



Petition worthy of our names

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ROYSON JAMES

*"Toronto gets more dangerous everyday
Anyone would think we're in the USA
We'll be minding our own business
When a coward shoots and kills us
City Council, help us ban handguns today."*

With poetry, raw prose, folk music and the unique, if not mellifluous, melodies of the septet called the Raging Grannies, Toronto came out yesterday to buttress Mayor David Miller's campaign to ban handguns across Canada.

Wisely, the gun lobby stayed away.

Someone extolling the virtues of gun ownership – even as grieving moms, weeping fathers and outraged citizens clamoured for the ban on all guns which, they said, "serve no purpose at all but to kill" – would have been anathema.

To be sure, there are arguments to be made on the futility of handgun bans. Yes, guns don't kill, people do. And yes, banning handguns won't keep guns out of the murderous hands of criminals and gang bangers. In fact, such arguments can come from the unlikeliest of sources sometimes.

That fellow who was shot on the Jane St. bus a few years back, the same incident that resulted in a little girl almost losing her eye as a couple of gunmen attacked him? Well, he recently called the Star to propose the above arguments.

But somehow one thinks even that shooting victim – standing in the presence of so much grief and anger and eloquent emotion and resolve in a city hall committee room yesterday – would relent and reconsider.

Miller is bang on with his call for a national handgun ban. Councillor Michael Walker was inspired to have moved the original motion at city council back in January. And citizens of goodwill, in a show of solidarity with the victims and their families, can do no less than sign the petitions, advocate and fight for an

abatement of the carnage on our streets.

Miller announced an Internet campaign with a [YouTube video](#). Citizens can go to www.toronto.ca/handgunban to add their name to the online petition that is to end up on the desk of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, where the handgun ban would have to be initiated.

Miller says he has held in his arms too many grieving mothers and relatives after they've lost a loved one to gun violence. He's promised to do everything in his power to reduce the risk of the carnage. And he's calling on citizens to help him.

First to enlist yesterday were many grieving family members and loved ones who gave politicians a public airing of their private hell. It was at times uncomfortable and comforting at the same time, a group catharsis.

Audette Shephard, president of United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere, spoke for mothers who've lost sons to gun violence, including her own, Justin, in 2001. She said the cycle of life and tragedy suggests, "One day for you, one day for me. For us, our day has already come. We're standing here so that your day won't have to come. Crime anywhere is a threat to safety everywhere."

It must have been disheartening for Miller to hear so many of the deputants say they had let go of their claim that Toronto was a safe, big city. Crime is down in every category but gun crimes, he said. Still, gun crimes fuel fear and perception.

Abdi Warsame told Miller he often bragged to his family in Somalia that Toronto was the safest city. "I've lost the bragging rights for Toronto. Before we lose the bragging rights for Canada, let's do something, Stephen Harper."

Royson James usually appears Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

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