



Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police  
Association canadienne des chefs de police

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Presentation to the House of Commons' Standing  
Committee on Public Safety and National Security

**Study of the growing problem of car thefts in Canada**

Remarks by:  
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Representing:  
**Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police**

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Good morning Chair, Vice-Chairs and committee members. On behalf of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the dramatic increase of auto theft in Canada and opportunities to combat this concerning public and officer safety trend.

## **Introduction**

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I very much appreciated participating in the federal government's National Summit on Combatting Auto Theft which took place a few short weeks ago, in Ottawa, on February 8<sup>th</sup>.

The Summit provided the police with the opportunity to collaborate with government officials and industry stakeholders to address the complexities of auto theft, including the role of organized crime in this growing criminal market.

The National Summit was an excellent first step, and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police is looking forward to working with the many partners who committed themselves to working jointly towards identifying and implementing solutions during the Summit.

## **Auto Theft Offences**

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I am aware of the alarming statistics and safety concerns presented to you earlier this week by the police witnesses who appeared before you on February 26<sup>th</sup>. To add current context, since the National Summit on February the 8<sup>th</sup>, there have been over 3,000 automobiles stolen in Canada.

Passenger vehicle thefts are not new to the Canadian criminal market. There are well documented cases of organized crime groups smuggling stolen vehicles in shipping containers to overseas locations dating back to the 1990s.

Generically, the incidents of auto theft decreased significantly in the period leading up to, and certainly after, a 2007 Transport Canada regulation that mandated vehicle manufacturers to equip all new vehicles with anti-theft engine immobilizers.

Despite these advancements, the criminal element eventually found technical means to manipulate and defeat these technologies.

## Organized Crime

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Organized crime seized upon being able to defeat the advancements in anti-theft technology, while concurrently exploiting the disruption to global supply chains caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to shortages of vehicles and vehicle parts, substantially impacting supply and demand; and thereby, dramatically increasing the value of used vehicles.

Today, organized crime has a stronghold on the transnational auto theft market. It is estimated that 80% of stolen passenger vehicles are exported, 10% of these vehicles are re-vinned and sold domestically, with the remaining 10% being chopped down and sold for parts.

The lucrative international market for stolen Canadian vehicles has surged as many of the desirable vehicles are readily available in Canada and are either very costly internationally, or not available for purchase in those countries.

For substantial profits, criminal networks are exporting stolen vehicles to foreign buyers, with the majority of those vehicles destined for Africa, the Middle East. And Europe.

As you have heard from my policing colleagues, police leaders, officers, their families, and the public alike, are all very concerned about the increased levels of violence associated with passenger vehicle theft.

Reckless offenders, many of whom have previous convictions for robbery, auto theft and weapon offences, or are out on bail for similar crimes, are committing violent carjackings and home invasions to gain access to certain sought after vehicles; and in doing so, are endangering the lives of the public and our officers.

Unfortunately, there are countless examples of vehicle owners having their vehicles stolen at gun point, and officers themselves and/or their police vehicles being struck or run off the road by violent offenders attempting to flee in stolen vehicles.

## **Police Leaders Are Calling For...**

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In response to this public and officer safety concern, and to disrupt the illicit transnational market being controlled by organized criminal networks – the profits of which often finance other criminal activities, ranging from drug trafficking, arms dealing, human smuggling, and international terrorism – Canada’s police leaders are calling for:

- Strengthening port security and monitoring mechanisms, including inspections and the use of technology, to disrupt the illegal export of stolen vehicles.
- Regulating advancements in anti-theft technology to disable, track, and recover stolen vehicles, along with restricting the sale of tools utilized to defeat anti-theft systems.
- Verification of third-party vehicle registration; the physical inspection of problematic VINs during the registration process and, the creation of a national system for vehicle registrations.
- Specific to the theft of motor vehicles, stronger minimum sentences for repeat offenders; the creation of new offences related to trafficking and/or exporting stolen vehicles; and, exercising the availability of the full range of *Criminal Code* penalties currently available.

## **Conclusion**

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In closing, by working collaboratively with government and industry stakeholders, collectively, we have an opportunity — in fact a responsibility — to better serve Canadians by taking the necessary actions to disrupt and dismantle the organized criminal networks involved in auto theft.

Thereby, improving the quality of life in Canada and enhancing both public and officer safety.