



**BILL
C-21**

An Act to amend certain Acts and to make consequential amendments (firearms)

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities

AS REPRESENTATIVES OF RURAL MUNICIPALITIES,

we believe it is important to balance public safety with the needs of our members. SARM certainly recognizes the importance of addressing gun violence and national crime rates. Rural crime is a big issue in Saskatchewan. However, we would also advocate that a pragmatic approach needs to be taken when addressing these issues. There are some severe legal implications that could occur at the expense of law-abiding firearms owners in the Bill.

Considerations need to take into account the unique challenges faced by rural communities and landowners. Rural residents often rely on firearms for activities such as hunting, livestock protection, and personal safety.

The Voice of Rural Saskatchewan

Bill C-21 (the “Bill”) is currently with the Senate for consideration and has been referred to the Senate committees for review as of June 21, 2023.

The Bill introduced a national freeze on the sale, purchase and transfer of handguns effective October 21, 2022. The Bill also includes significant measures to:

- address the alarming role of guns in gender-based violence through red and yellow flag laws;
- strengthen border controls by increasing maximum penalties for gun traffickers;
- create authorities to combat firearms smuggling, trafficking and related offences;
- establish new firearm-related offences and strengthened penalties; and
- address concerns with mid-power “replica” “air guns”.



Some of the factors that should be examined as the Bill is being reviewed:

- Adequate staffing of the RCMP is needed on the front lines. Vacant positions need to be filled and there needs to be an increase in the overall staff complement on the front lines.
- Costs related to policing are increasing for all partners. Local governments are being asked to absorb greater expenses, despite having fiscal limitations around how revenue can be generated to pay for services. The need for increased federal funding is eminent. Also, absorbing more of the retro-pay costs for the RCMP would free up dollars and allow provinces to better service their policing needs. Additionally, equipment costs for things like body-worn cameras need to be funded by the federal government, not only for their initial purchase but for the ongoing operational costs as well.
- In 2019, the federal government passed Bill C-75, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. The law now requires police forces and courts to release detained people at the 'earliest reasonable opportunity' and under the 'least onerous conditions' based on the circumstances of individual cases. Unfortunately, this has allowed individuals to gain bail more quickly, and have the opportunity to commit crimes while awaiting a court date. Unfortunately, Saskatchewan is all too familiar with the tragic consequences that this loophole can have. To effectively reduce crime Bill C-75 and the bail process (involving both violent and non-violent repeat offenders) should be amended to strengthen Canada's bail system.
- Understanding and addressing social issues that contribute to high crime rates should also be addressed. Providing funding for mental health care, addictions treatment, early childhood intervention programs, and community watch programs are some ways that if properly funded aid in crime reduction.
- Poverty is also a key contributor to crime. Higher prices on all necessities increases the poverty and homelessness rates across Canada. People are struggling to make ends meet. The government needs to look at ways to reduce the overall cost of living. Rural residents are seeing an increase in fuel thefts at a time when gas prices keep climbing.
- Focusing on combatting transnational crime and smuggling, increasing border security and minimizing ongoing threats posed by serious offenders at shared borders would also aid in reducing crime across Canada.



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