



Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

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

February 17, 2021

CACP Statement: Bill C-21 - New Firearms Legislation

On February 16, 2021, the federal government of Canada announced a comprehensive package of legislative measures to combat firearms crime and reduce firearms-related deaths.

We understand the various positions related to the firearms issue and the challenge of balancing individual rights and privileges with the broader rights and safety of society. As police leaders, we place a priority on public safety. We place a priority on victimization. We will always speak from that voice.

Based on a preliminary review of the new firearms legislation, the CACP believes that the proposed changes put forward by the federal government recognize 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.

This latest announcement is taking the changes achieved by Bill C-71 one step further, thereby strengthening the overall strategy to help prevent victimization by way of a firearm and to improve public safety by correcting some of the remaining weaknesses in our current firearm regulations, and to establish new firearms-related offences and strengthened penalties to help deter criminal activities.

The CACP supports the federal government's goal to help reduce gender-based and intimate partner violence, and self-harm by limiting the access to firearms by those who pose a risk of harm to themselves or others.

We also agree 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, something the CACP urged the government to do in a resolution passed by our membership back in 2000. We also welcome changes to firearms license requirements and the new authorization for police to access information about license holders in the investigation of individuals suspected of conducting criminal activities.

Finally, we wholeheartedly endorse all efforts to strengthen border controls and impose stronger penalties 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.

In conclusion, the CACP supports all initiatives that help increase public safety and reduce victimization. While we agree with the proposed changes in principle, we must now focus on what these mean in practice. We must now clarify the role police services are expected to play in enforcing these new regulations.