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February 19, 2019

[Classifications, ATTs among issues addressed at Bill C-71 committee](#)

OTTAWA – Canadian Shooting Sports Association President, Steve Torino, and Executive Director, Tony Bernardo, testified before the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence in a marathon session last evening that brought organizations and individuals on both sides of the gun debate together in the new Senate of Canada Building to examine Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms.

Messrs. Torino and Bernardo outlined several significant problems with Bill C-71 including the change to lifetime background checks; changes to the licence verification process; requirements for businesses to keep detailed recordings of all firearm transactions; changes to the electronic conditions of Authorizations to Transport (ATTs); and the removal of the Governor-in-Council to declare a firearm to be non-restricted.

“We have very serious concerns as to how Bill C-71, if passed, will effect the future of Canadian gun owners,” said Mr. Bernardo. “I would like to speak first to the removal of the Governor-in-Council power to declare a firearm to be non-restricted. This is the RCMP ‘mistake eraser’, the section of the Firearms Act that allows the minister, the person that we elected to make our laws, to override an arbitrary decision by the RCMP – because they’re not always right.” Mr. Bernardo referenced the CZ-858 firearm that the RCMP has reclassified three times.

Compounding this are the new classification categories. All existing classifications in the Firearms Act have a stated reason for being – that includes Section 12 that deals with prohibitions. “Every single section of Section 12 has a rationale. There’s a reason why the firearm is being prohibited. But section 12(11) and 12(14) are absent that reason,” states Mr. Bernardo. “Law-abiding, lawful Canadians with licences, who have never committed a crime, legally obtained and legally use these firearms, and now the government is going to take them away without even the decency of telling them why? That’s absolutely wrong. Canadians need to know why their property is being taken by the government.”

Authorizations to Transport (ATTs) do not get away unscathed. Bill C-71 largely reverts ATTs back to an archaic paperwork system eliminated by the former Harper government in favour of automatically attaching electronic ATTs to licences. Of particular note, under Bill C-71, licensed gun owners who wish to transport restricted or certain prohibited firearms to a gun smith, gun show or border crossing will now need to have a paper ATT issued by their province’s Chief Firearms Officer. “There’s no evidence of any kind that the electronic permits were being violated or abused. There is simply no evidence to this. We’re going to cut down a forest of trees making permits that are exactly the same to replace the electronic ones that we’ve got because it’s 2019? There’s absolutely no reason for this. It’s simply a paperwork excursion,” stated Mr. Bernardo.

The CSSA also believes the five-year investigation window in the current law that determines an applicant's fitness to possess a licence appears to be producing the desired results. With only 817 refusals of some 401,884 licences issued in 2017 – or 0.020%

– it appears unnecessary and counterproductive to spend scarce resources on yet more red tape that may not produce any tangible benefits.

Finally, Bill C-71's requirements for detailed recording of all firearm transactions, combined with the information required for licence verifications for individuals, appear remarkably similar to the cancelled long-gun registry. “The information that cost government billions of dollars to collect and maintain has now been downloaded onto the backs of businesses,” stated Mr. Torino. “It appears that C-71 is a de facto return to it.”

Despite these many concerns, the CSSA is hopeful that Senators on the SECD committee will use their “sober second thought” to make this bad piece of legislation a better one. Gun owners are not the problem, but we want to be part of the solution.

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