murdered. Thirteen others were shot and injured. Others narrowly escaped.

Today, on behalf of the City of Toronto, Mayor John Tory will mark remembrance of that night and honour the victims, the families, the classmates, the teammates, the friends, the local businesses, the nearby neighbours, the first responders, the emergency room doctors and nurses and all who were affected by that night. It is emotionally hard to remember. We do so for the sake of those we lost, for those that were changed, for our own families, and for those who have been affected by gun violence in our country.

We also continue to advocate for measures that could help to prevent this from happening again. Armed with a handgun stolen from a retailer, a person filled his heart with hate and shot at people at random, killing and changing lives forever. His tool was a handgun – glorified by some, thought of as a hobby by others - a lethal weapon by design and primary purpose. That sad fact continues to affect us all.

We have an ongoing gun violence problem, just as we did two years ago. According to the Toronto Police service's website, the year 2020, on a year to date basis, looks very much like 2018, which established a new record for gun related crime in Toronto. Police have reported 244 shootings this year. That is up 8% from 2018 and 14% from a year ago. One hundred and eleven people have been killed or injured so far this year, versus 113 in 2008 and 117 in 2009, also on a year to date basis. While the pandemic may have isolated us, and we have given up large gatherings like that night two years ago, gun violence continues. It must become a focus for our leaders to address this. We must ask how other countries, of a similar population, with similar challenges have a better record than Canada on gun violence.

We must reduce the risk of death posed to the broader community by the existence of these inexpensive, portable, concealable and deadly weapons. Handguns are not needed as tools for hunting. We must start asking why handguns, among other firearms, are owned privately in Canada given the threat they pose to others, even with careful ownership. We are all living as a community with the risks posed by having one million handguns in Canadian homes, and in 2,400 retail stores, that can be stolen, diverted to criminals, sold to fraudsters, and used to kill at a distance with the pull of a trigger.

While the Federal government is addressing many issues related to gun violence, and we are supportive of these initiatives, their initial proposal is to leave handgun regulation to

municipalities. This approach could easily create a patchwork of laws that will sow confusion among gun owners, those concerned about guns, and those who will enforce these laws. No Canadian gun control advocacy group or safety organization has called for differing rules from town to town and city to city.

We must ask why the will of the majority of Canadians is not being heard. Three national surveys, recently reported by various groups, show that the vast majority of Canadians support our request. The [Angus Reid Institute](#) published a survey on May 1, 2020, that plainly shows 67% of Canadians want a ban on handguns. [Ipsos](#) Canada published a survey on gun control on May 28, 2020, where 71% of respondents indicated that “the federal government’s legislation (related to assault weapons) should also include a ban on all handguns”. An [EnviroNics Research poll](#) published in May, shows a full **69% of Canadians** prefer gun control laws banning or further restricting handguns to be national and applied uniformly across the country, as opposed to having the federal government work with municipal governments to allow for local bans or further restrictions on handguns.¹

More than gun control measures are needed to address the whole issue of gun violence; however, that does not excuse inaction on this specific initiative. We must do what other thoughtful nations have chosen to do and prohibit handguns. As a group of families and community members, we experienced a failure of existing policies just once, and once should have been enough for everybody to want to take every action possible to prevent this from happening again.

About Danforth Families for Safe Communities

DFSC is a group of survivors, families, friends and community members impacted by the shooting tragedy on Danforth Avenue, Toronto, Canada, on July 22, 2018, where a young girl and a teenager were killed and 13 were shot by a lone gunman. The DFSC have come together in the wake of our tragedy to share our views and experience, in the hope that others will not have to experience anything similar.

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¹ **EnviroNics Research**, for PolyRemembers/PolySeSouvient. Online survey conducted May 11th to May 14th 2020 among a representative sample of 1511 Canadians aged 18 years and over. Results: http://polysesouvient.ca/Documents/POLL_20_05_11_to_14_EnviroNics_NationalLocal_HandgunBan.pdf; Question: “During the last Federal election, the Liberals promised to work with the provinces and territories to give municipalities the ability to further restrict – or ban – handguns.(Randomize) [] Some / While others say that it would be preferable that a ban or further restrictions on handguns, which are not used for hunting, be national and applied uniformly across the country. [] Some / While others say that it would be preferable that the federal government work with municipalities to allow for local bans or further restrictions on handguns, instead of bringing in new federal measures for handguns. Which view is closer to your own? ‘It is preferable that gun control laws banning or further restricting handguns, not used for hunting, be national and applied uniformly across the country’; ‘It is preferable that the federal government work with municipal governments to allow for local bans or further restrictions on handguns’.”