



# Impact of (former federal Bill) C-21 on Alberta's Firearms Businesses

## Background

Bill C-21, *An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)*, became law on December 15, 2023. This fact sheet explains the measures that may be of greatest interest to firearms businesses.

- Codifying the handgun “freeze” in the federal *Firearms Act* by prohibiting the issuance of new registration certificates for handguns, with minor exemptions:
- Granting Chief Firearms Officers the ability to issue Authorizations to Transport for the temporary storage of a prohibited or restricted firearm.
- Changing the definition of a “prohibited firearm”.
- Creating a new criminal offence for depicting violence in firearms marketing.
- Requiring a firearms licence for the transfer of cartridge magazines.
- Prohibiting the acquisition of cartridge magazines during the “licence extension” period.

Significant portions of C-21 will come into force through an order-in-Council (OIC) at a yet-to-be-announced date. Consultation and communication by the federal government on when these measures will be implemented by an OIC has not occurred as of March 2024. Measures relevant to businesses that will be enacted by a future OIC include new requirements for possessing a valid firearms licence to lawfully import cartridge magazines, firearm parts, and ammunition.

## Handgun “freeze”

On October 21, 2022, a freeze on the sale, purchase, or transfer of handguns by individuals within Canada, and the transport of newly acquired handguns into Canada came into force through regulations. C-21 becoming law enshrined this freeze in legislation. As such, the Registrar of Firearms can no longer issue registration certificates for handguns to individuals unless they fall within the following exemptions:

- Individuals who hold an Authorization to Carry (ATC) for personal protection or lawful occupation (such as remote wilderness hunting and/or trapping).
- Individuals who train, compete or coach in a handgun shooting discipline that is on the programme of the International Olympic Committee or the International Paralympic Committee.

As well:

- Individuals and businesses cannot transfer a handgun to an individual unless that individual belongs to one of the groups identified above.
- Individuals and businesses cannot submit applications to transfer handguns when the buyer is an individual, unless the buyer belongs to one of the groups identified above.

Individuals can continue to possess and use their currently registered handguns and sell or transfer their registered handguns to businesses or exempted individuals.

Authorized retailers can continue to sell handguns to other authorized businesses (e.g., gunsmiths, museums, valuable goods carriers, retailers, members of the film and theatrical industry), law enforcement, defence personnel, and exempted individuals.

A business can import handguns if it has the appropriate activities on its business firearms licence to acquire restricted firearms. A business requires an Import Permit issued by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) to import a handgun. For more information on Import Permits for firearms, please contact the Export Controls Operations Division of GAC at 343-203-4331 or see the link at the end of this fact sheet.

## New Prohibited Firearm Definition

Pre-existing business inventories are not impacted by this change. This definition applies to a firearm that is not a handgun and that:

- discharges centre fire ammunition in a semi-automatic manner;
- was originally designed with a detachable magazine with a capacity of six cartridges or more; and
- was designed and manufactured on or after December 15, 2023.

## ATTs for the temporary storage of prohibited or restricted firearms

CFOs can now issue an Authorization to Transport (ATT) for temporary storage to address a mental health issue. These ATTs allow an individual to transport a prohibited or restricted firearm to an individual or business who has a licence to possess prohibited or restricted firearms. This

temporary storage allows the mental health condition to be addressed by the owner.

### Violence in firearms marketing offence

It is now a criminal offence for a business to advertise a firearm in a manner that depicts, counsels, or promotes firearms violence against a person. Individuals convicted of this offence may face a maximum of two years' imprisonment for a first offence and five years for each subsequent offence. This offence does not apply to persons or businesses that advertise in their usual course of business directly to or on behalf of the film industry, the Canadian Forces, or public safety personnel.

### Requirement of a firearms licence to import ammunition, cartridge magazines, and firearm parts

Businesses licence holders are not impacted by this change; however, they will still require import permits from GAC for importing firearms and related goods and import permits from Natural Resources Canada for importing ammunition. Please see the links at the end of this fact sheet for more information.

This change will instead impact individuals, who will require a valid firearms licence to import ammunition, firearm parts, and cartridge magazines. "Firearm parts" include:

- a barrel for a firearm;
- a slide for a handgun; and
- any other prescribed part.

Firearms parts do not include parts designed exclusively for use on a weapon deemed under Part III subsection 84(3) of the *Criminal Code* not to be a firearm. These clauses will come into force via an OIC at a still-undetermined date. Federal communication on the specifics of "any other prescribed part" (a firearm part described by a regulation) has not yet occurred.

### Cartridge magazines may not be transferred without a firearms licence

Cartridge magazines may not be transferred or sold unless the transferee/buyer holds a firearms licence.

- It is the business or individual's responsibility to determine the most effective way to ensure an individual holds a valid licence, as is already the case with ammunition.
- There is no requirement to verify that a business has a valid licence before transferring a cartridge magazine to the business.
- There is also no requirement for a business that transfers a cartridge magazine to provide any

information to the Canadian Firearms Program or Chief Firearms Offices or to keep records about the transfer of cartridge magazines.

### Cartridge magazines may not be acquired during a firearms licence "extension period"

Following the expiration of a firearms licence, a licence holder may not acquire cartridge magazines during the six-month extension period and may only acquire cartridge magazines once the licence is renewed.

### Alberta's official position and response to C-21

[Alberta's written submission to the Senate of Canada](#)

We will continue to explore options on how to best respond to C-21 as we continue to advocate for Alberta's law-abiding firearms community and businesses.

### Where can I find more information about C-21?

We will update and share this fact sheet to address feedback and measures that will come into force through regulations in the future. You can also contact the ACFO at:

**Email:** [AlbertaCFO@gov.ab.ca](mailto:AlbertaCFO@gov.ab.ca)

**Mail:** Alberta Chief Firearms Office  
PO Box 458, Station Main  
Edmonton, AB T5J 2K1

Associated federal links:

C-21 (44-1) - LEGISinfo - Parliament of Canada  
<https://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/en/bill/44-1/c-21>

GAC: Firearms and Related Goods  
[https://www.international.gc.ca/controls-controles/firearms\\_armes\\_a\\_feu/index.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/controls-controles/firearms_armes_a_feu/index.aspx?lang=eng)

Natural Resources Canada: Ammunition  
[Permits, licences, certificates and regulations for ammunition and propellant powders \(canada.ca\)](#)

Canadian Firearms Program  
<https://rcmp.ca/en/firearms>