

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

As I write this article in late May, Ontario is just starting a phased re-opening of some non-essential businesses. There are still long line-ups, social distancing is in place, and facemasks are required in many places.

We just got the approval for gun clubs and gun ranges to open for practice only (as at May 19, 2020). Ontario clubs are putting safety protocols in place to meet the applicable requirements. When Ontario can host competitions and have meaningful enough sized gatherings is anyone's guess. But, the OPTA is still optimistic that our Ontario provincial championships can be hosted at St. Thomas as scheduled (July 30 to August 3, 2020).

The border between Canada and U.S.A. remains closed for non-essential travel until June 21, 2020 but this closure may be re-extended thereafter. Time will tell.

As if COVID-19 wasn't bad enough, our government has imposed a further "gun ban" that has 1500 types of guns on the list. In addition to these numbers, any firearm that has a barrel width of 20mm or greater or firearms capable of discharging a projectile with a muzzle energy greater than 10,000 joules are also prohibited.

At least one of the firearm owner advocate associations has had one or more legal opinions that 10 and 12 gauge shotguns with screw-in chokes are prohibited because when the choke is out, the diameter exceeds 20mm. I don't share that opinion but acknowledge that the Government's wording in its "Order in Council" is sloppy.

The industry standard, as I understand it, is that the barrel measurements are taken from front of the chamber and aft of the choke. The Government has come out with a "clarification" that 12 and 10 gauge shotguns are not prohibited so in my judgement in spite of sloppy wording our 12 and 10 gauge shotguns should not be prohibited and one can continue to use them. I have had U.S. residents inquiring about this issue as they have heard two conflicting viewpoints and don't want to have their shotguns seized and/or be charged for violation of our laws. This is an issue not just for clay target shooters but wildfowlers as well.

As for 10,000 joules – perhaps someone could load the dickens out of a 12 or 10 gauge shell and get a result that exceeds 10,000 joules but for any standard hunting and target loads, there is no issue. What does "capable of generating muzzle energy greater than 10,000 joules" mean? If one yoyo can do this, does that mean that the firearm he used is capable of exceeding the limits and jeopardizing everyone? I think not but again – sloppy wording and needless alarm. If you're wondering what a "joule of energy" is, you're not alone. You have to be a math whiz or techno-freak to sort this out.

No average firearm owner will be easily able to calculate joules of energy. From our old physics classes, as most of us will recall, energy, mass, speed interplay. There are formulas. Just be aware.

One more burden placed upon those in Canadian society that deign to own a firearm.

In my profession as a lawyer, I deal regularly with small business owners that are seeing their businesses dying on the vine. They can't open and have no income, yet the expenses keep piling up. Many will never re-open again. They will have no job and their employees will have no job. Most of those that make the rules that keep our businesses closed have secure jobs and keep getting paid. If their paychecks were in jeopardy perhaps there would be a little more empathy with some business owners and some urgency to help these businesses open quickly and safely.

I have little patience for the government agencies that we regularly deal with who are closed but display signs where they cheer on the front line essential workers, and they give assurances that just because they are closed to the public, that they are nevertheless working from home. In many cases – yes. In a great many cases – nonsense. Nobody answers the phone, or emails. It is often days (if ever) that someone gets back to you on an issue.

The gas prices are low – but there is no place to go. Shelter at home means increased stress levels and a feeling of helplessness for many. Our office is uncertain what to expect – a new baby boom –or- a raft of divorce cases.

Do the best you can under exceptional circumstances, and remember the words once spoken and believed to have its origins in old Chinese folklore, “May you live in exciting times.”

Enough excitement already.

Paul Shaw,
Ontario Delegate