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Statement on Bill C-21: An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)

Whether in the Yukon or across Canada, we all agree that more needs to be done to make our communities safer. Bill C-21 as passed today, is part of our government's efforts to address the escalating gun violence in this country, while acknowledging the rights of Indigenous people and the traditions of hunters and sport shooters.

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to engage with many Yukoners, including First Nations, hunters, outfitters, and many others about C-21. Many Yukoners have expressed concerns about components of the bill, particularly when the G4 amendments focussed on non-handgun firearms were proposed at Committee. Recognizing how important this change was for Yukoners, I brought the concerns of Yukoners to Ottawa, and I brought the Minister of Public Safety to the Yukon to hear directly from citizens. These amendments were subsequently withdrawn.

On May 1st, substantially revised amendments were introduced at the Public Safety Committee (SECU). These revised amendments have been welcomed by many as positive step forward from those initially proposed. No longer is there a massive and confusing list of banned guns. Current firearms models on the market are to be exempt from the assault weapon definition, and current owners now have some room to breathe. A new advisory committee which will include hunting and sport shooting experts, Indigenous peoples, as well as gun control advocates will be launched to determine classifications on firearms moving forward. In addition, the onus on classification will now shift from the owner to the manufacturer.

It is my duty to reflect the will of Yukoners, particularly when the will is reflected widely and where there is a substantial rationale to support that will. While I support measures within Bill C-21, like the increased support for law enforcement to address illegal sales and smuggling, the stiffer penalties for transgressions, commitments to invest in early diversion programs, and measures like the red and yellow flag laws to make it easier for early intervention where risk was apparent, I agree that there remain significant unaddressed concerns.

It was with this in mind, in the third reading of Bill C-21 today, I voted against C-21.

On Wednesday, during the third reading debate of C-21, I highlighted some of the complexities of this issue and the concerns that remain. My office would be happy to provide a transcript of the speech on request, or you can find it in Hansard for May 17, 2023.

As a Canadian, as a parent, and as a public health physician, I abhor gun violence and I am distressed by how we have seen a rise in violence, including gun violence, in Canada. We are obliged to do better to make our communities safer. Many of the measures in Bill C-21 provide a means to accomplish this aim. It is also worth pointing out the multiple other measures that our government is taking, including:

- **\$312 million** over five years to enhance the intelligence and investigative capacity of the RCMP and CBSA to halt the flow of illegal guns through our borders
- **\$1 million** to the City of Whitehorse through the Building Safer Communities Fund, to divert at-risk youth away from gun and gang violence before it starts
- **\$390 million** over five years for provinces and territories to build upon the government's *Take Action Against Gun and Gang Violence* strategy to address gang violence and reduce the number of crimes committed with firearms

I can assure you that between my various interventions and my vote, the voice of Yukoners has been heard loud and clear.

Now that C-21 has passed the House, it will move onto the Senate for further consideration and review before receiving Royal Assent. If the Senate decides to make further amendments to the Bill, those amendments will come back to the House for approval. I will review them carefully. It is my commitment to you to continue to work with my colleagues to ensure that the concerns of Yukon hunters, firearms users, and others continue to be heard so that we can advocate for the best possible laws: laws that protect Canadians from gun violence with a strong preventative approach, but that will always honour the legitimate rights of Indigenous people and Canadians' rights to hunt.

Gun violence is real. And so are the rights of the many law-abiding Yukoners that have reached out. I will continue to advocate for evidence-based policies that can help to reduce gun violence while recognizing the rights of legal firearms owners.

Sincerely,



Brendan Hanley
Member of Parliament for Yukon