

Public safety benefits will be determined by strength of regulations

Montreal – May 18, 2023 – In anticipation of the imminent adoption of **Bill C-21** by the **House of Commons** (the legislation having [passed the report stage](#) yesterday), **PolySeSouvient** says:

“Bill C-21 contains solid measures to improve the protection of victims of domestic violence from gun violence thanks to a series of measures contained in the initial version as well as [several of amendments](#) passed by the Public Safety Committee. The measures introduced concerning this oft-neglected aspect of the gun control debate represent concrete and effective progress and will save many lives, in particular the automatic prohibition to own guns for any individual subject to a protection order – something we have called for [since 2018](#).

However, the potential public safety benefits of other measures rest on yet unknown regulations that will flesh out the details. Regulations will also determine the strength of other commitments that are part of the government’s [gun control package](#).

For example, **the freeze on handguns** could be seriously undermined by the exemption for anyone ‘training, competing or coaching’ in an Olympic handgun shooting discipline, as anyone can claim to want to be an Olympic athlete. Related criteria to be prescribed by regulation will determine whether or not this exemption will turn into a huge loophole.

Most importantly for us, the bill fails to deliver on the measure repeatedly promised to survivors and families of victims of mass shootings: **banning assault weapons**. The new definition of prohibited weapons in C-21 only applies to models that have not been invented yet and is easily circumventable. Hundreds of [models of military-style weapons](#) remain legal and even non-restricted. The minister has promised to prohibit such weapons by Orders in Council in the fall, but the scope of these regulations remains to be seen.

The minister has also promised to amend regulations regarding magazines to ensure current limits are actually respected, which is something we have [advocated in favour of](#) for years. As always, the devil is in the details and, like freezing handgun acquisitions or banning assault weapons, regulations **prohibiting large-capacity magazines** must be [comprehensive](#) to be effective.

All three parties that claim to support gun control – the [Liberals](#), the [NDP](#) and the [Bloc Québécois](#) – have insisted on introducing a **new process to prevent abuses or mistakes by manufacturers with respect to the classification** of new models. Unfortunately, the government’s [proposed regulatory remedy](#) falls short of providing any meaningful improvement over the current system. Indeed, [the idea](#) of requiring a Firearm Reference Table (FRT) number before a new model can enter the Canadian market in no way ensures prior physical inspection by the RCMP – which is what is needed. The cases of the [Swiss Arms Family](#) and the [CZ858](#), arguably the worst examples of misclassification, would not be affected by the proposed approach, as both models received FRT numbers before entering the Canadian market.

Finally, it is unfortunate that, while initially expressing misgivings, the NDP voted in committee with the Liberals to pass the ‘ex-parte’ red flag measure, which a coalition of women’s groups has severely criticized.” The coalition [stated that](#) *“Citizens or other organizations, much less potential victims, should not be expected to put themselves at risk by going to court to request action that should be immediate and within the direct responsibility of police. It is widely recognized that women are in greatest danger during and after separation. Shifting the onus of enforcement to women and third parties, as Bill C-21’s ‘Red Flag’ provisions attempt to do, is a guaranteed route to increased fatality.”*