

Bill C-21 — What businesses need to know

Bill C-21 received Royal Assent on December 15, 2023. It includes measures to combat firearms crime, codifies the national handgun “freeze”, brings increased penalties for firearms smuggling and trafficking, and provisions to better address the role of firearms in intimate partner and gender-based violence. This information sheet highlights legislative changes of direct interest to businesses that are now in force.

Handgun freeze (section 12.2 of the *Firearms Act*)

On October 21, 2022, a freeze on the sale, purchase or transfer of handguns by individuals within Canada, and on bringing newly acquired handguns into Canada, came into force by regulations.

The Registrar of Firearms can no longer issue registration certificates for handguns to individuals unless exempted.

Exempted individuals include:

- Anyone who holds an Authorization to Carry (ATC) for personal protection or lawful occupation, (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.

To be exempted as an elite sport shooter, trainer or coach, section 97.1 of the *Firearms Act* requires the individual provide a letter to CFOs annually from a provincial or national sport shooting governing body attesting to the criteria in the Act.

Section 19.1 of the *Firearms Act* prevents the issuance of an Authorization to Transport for a handgun from a port of entry unless the individual holds a registration certificate for the handgun.

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

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

Violence in firearms marketing offence (subsection 112(1) of the *Firearms Act*)

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, with a maximum of two (2) years imprisonment for a first offence and five (5) years for each subsequent offence.

Authorization to transfer a cartridge magazine to individuals (subsection 25(1) of the *Firearms Act*)

An individual may transfer cartridge magazine that is not deemed prohibited only if the transferee possesses a valid firearms licence.

Magazines may not be acquired during the licence “extension period”
(subsection 64(1.2) of the *Firearms Act*)

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

New definition of “prohibited firearm” (subsection 84(1) of the *Criminal Code*)

Firearms that meet the technical characteristics and requirements of the new definition of “prohibited firearm”, including that they are designed and manufactured on or after Royal Assent are prohibited.

The 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
- is designed and manufactured on or after Royal Assent of the legislation (December 15, 2023).

This is a forward-looking definition and does not affect existing firearms in Canada before Royal Assent of the legislation (December 15, 2023).

Associated links

- [C-21 \(44-1\) - LEGISinfo - Parliament of Canada](https://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/en/bill/44-1/c-21)
<https://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/en/bill/44-1/c-21>
- [Firearms, Related Goods and Ammunition \(international.gc.ca\)](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
- [A comprehensive strategy to address gun violence and strengthen gun laws in Canada \(publicsafety.gc.ca\)](https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/frms/c21-en.aspx)
<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/frms/c21-en.aspx>
- [Legislation to reduce gun violence receives Royal Assent - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2023/12/legislation-to-reduce-gun-violence-receives-royal-assent.html)
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2023/12/legislation-to-reduce-gun-violence-receives-royal-assent.html>
- [Canadian Firearms Program](https://rcmp.ca/en/firearms)
<https://rcmp.ca/en/firearms>