

Ottawa’s firearms buyback plan isn’t about safety

By Marco Navarro-Genie
It’s about politics and provinces are right to refuse to play along

Federal Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree’s leaked admission that Ottawa’s firearms buyback is unenforceable was no slip. It exposed the way federal power is deployed for partisan gain while provinces are left to pay the bill.

The leak matters because it exposes a pattern, not an exception. Ottawa drafts policies to suit its politics and expects provinces to carry the weight. Police budgets, university research chairs, hospital systems and housing markets are treated as levers to be pulled from Ottawa. The effects are felt locally, but the decisions are made elsewhere.

Consider the pattern. The Online Harms Act, rejected more than once, is introduced yet again, as if repetition can

substitute for consent. Health care dollars are tied to federal strings that reorder provincial systems with no regard for local capacity. Immigration quotas climb at a pace provinces cannot house or school. Environmental rules descend without negotiation, upending years of co-operative planning. Each measure arrives as an edict. Consultation is reduced to announcement.

Ottawa’s firearms politics are about control, not safety. Provinces are pushing back with Sovereignty Acts and constitutional authority. From gun grabs to health care strings, Ottawa rules by edict. Some provinces are finally saying no more.

Resistance has already begun. Saskatchewan moved early, adopting legislation that makes any federal confiscation program subject to provincial authority, including RCMP operations. In Alberta, Premier Danielle Smith has

gone further, declaring flatly: “We will not allow police in Alberta to confiscate previously legal firearms. I have directed two of my ministers to relentlessly defend Albertans’ right to lawful and safe possession of firearms and the right to self-defence.”

Even before the introduction of the Sovereignty Act, Tyler Shandro, then Alberta’s justice minister, announced that the province would not use its police or prosecutors to carry out confiscations. Although former premier Jason Kenney opposed a Sovereignty Act, his government likewise refused to act as Ottawa’s enforcer.

Alberta and Saskatchewan have since given themselves legislative tools, Sovereignty Acts, which assert the right of provinces to decline enforcement of federal laws they judge unconstitutional. These statutes formalize existing constitutional powers. Provinces without

Sovereignty Acts have also drawn lines. Ontario has signalled its refusal to help enforce Ottawa’s firearms program.

These positions are lawful, rooted in the Constitution’s division of powers, which assigns the administration of justice and policing to the provinces.

This clarity ought to attract others. Manitoba, with one of the highest proportions of licensed hunters in the country, has strong reason to resist Ottawa’s targeting of lawful gun owners. Communities are not made safer by seizing deer rifles from responsible hunters, nor are public services improved by diverting scarce provincial resources into a program that federal ministers concede will not work. Manitoba would do well to follow Alberta and Saskatchewan in defending its jurisdiction, whether through a Sovereignty Act or by refusing to play Ottawa’s

game.

The point is practical. Prairie provinces cannot spare rural detachments to seize hunters’ rifles because the Liberal caucus fears losing seats in Montreal. They cannot put their power grids at risk to meet Ottawa’s timelines while households absorb higher bills. Universities cannot be turned into federal policy pilot projects. Provinces exist to govern their own communities, not to absorb the fallout of federal experiments.

The genius of federalism lies in the division of authority, which encourages compromise and minimizes tyrannical imposition. Ottawa governs in its sphere, provinces in theirs. Where the two overlap, cooperation must be negotiated, not imposed. Sovereignty Acts sharpen that principle. They remind Ottawa that partnership is earned, not dictated.

What Anandasangaree’s

admission exposed was not only the cynicism of one firearms program. It revealed a method of governing: federal power deployed for partisan gain, with provinces reduced to instruments. That cannot endure. Canada was never meant to be a chain of command. It was built as a contract—one that requires respect for provincial authority.

Provinces that refuse to carry out Ottawa’s politically motivated projects are not weakening Canada; they are enforcing its terms.

Marco Navarro-Genie is vice-president of research at the Frontier Centre for Public Policy and co-author, with Barry Cooper, of Canada’s COVID: The Story of a Pandemic Moral Panic (2023).

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System reform and more supply are key to balancing Ontario’s rental housing market

Ontario’s rental system is broken. Across the province, too many families, students, and seniors are struggling to find safe, affordable places to live. In A Fair Rental Market for a Stronger Ontario, the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) is calling on the provincial government to help tenants, landlords, and the REALTORS® that serve them by modernizing rental laws, fixing the dysfunctional Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), and expanding supply so more Ontarians can find the right place to call home. OREA’s latest policy report lays out a path forward with 20 “action-ready” and long-term recommendations that will help achieve a fair, functional, and

balanced rental housing market that works for everyone, including: Reviewing and modernizing the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA), to reflect today’s rental market, improve affordability, and create a fairer system for both small and large landlords. Finding new opportunities to support mediation services between landlords and tenants at the LTB, such as exploring a model similar to British Columbia’s Residential Tenancy Branch’s facilitation services. Mandating the equal treatment of all individuals under the Condominium Act, 1998, to be inclusive of diverse families. Moving away from the LTB’s

digital-first strategy to improve efficiency by restoring in-person hearings as the default, while offering a virtual option. Providing targeted tax incentives to small landlords in good standing, who offer new rental units in growing markets, to help ease pressure on tenants while encouraging responsible property management. “Ontario needs a rental market that is fair, efficient, and keeps the door to homeownership open to everyone who wants to achieve that dream,” said OREA President Cathy Polan. “That means we need more accessible and affordable supply across the housing spectrum so families of every size can find a great place to thrive. Improving Ontario’s rental

landscape to make housing more affordable is a key step towards that goal.” Building on the work done by the Presidential Advisory Group on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEIA) in OREA’s 2022 report, Fighting for Fair Housing, the recommendations in this report aim to rebalance the rights and interests of landlords and tenants, while supporting a strong, stable housing market. In a new survey conducted by Abacus Data in July 2025 on behalf of OREA, over half (56 percent) of Ontario said they consider the rental market unbalanced, citing high rental prices (82 percent), limited availability of suitable units (62 percent), and poor property

condition (49 percent) as key barriers. In addition, a dysfunctional, backlogged tribunal system is failing both tenants and landlords. Among them, only 32 percent say they are satisfied with dispute resolution at the LTB, and a strong majority of both – nearly 7 in 10 – want to see the RTA modernized to better reflect current market realities. “As both a landlord and father of renters, I know a fair, balanced rental market is key to housing affordability across the spectrum, and the policy solutions Ontario REALTORS® put forward today will do just that,” said OREA CEO Luigi Favaro. “This is the Government of Ontario’s

chance to address ongoing challenges in the rental market, giving mom-and-pop landlords accessible, timely dispute resolution while also protecting tenants from bad faith evictions and ensuring Ontario’s market has a healthy stock of diverse supply.” If Ontario is to remain a place for families to grow, Ontario REALTORS® know that bold action is needed to build a rental housing system that works in every community. If implemented, these 20 recommendations will help deliver diverse options for tenants, support all housing providers, and strengthen the housing market as a whole.

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