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Property rights

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I received a letter from the RCMP the other day notifying me that I may or may not be a criminal in the near future.

In fact several million Canadians would have received the same notification.

Every law-abiding owner of a valid firearms licence in the country was sent a letter informing them that they may now be in possession of a prohibited weapon.

The government's recent announcement that they are changing the status of several rifles, from the current legal status to that of a prohibited weapon means thousands of legal gun owners could soon be on the wrong side of the law because they have a legally purchased, legally owned rifle.

I don't own any of the rifles on the list. I'm not even a hunter.

I keep my shooting to targets and the occasional tin can and old pop bottles filled with water, just to make it interesting.

Owning and maintaining firearms in Canada is a privilege, not a right. Unlike our American neighbors who decided from the get-go that every citizen has the right to arm themselves, our laws provide for gun ownership depending on a set of rules every gun owner must follow.

Last year in Toronto, there were around 325 gun shooting incidents. Pretty much all those incidents were related to the drug trade, and illegal gang activity.

Illegal firearms from U.S. sources are used in 70 to 90 percent of all gun-related crimes in Canada. Please note, illegal guns, not legally registered guns.

The owners of the 60,000 AR-15 rifles in Canada, were not doing the shooting.

The owners of these rifles also paid a premium price for what are premium level rifles. These are not your grandpa's double-barreled shotgun with the fancy Damascus barrel design.

They are precision-made rifles that come with a hefty price.

It should also be noted, that the man responsible for the mass shooting in Nova Scotia, which apparently inspired this ban, did not have a firearms licence, and his guns were illegally obtained. It is believed he got them from outside of Canada.

This firearms ban affects everyone in the country, whether you like it or not.

The order to ban these rifles did not come as the result of a parliamentary debate or any kind of discussion.

The order to ban these rifles came as the result of a signature on what was essentially an executive order. The PM signed a piece of paper and it was done.

Many Canadians don't realize that property ownership is not a right in Canada.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not guarantee your right to own anything, including the home you live in.

Unlike many modern western countries, the right to own property is only included through the Bill of Rights ? an ordinary federal law. It is not part of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Although you do maintain some property rights, those property rights are created and protected by both common law and statute law ? although both can be changed by legislation.

You need a team, a large team, of lawyers to figure it all out.

The point is, the PM decided to take away the legal ownership of property of thousands of Canadians by placing his signature on a document. No debate, no consultations, no real thought process involved here other than to eliminate something based on design.

Yes, the AR series and other rifles have that militaristic design. However, they are no more deadly than any other firearm.

I hope the PM's office doesn't realize that motorcycles are an inherently dangerous mode of transportation ? which they are. I have a motorcycle licence, and yes, they aren't as a safe as a car.

If he gets out his pen again, you could receive a letter stating your Harley Davidson Softail is now on the list of illegal modes of transportation and prepare to drive to the local scrapyard to be destroyed.

To show that this new program of prohibiting certain weapons was not thought out very well, you only have to read the notification sent to firearms licence holders across the country.

The instructions state: The Government INTENDS to implement a buy-back program and is looking at a range of options ? which will be available at a later date.

Under a section titled ?What are your options?? The first instruction is ?Wait for further instructions to participate in the buy-back program.

Exactly what is that supposed to mean? I'm pretty sure there are a lot of rifle owners who are feeling pretty nervous having to ?wait' for instructions while in possession of a rifle that has been declared as prohibited.

I would imagine many owners of the now-prohibited rifles will find a secure hiding spot for them.

Just like they did when a previous government started its disastrous, now scrapped, long gun registry.