



Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

Supporting police professionals through innovative and inclusive police leadership to advance the safety and security of all Canadians.

June 1, 2022

CACP Statement: Bill C-21 - Firearms

On May 30, 2022, the federal government of Canada announced the introduction of an amended Bill C-21 to help reduce gun violence in Canada.

The CACP believes that the proposed legislation recognizes that stopping gun violence requires a whole of society approach including education and prevention to address root causes, and law enforcement to help stop the criminal elements who are perpetrating violence in our communities. We believe Bill C-21 will help prevent victimization by way of a firearm and improve public safety.

The CACP supports a national, versus municipal patchwork approach to managing the issue of **handguns** in Canada. We believe that a handgun freeze is one method of reducing access to these types of firearms, while allowing existing law-abiding handgun owners to practice their sport. However, we continue to maintain that restricting lawful handgun ownership will not meaningfully address the real issue: illegal handguns obtained from the United States that have led to the disturbing current trend in gun violence that is largely related to gangs, street gangs, and more sophisticated organized crime groups.

This is why we particularly support the implementation of **new firearms-related offences, intensified border controls, and strengthened penalties** to help deter criminal activities and to combat firearms smuggling and trafficking, thereby reducing the risk that illegal firearms find their way into Canadian communities and are used to commit criminal offences.

The CACP agrees with implementing initiatives that target the criminal use and diversion of firearms to the illicit market by prohibiting the importation, exportation, and sale of **replica firearms**, specifically those that are a likeness to real firearms and are indistinguishable from the genuine articles from near or far, or that can be altered to convert them into deadly weapons. This is something the CACP urged the government to do in a resolution passed by our membership back in 2000.

The CACP also supports the **red flag law** and its goal to help reduce gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and self-harm by limiting access to firearms by those who pose a risk of harm to themselves or others.

The CACP welcomes changes that provide **new police authorizations and tools** to access information about license holders in the investigation of individuals suspected of conducting criminal activities.

Regarding the mandatory buy-back program or the requirement to make **assault-style weapons** permanently inoperable, the CACP awaits the details on the implementation of such a program and the implications for, and expectations of, police services in Canada.

In conclusion, the CACP supports improving safety for the public and front-line police officers. Reasonable requirements on responsible firearm owners need to be balanced with protective measures to help mitigate the impact of the worst outcomes of firearms. While we agree with the proposed changes of Bill C-21 in principle, we must now focus on what these mean in practice and clarify the role police services are expected to play in enforcing these new regulations.