

Adoption of Bill C-21 by the Senate:

## A SOLID VICTORY FOR PUBLIC SAFETY...

(... although much of its public safety benefits  
will be determined by strength of regulations)

**Montreal – December 14, 2023** – Survivors and victims of some of the worst mass-shootings in **Canada** welcomed today's [final passage](#) of **Bill C-21** in the **Senate**, the long-awaited reform of the **Firearms Act** that was [promised in the last election campaign](#) by the **Liberal Party**.

**Nathalie Provost, survivor and spokesperson for PolySeSouvient** stated: “Bill C-21 contains solid measures to better protect victims of domestic abuse from gun threats and violence thanks to a series of measures related to this oft-neglected aspect of gun control. These measures represent concrete and effective progress and will save many lives, in particular due to the new automatic prohibition preventing an individual who is subject to a protection order from owning guns” – something **PolySeSouvient** has called for [since 2018](#).

**Boufeldja Benabdallah, co-founder of the Quebec Mosque**, adds: “Although it’s not a total ban, we are very happy about the freeze on new handgun purchases, as this is an important step in the right direction. It is a victory for public safety that the measure applies *federally* - instead of being limited to potential municipal or provincial bans, which we strongly opposed. At the very least, the handgun freeze will translate into a progressive phase-out of privately owned handguns over three or four generations. It can now be enhanced by other levels of government.”

Tonight, Canadians can celebrate the final adoption of the following legislative measures<sup>1</sup>:

- 1) **A freeze on the purchase of new handguns.**
- 2) **The obligation to show a gun possession license to buy magazines.**
- 3) **Several measures to combat smuggling and ghost guns** (including increased maximum penalties, ban on ghost guns, ban on certain gun parts, expansion of police's ability to wiretap in relation to gun trafficking, and increased ability of border agents to manage inadmissibility to Canada based on regulatory firearm offences).
- 4) **The automatic prohibition to own guns for people subject to a protection order (including a restraining order).**
- 5) **The obligation of a chief firearms officer (CFO) to revoke the licence within 24 hours** of an individual **where the CFO has reasonable grounds to suspect that the licensee may have engaged in an act of domestic violence or stalking.**

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<sup>1</sup> Notable less positive changes include: 10) The new “*Ex-parte*” option – the “red flag” measure - which allows victims or third parties to make an application before a court to remove guns from potential aggressors. PolySeSouvient and [a coalition](#) of women's groups opposed this measure and will need to closely monitor its impacts. 11) A weak definition of prohibited weapons aimed at banning future certain models of assault weapons that is [totally ineffective](#). PolySeSouvient and others will [keep fighting](#) for a comprehensive ban.

- 6) **An expanded definition of "domestic violence"** that includes all intimate and family violence as well as non-physical forms of violence like coercive control and threats of suicide, as well as **an expanded definition of "protection order"**.
- 7) The possibility of **prohibition orders for individuals cohabiting with someone prohibited from owning firearms**.
- 8) The **exclusion of "employment" as a justification for exempting an individual from licence revocation** linked to a protection order.

### **Much depends on the regulations:**

The potential public safety benefits of most of the key measures will depend 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](#). Timely regulation is also a concern, as regulations under the Liberal's Bill C-71 were implemented *three and a half years* after it was adopted by the Senate in 2019 and [considerably weakened](#) key measures.

For example, with respect to C-21, [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 than can potentially nullify the measure.

Most importantly for **PolySeSouvient**, the bill fails to deliver on the measure repeatedly promised to Canadians: [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. **Minister Dominic LeBlanc** [has committed to](#) introduce a new Order in Council to ban existing models and to amend regulations regarding magazines to ensure current theoretical limits are actually respected (something PolySeSouvient has [advocated in favour of](#) for years). 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.

"While we remain positive with respect to the government's commitments to complete the gun control package with new regulations, we know that the gun lobby will continue to use its considerable resources and influence to weaken, delay or block any significant progress. So while we celebrate this important victory today, Canadians also need to remember that the fight is not over," concludes **madame Provost**.

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For interviews: Nathalie Provost (514-796-0142) and Heidi Rathjen (514-816-7818) are available for online or telephone interviews.

For further information: [info@polysesouvient.ca](mailto:info@polysesouvient.ca)