



A Primer on Bill C-71
An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations, in relation to firearms
April 2018

Background

- Stated Goal of the Legislation – as described by Public Safety Minister, Ralph Goodale, the legislation is designed to make Canada “less vulnerable to the scourge of gun violence, while being fair to responsible, law-abiding firearm owners and businesses”
- The Government of Canada, using highly selective data, indicates that the legislation is needed to address an increase in gun-related homicides and fatal shootings. To justify the proposed legislation, the Government of Canada used data from 2013 (a year in which the criminal homicide rate was the lowest in the last 50 years) and compared it to data from 2017. What the government did not show or indicate was that gun-related crime has been declining since the late 1970s. The rate in 2013 was an anomaly, and has been used to falsely indicate that gun-related crime and fatalities is on the rise. Using short-term data to assess progress on a long-term issue is not valid.
- Canada already has some of the most restrictive firearms legislation in the world
- Criminals do not pay attention to legislation. Legislation needs to address the criminal element in our society and not simply to continue to place further restrictions on law-abiding citizens.
- In 2012, at the peak of the Long Gun Registry, less than 5% of firearms used in homicide were registered
- Only 2% of accused murderers had a Possession and Acquisition License (PAL)
- The Government of Canada needs to focus their energy on legislation that will truly address public safety

Key Provisions of Bill C-71

- Background Checks
 - The government is proposing that background checks (for acquisition licenses) for criminal violence and mental illness (currently set at 5 years) will be increased to the lifetime of an individual
 - MWF response: we are supportive of some form of mental health screening, but advise the Government of Canada carefully consider the effectiveness of current systems of screening in place, what is not working, and to ensure the details of new legislation are clear and detailed. For example: 1) what agency is responsible for reviewing doctor’s reports? How will patient confidentiality be addressed? 3) What are the criteria for evaluation?

Currently, there is already a high standard to determine eligibility through daily eligibility screening by the Canadian Police Information Centre.

- Business and Private Sale of Firearms
 - The Government of Canada is proposing that the sale of firearms (both through businesses and privately) be subjected to license verification. Anyone selling or giving a non-restricted firearm will have to 1) obtain proof of a firearms license from the purchaser, 2) verify the validity of that license with the Canadian Firearms Program (CFP), 3) obtain a reference number from CFP that the license has been confirmed (which will only be valid for a specified period of time)
 - What evidence does the government have that the current system of purchasers showing a PAL is not working? Who will keep the License Verification activity data, for what purpose, and for how long? Is the data associated with an individual and who can access the information? What are the criteria for the License Verification to be approved or denied? What is the definition of “giving”? Does it include gifting and lending? Will the verification from CFP be available 24/7, 365 days a year?
 - MWF response: The provision should be rescinded, as it will not contribute to improving public safety.
- Business Retention and Surrender of Records
 - The Government of Canada is proposing that all firearm dealers keep detailed records on sales to individuals (for at least 20 years), that can be accessed by police, if necessary
 - What evidence is there that such a measure would reduce or solve crime? How will privacy be addressed?
 - MWF response: this will essentially force businesses to create and operate a gun registry system for government, contrary to the government’s election promise. This provision needs to be rescinded.
- Revision to Authorizations to Transport
 - The Government of Canada is proposing that the only permitted uses are to shooting ranges and “purchase-to-home”
 - The provision means that all firearm owners will have to obtain additional formal authorization to bring restricted and prohibited firearms (including hand guns) to gun shows, a gun smith and to border crossings.
 - MWF response: This provision will only impact law-abiding gun owners. The elimination of “transport to/from a Gunsmith”, “transport to/from a gun store for appraisal or sale”, “transport to/from a gun show” and “transport to/from a border point” is unnecessary. There is no evidence that such transport currently creates a public safety issue.
- Approach to Firearm Classification
 - The Government of Canada is proposing to remove the ability to allow the Governor in Council (GIC) to down grade the classification of a firearm, giving sole discretion back to the RCMP. Additionally, the GIC may still be used to declare any firearm restricted or prohibited. The CZ and SAN Swiss Army

firearms would revert back to their former classification of “prohibited”.
Current owners would be grandfathered.

- MWF position: GIC needs to retain the ability to reverse decisions made by the RCMP, which to date, do not have a fair and transparent process of classifying firearms.

What MWF will do:

- Submit our concerns to The Hon. Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety

What MWF suggests our Affiliate Clubs and Members do:

- Contact/write the Minister of Public Safety and your MP expressing your concerns.
- Join an on-line petition for the House of Commons to scrap Bill C-71. You can join the petition at <https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-1608>

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