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MP BRENDAN HANLEY STATEMENT REGARDING VOTE ON BILL C-21

On Wednesday June 22, 2022 C-21 *An Act to amend certain acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)* completed its second reading in the House of Commons. At this stage, the proposed legislation will be studied and reviewed in committee before third reading, at which point a final version will be put to the House for a vote. This vote will likely take place in the fall. This bill's intent is to address the significant increase in gun violence that we have seen in Canada over the last few years.

Addressing the rising incidence of gun violence in Canada is clearly needed. I agree that we must urgently invest in measures to reduce the impact and risk of gun violence in Canada. That is why there are key provisions of Bill C-21 that I support, such as strengthened powers for law enforcement, and red and yellow flag laws that would revoke the firearms licenses of those at risk for intimate partner violence, and/or allow for earlier intervention by law enforcement when someone becomes a risk to themselves or others. These are sensible measures that I know from talking to Yukoners many, including gun owners, can support.

Over the past few weeks I've been listening to Yukoners reaching out to my office regarding C-21, and while some have expressed support for some of the measures currently found in C-21, many continue to have reservations about other components of the bill. Specifically, there are some uncertainties about who the exemptions on handgun ownership apply to. I have noted concerns about the restrictions placed on sport and target shooting, and the efficacy and potential impact of a proposed freeze on the transfer and sale of handguns. I know that there are also concerns about the lack of evidence implicating legally acquired guns, compared to those smuggled or otherwise illegally obtained, as being behind most cases of gun violence in Canada.

While gun violence is a critical issue we must address, I decided not to participate in the vote at this stage of C-21, given these concerns and uncertainties. This is a complex bill that needs time for full consideration, especially for a constituency like the Yukon with such a high proportion of legal, law-abiding and responsible gun owners. Now that the Bill will go to committee, I hope that the testimony and written submissions will help to sound out and address the concerns that constituents have raised. There will also be opportunities for amendments to be proposed, which could help to improve the bill where there are gaps. I will advocate for interested Yukon stakeholders to have a voice at committee, whatever their position on the bill. In addition, when committee hearings start, Yukoners like all Canadians will be able to submit written briefs.

I have discussed the bill directly with the Minister of Public Safety, Minister Mendicino now on two occasions, flagging some key parts of the bill that require further clarification, or that Yukoners are concerned about. Over the coming months, I look forward to continuing to engage with Yukoners and encourage them to reach out to my office about C-21. I will continue to discuss this bill with my colleagues as well, to determine whether I can support C-21 in its final form.