



**BCWF Response to Bill C-21, an act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms), which received first reading February 16, 2021.**

Bill C-21 Overview

The federal government says Bill C-21 is designed to keep firearms off the streets. Canadians are legitimately concerned about increasing gun violence from gangs, but BCWF analysis finds nothing in the bill to address these concerns.

- C-21 is not "taking guns off the streets"; it's taking them "off provincially licensed ranges."
- C-21 is not a "gun ban" against criminals; it's a "ban against RCMP-vetted gun owners."
- C-21 is not "making cities safer"; it's "taking police resources away from gangs and guns units" to waste energy on already RCMP- vetted hunters and sport shooters.
- Why ban BB and airsoft "guns?" They are not "gateway guns." They are "toys."

Bill C-21 legislation focuses on lawful owners – who are not the problem. The bill invents excessive regulations that will not address the real problems that Canada needs to address, e.g. gun violence, violent gangs, smuggled guns, and appropriate support for people who struggle with mental health issues.

**Municipal Bans**

The bill grants municipalities power to regulate the storage and transportation of restricted weapons [handguns] by lawful owners. The reality is, virtually all gun violence is committed with illegal firearms. It is misleading to suggest that forcing hunters and sport shooters to surrender their firearms, which they have used lawfully and responsibly, is somehow going to solve the problem of shooting and criminal gang activity in the big cities.

Canadian Police Chiefs, Police Unions, and working police members oppose these measures, as the enforcement of these additional useless laws will take away tens of thousands of police hours from front-line police work.

Mayors and city authorities should realize sport shooters aren't the problem. Available data from Statistics Canada confirm that hunters and sport shooters are among the most law-abiding citizens in

the country and that legally purchased firearms are rarely involved in criminal violence, either through theft or 'straw purchases.'

Since legal firearms are rarely used in criminal violence, municipal bans will be ineffective in curbing gangland or domestic violence. This legislation merely punishes lawful owners such as hunters and sport shooters to no useful purpose.

### **Ban and buy-back program**

About 1,500 models and variants of firearms became prohibited upon the introduction of an Order-in-Council in May 2020. Around 250,000 firearms would be included. The rationale for banning these models is that they are "assault-style" military weapons.

The term "assault-style" is a meaningless legal term under the Firearms Act. The government implied that any semi-automatic firearm is an "assault-style weapon." This is wrong. True military assault rifles have been banned for decades. Semi-automatic firearms are used responsibly every day in Canada by hunters and sport shooters.

1,500 models and variants have been deemed unreasonable for use in Canada for hunting or sporting purposes. The ban includes bolt-action as well as semi-automatic, even airsoft guns, air guns and replicas. Owners of these prohibited firearms can no longer use them, and the government promises it will bring in a buy-back program for those owners who wish to relinquish these now unusable guns

There is no justification for banning the firearms in Bill C-21 or those banned last May. Legal owners are forced to choose between accepting the government's price for their newly prohibited firearms or agreeing to strict new regulations that force them to lock up their guns in a safe without being able to take them to the target range, sell them, or let their heirs inherit them.

The government's promised buy-back program of these newly banned firearms is a multi-million/billion-dollar boondoggle, and C-21 fails to introduce this buy-back program.

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<https://parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/bill/C-21/first-reading#ID0E0YB0AA>

C-21 does not mention:

1. a method for a buy-back program;
2. the funding for a buy-back program;
3. an alternative method to finance a buy-back program.

Wasting taxpayers' money is reminiscent of the failed long-arm registry that cost over \$2 billion without achieving any meaningful outcome.

Bill C-21 will also effectively destroy a very popular sport for young adults and children, i.e. airsoft In Canada.

### **Red and Yellow Flags**

Proposed changes to red/yellow flag laws do not appear necessary as they merely expand existing provisions that permit firearms to be confiscated from people judged to be a threat to themselves or others.

Bill C-21 violates due process in two ways: first, it allows anyone to apply to the courts for a warrantless search and seizure, and second, it provides no provision for the person who is the subject of such an order to have an opportunity to present his (or her) side of the case before the police arrive, opening the door to searches on spurious excuses.

Nor does the suspected "dangerous" individual have to own a firearm. The judge is only required to believe there is a weapon or that the person "might have access to any such thing."

### **What is needed**

Instead of targeting law-abiding Canadians and firearm retailers, the government should be investing in police anti-gang and gun units and the Canadian Border Service Agency. Law enforcement must be provided with the resources they need to stop illegal smuggling operations and get dangerous criminals and gangs off our streets.