This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Mon Aug 3 16:18:21 2026 / +0000 GMT

Is this the year of the gun?

EDITORIAL

IT'S GETTING PRETTY SCARY when on the same weekend we hear of 40 innocent people being gunned down in two cities south of the border and 13 people being shot in a single night in Toronto.

There's little doubt that in North America this could be called the Year of the Gun, or that gun control could well become an issue in next October's federal election as well as in the 2020 presidential election in the United States.

We think Canadians ought to be proud of the fact that our Constitution has no provision similar to the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which has been interpreted by that country's Republican-dominated Supreme Court as barring any meaningful form of gun controls.

Those of us living on the edge of the Greater Toronto Area shouldn't take too much comfort from the fact shootings locally are mainly by hunters and that thus far in 2019 there have been no reported illegal discharges of firearms in Dufferin County.

Rather, we should note that the rash of shootings in the GTA is no longer confined to Toronto, with hardly a day going by without at least one occurring in York and Peel Regions.

The massacre of 31 WalMart customers in El Paso, Texas and another nine outside a nightclub in Dayton, Ohio, has led President Donald Trump to visit the two cities yesterday after remarking that the El Paso killer, not the assault rifle he used, was to blame.

Despite the fact that about 90 per cent of U.S. citizens support universal background checks of those seeking to purchase firearms and a ban on sale or ownership of assault weapons, neither is likely to take place without the support of the gun lobby.

We've never heard a coherent explanation as to the need for Americans to possess assault rifles, or for that matter of Torontonians to own handguns, and we certainly support Toronto Mayor John Tory's campaign for a handgun ban.

The need for gun controls in the U.S. has become all the more evident because of the fact that some of the mass shootings were a form of domestic terrorism carried out by killers full of hatred for minorities, be they Muslims, Jews, blacks or, as in the case of the El Paso killer, of immigrants from Latin America.

And that element is by no means found only in the U.S. Quebec has been the scene of the 1989 massacre in Montreal's École Polytechnique, where 14 women lost their lives because of the killer's hatred of feminists, and the more recent deaths of six worshippers in a Quebec City mosque by a killer full of hatred toward Muslims.

Thankfully, none of the fatal shootings in the GTA appear to have been race-related, with most seemingly being connected to warfare between gangs of youth, with both killers and victims for some reason being mainly black.

However, it was just last year that we witnessed the horror of a van being driven down a sidewalk on Toronto's Yonge Street by a young man who appears to have become as anti-feminist as the shooter in Montreal 29 years earlier.

If nothing else, that horror demonstrated that guns and knives aren't the only potential weapons for someone bent on killing others.But that's hardly an argument against the need for tough gun controls.

A Wikipedia list of firearms deaths per 100,000 residents shows Japan with the lowest tally, at 0.06, with all of them suicides, not homicides. In contrast, the rate in the U.S. was 12.21 deaths per 100,000, with 4.46 of them homicides and 7.32 suicides.

Canada was somewhat better, with an overall rate of 2.05 per 100,000, made up of 0.61 from homicides and 1.52 attributed to suicides.

It's surely no coincidence that Japan has some of the world's toughest gun controls, to the point where even gang members content themselves with knives as their weapons. Anyone wishing to purchase a firearm must submit to interviews in which they demonstrate the intended purpose.

In the U.S., most of the support for gun controls comes from Democrats and most of the opposition from within the Republican Party, perhaps because one of its big financial supporters is the National Rifle Association.

The Democratic Party wants stricter regulation of firearms, especially assault weapons, with its views centred around the belief that the constitutional right to own firearms is subject to reasonable regulation.

The 2012 Democratic platform said it didn't want to override the Second Amendment but wanted common-sense reforms.

Similarly, in Canada, calls for tougher gun controls have tended to come from centrist and left-wing parties, with the Liberals having brought in a short-lived long gun registry that was quickly killed by the Conservatives.

It will be interesting to see whether 2020 will see any toughening of gun laws in either the U.S. or Canada.