



Minister's Office
PO Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

July 27, 2022

Brad Cathers
MLA for Lake Laberge
Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C5

Dear MLA Cathers,

Re: Firearms Legislation – Bill C-21

I am writing in response to your letter of June 8, 2022, requesting that I contact Minister Mendicino to oppose Bill C-21. Thank you for offering your views on the Government of Canada's proposed legislation and how you see this affecting Yukon citizens.

Even with its relatively small population, the Yukon has seen an increase in violent crime and homicides in the past few years adversely impacting families, friends and communities across the territory. Many of these crimes involved firearms and were connected to organized criminal activity. The need to limit access to handguns and assault weapons while not impeding the lawful use of firearms, is prominent in our minds owing to last year's tragedies in Nova Scotia and ongoing gun violence in many Canadian urban centres. The Yukon has the highest rate of possession acquisition licenses for both prohibited and restricted firearms in the country. Furthermore, there is a disproportionate impact of crimes affecting Indigenous communities in terms of homicides involving firearms and firearms-related violent crimes. We must find a balance that counters the adverse impacts of illegal firearms, while recognizing that legal firearm ownership and use are important parts of subsistence hunting and traditional lifestyles.

In past years, the Yukon has allocated funding to improve interdiction and to disrupt the efforts of criminal groups that use illegal firearms. Investments realized through the federal Countering Gun and Gang Violence Action Fund has helped us to look into the nature of illicit firearm use in the territory, while also helping us to address threats such as firearms violence, organized crime and its influence on our youth. In the north, we have identified the issue of theft of legally obtained weapons that are later used for criminal purposes, along with the problems posed by illicit firearms smuggled across territorial boundaries or across our international border crossings. This is how illegal firearms come into use

within the territory. Therefore, we will be working with Canada's Border Services, the RCMP and our territorial partners in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to address the impact of illegal firearms across the north. We believe that coordinated efforts by the provinces, territories and the federal government will enhance enforcement efforts and improve our capacity to monitor gun crime. This, in turn, will help us all to develop a more informed national picture to guide future strategies.

Although the *Criminal Code* and *Firearms Act* are under purview of the Government of Canada, our government will always support lawful ownership of firearms in Canada and in the Yukon. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information and important considerations related to illicit firearms and the critical need to take measures to support safe communities and reduce violent crime.

Thank you for your time to write to me.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracy-Anne McPhee', written in a cursive style.

Tracy-Anne McPhee
Minister of Justice and Attorney General