



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6



June 8, 2022

Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee
Minister of Justice
PO Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Dear Minister McPhee,

RE: Firearms legislation - Bill C-21

On behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, I urge you to contact your federal colleague Minister Mendicino to oppose Bill C-21.

While more action is needed to address gun violence in Canada, it is important to take an evidence-based approach to this problem rather than one guided by emotion. Public policy based on fear is not the right approach to take.

We strongly encourage you to read the position statement by the National Police Federation (which is the union representing RCMP members) on the matter of gun control legislation. While their position statement on the current state of gun violence in Canada was issued in November 2020, it is directly relevant to this new legislation, as it addresses matters including the so-called “buy-back” program proposed by Mr. Trudeau, and the federation’s own priorities.

As stated by the National Police Federation, “Effectively addressing the threat of Canada’s growing illicit firearms market and related increased gang violence requires the urgent, efficient, and effective deployment of law enforcement expertise, personnel, and financial resources.”

The union representing RCMP members goes on to state:

“Costly and current legislation, such as the Order in Council prohibiting various firearms and the proposed “buy-back” program by the federal government targeted at legal firearm owners, does not address these current and emerging themes or urgent threats to public safety.”

We urge you to listen to the expert advice the National Police Federation provided in that position statement, and recognize that most of the gun control measures currently proposed would actually divert important personnel and resources from where they are needed most.

Last year, the Toronto Police Service indicated 86% of the guns seized in connection with crime were illegally obtained from the U.S. black market and across the country, most gun violence is connected to organized crime.

The focus of any serious, responsible plan to address gun violence in Canada must target organized crime, and guns smuggled across the border from the United States. It is also important to tackle the root causes of crime, including diverting at-risk youth from becoming involved in gangs.

I would note that we do see value in the proposed “red flag” and “yellow flag” provisions aimed at individuals who may pose a risk to others. While we encourage you to seek expert advice and consult with Yukoners on how these proposed new measures compare to provisions already in the Criminal Code for this purpose, we support in principle strengthening the ability to take proactive action to prevent crimes such as domestic violence and homicide.

The Yukon Party Official Opposition suggests the following specific actions:

1. **Appoint a Chief Firearms Officer for the territory, reporting to the territorial government.** This would make the position more accountable, speed up the processing of PAL renewals for law-abiding citizens, and also allow for faster suspension of a licence if required.
2. **Lobby the federal Liberals to cancel the proposed “buy-back” program, repeal the May 2020 Order-in-Council, and allow law-abiding firearms owners to keep their legally acquired property.** As stated by the National Police Federation, the “buy-back” program actually “diverts extremely important personnel, resources, and funding away from addressing the more immediate and growing threat of criminal use of illegal firearms.”
3. **Prioritize crime reduction, gang diversion, safe communities, secure borders, Canadian enforcement agency integration, and cross-border safety of the public and all police officers.** This was called for by the National Police Federation.
4. **Lobby for increased funding for the RCMP Border Integrity Program, to enable dedicated proactive RCMP investigative weapons enforcement activity and the dismantling of gang and organized crime firearms smuggling.** This was called for by the National Police Federation.
5. **Help law enforcement properly address crime prevention rather than focusing funding and resources towards the ongoing monitoring of unrelated restrictions on licensed and regulated firearms owners.** This was called for by the National Police Federation.
6. **Prioritize and lobby for increased resources for the federal policing program of the RCMP.** In 2018, the Yukon – like other jurisdictions – actually lost police positions used for investigations into matters such as drug trafficking and organized crime due to federal cuts to this funding. That funding should be restored, and enhanced.

7. **Lobby for Gun and Gang Violence Action funding from the federal government to be able to be used by provinces and territories for policing.**
8. **Work with all orders of government to address the root causes of organized crime, including early identification of at-risk youth, diversion programs, and job-skills training to help at-risk people find opportunities and productive alternatives to becoming involved with a gang.**

We believe these alternative measures would be a more effective approach to dealing with the real issues facing Canadians, and improve public safety while respecting the rights of law-abiding firearms owners.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this proposed legislation, or our suggestions.

Sincerely,



Brad Cathers
MLA for Lake Laberge
Official Opposition Justice Critic

Encl.

