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New Research: Canadian Gun Laws Did Not Impact on Suicide

New research in the international journal *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior* shows that tightening Canadian gun laws did not lead to declines in suicide.

The study, led by McGill University Professor of Psychiatry Jean Caron, found that Bill C-17 was not associated with an acceleration of the pre-existing decline in firearm suicides, or any reduction in overall suicide rates in Quebec.

The International Coalition for Women in Shooting and Hunting (WiSH) say this result, while disappointing, is nonetheless consistent with other countries' experiences with gun laws and suicide.

"In New Zealand, for example, epochs of legislative change did not impact on overall suicide rates," said WiSH Chair Dr Samara McPhedran.

"In Australia, national suicide prevention strategies appear to have played a more influential role than gun laws in reducing suicides across the board, irrespective of method."

Caron and colleagues report that total suicide rates in Quebec increased by 19% after the firearms legislation was introduced.

"This report highlights, yet again, the importance of adopting comprehensive prevention strategies and tackling the complex nature of suicide, rather than seeking quick fixes."

"We urge the Canadian Government to heed this study, and take careful note of its public health policy implications," Dr McPhedran said.

Reference: Caron, J., Julien, M., & Huang, JH. (2008). Changes in suicide methods in Quebec between 1987 and 2000: The possible impact of Bill C-17 requiring safe storage of firearms. *Suicide and Life Threatening Behavior*, 38(2): 195-208.

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WOMEN ON TARGET FOR POSITIVE CHANGE