Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police
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Presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Section 810 of the *Criminal Code* and Women's Safety

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Introduction

Good afternoon, I am Jennifer Davis, Deputy Chief of the Waterloo Regional Police Service and Committee Co-Chair of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police's Crime Prevention, Community Safety and Well-Being Committee (CPCSWB).

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation for the opportunity to discuss Section 810 of the *Criminal Code* and provide some insights and recommendations from a policing perspective.

If we were to ask whether Section 810 orders are effective — the response would be that they serve as a useful tool for preventing future harm, provide a mechanism for enforcement, and impose consequences when conditions are violated. However, they do not provide a guarantee or prevent future violence.

They are most effective for lower risk situations, where clear, specific, and enforceable conditions are imposed, and where other assurances are also in place.

They are less likely to be effective in higher risk situations, where a defendant may ignore conditions, or where the matter has already passed the precipice of concern and stronger measures are required.

The authority provided by Section 810 closely reflects the principles of early intervention, empowering the justice system to identify and address potential risks before they escalate into more serious harm.

Early Intervention and the Need for Additional Safeguards

The Family Violence Project (FVP) of Waterloo Region is one example of a multi-agency initiative providing wrap-around supports to those experiencing family or intimate partner violence.

The first of its kind in Canada, the FVP exemplifies the benefits of early intervention by focusing on prevention, and education, and not just crisis response.

Early intervention teams offer outreach, education, safety planning and referrals to supports (counselling, legal aid, housing etc.) where an individual can be diverted through a peace bond process.

In 2021, when the Early Intervention Program launched, ninety-four individuals successfully completed their peace bond term while simultaneously receiving necessary access to supports.

Currently, in 2025, more than 198 individuals are participating in this program and are subject to peace bond conditions, underscoring the ongoing need for increased resources and funding.

Recommendation: To strengthen the effectiveness of Section 810 orders, we need to invest in early intervention programs and multi-agency hub models that provide comprehensive supports for individuals. Supporting individuals with timely access to services significantly increases the likelihood of successful outcomes, making peace bonds a more reliable tool for preventing further harm to women and children.

Use of Section 810 Orders to Limit Firearm Access

Historically, we have seen inconsistencies in how peace bonds have been relied upon in cases of intimate partner violence.

Only recently, have we seen a shift to the consistent application Section 810 peace bonds in these situations.

These orders provide the authority needed to impose conditions that extend beyond just general safety measures.

This is necessary in IPV cases where a desire exists to impose conditions that include the requirement to surrender firearms triggering the process for a Possession and Acquisition License (PAL) suspension or revocation.

According to the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, the presence of firearms can escalate IPV to homicide, particularly in contexts where prior concerns about violence or control were documented. The Committee identified that between 2003 and 2023, a firearm was used in 24.7% of intimate partner homicides reviewed and 59.8% of all cases resulted in homicide-suicides in Ontario.

Enacted in April 2025, former Bill C-21 implemented strategies to mitigate gun violence associated with intimate partner violence, directly targeting these identified risks.

Recommendation: To strengthen the effectiveness of Section 810, in all cases where an offender is known to possess firearms, it is imperative that the order mandate the immediate surrender of all firearms and automatically initiate the process for the suspension or revocation of the defendant's PAL. This decisive action is essential to safeguard potential victims and prevent the escalation of intimate partner violence to lethal outcomes.

Coercive Control

Finally, I would like to highlight the pattern of control often found in IPV situations and the effectiveness of Section 810.03 orders in these matters specifically.

Coercive control seeks to strip victims of their autonomy and decision-making ability. Although this can affect anyone, women are disproportionately at a higher risk of this behaviour.

One significant benefit of a Section 810.03 order is the ability for *anyone* who holds fear for the victim to apply, not just the victim. This is especially important in situations where coercive control exists.

Section 810.03 orders allow for a broader range of conditions and can last up to two years for a defendant with prior IPV convictions, a benefit when the defendant and victim choose to remain together or need ongoing contact.

They allow for greater monitoring and oversight recognizing the heightened level of risk that may be involved.

A key concern, however, is that no one agency is formally tasked with monitoring individuals on peace bonds. This lack of formal supervision puts added pressure on police to enforce conditions, respond to breaches that rely heavily on victim reporting, and manage individuals with limited monitoring tools like GPS tracking—all with already strained resources.

Bill C-332, which proposed amendments to the *Criminal Code* regarding coercive control in intimate partner relationships, aimed to formally recognize coercive control as a criminal offence. This change would not only clarify the issue from a legal standpoint but also promote greater awareness and guide police and community organizations in responding effectively to cases involving coercive control.

Notably, the CACP CPCSWB committee presented their submission to this very committee in 2022, emphasizing the critical need to criminalize coercive control to better protect victims and support law enforcement efforts. Further, in July 2025, the CACP endorsed the National Framework for Police Intervention in Intimate Partner Coercive Control, demonstrating their continued commitment to advancing police practices and supporting comprehensive interventions in cases of intimate partner violence.

Recommendation: Alongside Section 810 orders, we need to reinforce the need for coercive control to be defined as a criminal act within the *Criminal Code* and formally reintroduce it at its previous legislative stage. Doing so would strengthen protection for victims by enabling proactive conditions and criminal accountability for offenders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these recommendations establish a solid foundation for preventing intimate partner violence and protecting those at risk. By enabling proactive action and ongoing oversight, they advance safer communities and support a justice system better equipped to address these challenges.