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RE: Canada's trappers and Bill C-21

Fur Institute of Canada

The Fur Institute of Canada (FIC), created in 1983 by Canada's Wildlife Ministers, is the national voice for trappers, sealers, and the broader fur sector. Responsible for Canada's trap testing and certification program in accordance with the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards, the FIC advocates for a sustainable, well-managed fur sector and furbearer conservation on behalf of Canada's 50,000 trappers. The FIC's work supports not only the commercial fur trade, but wildlife research, predator management, human-wildlife conflict work and livestock protection.

Canada's trappers and firearms

Bill C-21, *An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)*, has the potential to have a significant negative impact on the safety of trapping and trappers across Canada. The essential role of handguns in safe dispatch and defense of trappers is recognized by the *Firearms Act*, and the *Authorizations to Carry Restricted Firearms and Certain Handguns Regulations*. Trappers are identified explicitly in 3(c) of the Regulations as a individuals who: "need[s] restricted firearms or prohibited handguns for use in connection with his or her lawful profession or occupation".

Trappers use handguns and other restricted firearms for two primary purposes: humane dispatch of trapped animals, and for self-defense from large predators. Bears, mountain lions, and wolves are all predators which may be attracted by trappers setting or checking their traps. As trappers are often working with dead animals, lures, or other attractants, while handling traps, tools and other items, a handgun worn on their person can be more quickly brought to bear for defense than a long gun.



C-21's impacts on trappers

C-21's centralization of the issuance of Authorizations to Carry (ATCs) with the Commissioner of Firearms has the potential to slow an already slow process to a near-halt. The post-1998 process for obtaining ATCs, and disconnects between the timelines for issuance of provincial trapping licenses and issuance of ATCs can already create situations where trappers are unable to obtain ATCs for the start of trapping season. Further centralizing the process will functionally eliminate the ability for trappers to obtain ATCs in a timely manner, removing an essential tool for safety in the backcountry. Without established service standards which are enshrined in the legislation, shorter than current timelines, and aligned with provincial licensing and seasons, this move should not proceed.

Bill C-21 in its current form would significantly decrease the number of people eligible to purchase handguns, which will lead to a market-based rationalization of availability in the firearms retail space, and a corresponding increase in price. This will add to the financial burden on trappers, who are already suffering from the impacts of a sagging international fur market, inflation, and increases in input cost on fuel from the carbon tax.

A new trapper seeking to enter the industry already needs to pay for a provincial trapping course, trapping license, and RPAL course all before applying for an ATC which may or may not come in time for trapping season. All before purchasing their firearm or their traps. Given that trappers primarily live in rural and remote communities, further restricted retail presence could add hundreds of kilometers of travel to procure that firearm. Increasing the costs of any of those constituent pieces will put trapping even further out of reach, particularly for low-income and Indigenous individuals.



Recommendations

We recommend that C-21 be amended to include service standards for the issuance of Authorizations to Carry, or that section 26 of C-21 be struck.

We also recommend that passage of C-21 be delayed to allow for further amendments that consider the impacts on safety and livelihoods of trappers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in regards to the legitimate and legal use and availability of handguns.

Without these changes, the passage of Bill C-21 will make trappers in Canada less safe in the pursuit of their outdoor heritage, culture and livelihoods. We welcome any opportunity to further explain the impact of thus proposed legislation.

Doug Chiasson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | DIRECTEUR EXÉCUTIF

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