



NEWS RELEASE
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CACP Welcomes More Tools in the Fight Against Gun Crime

On Thursday May 20, 2004, Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan, released a new gun control package which provides stronger sentences, more tools for the police and maintains a strong licensing and registration program while streamlining processes and capping costs.

Edgar McLeod, Chief of the Cape Breton Regional Police Service and President of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) said: "This is a welcome move towards greater public safety. It maintains the integrity of the existing program while reinforcing our fight against crime with new measures. Police have demanded that the government get tough on guns and this package does it. Many police have been frustrated with laws that do not reflect the seriousness of gun crime. The proposals to strengthen the penalties for misusing guns will send a strong message: we do not tolerate gun crime."

Amendments to the *Criminal Code* to toughen the gun crime provisions include:

- strengthening certain Criminal Code penalties to deter the possession of loaded handguns in public places (with an increase in the current minimum penalty of one year);
- increasing the minimum penalty for weapons trafficking and possession for the purpose of trafficking (currently one year);
- providing that judges must give specific consideration to domestic violence in deciding whether to order a prohibition for the possession of firearms;
- expanding the application of lifetime prohibitions for the possession of all classes of firearms following conviction for specific serious offences;
- providing that the use of a firearm in the commission of an offence be included in the grounds justifying detention of an accused; and
- providing that parole will not normally be available until half the sentence is served, following conviction for specific serious offences committed with a firearm.

"The package also expands the use of new technology for more effective crime scene investigation by establishing a Canadian Integrated Ballistic Identification Network (CIBIN) and maintains funding for the National Weapons Enforcement Support Team which has provided valuable assistance to police services across the country."

“We have maintained all along that we need a balanced approach: strong laws controlling legal firearms in AND tough responses to criminal misuse of firearms. We are pleased that this package recognizes that strong controls over legal guns are critical to preventing their misuse and the diversion of legal guns to illegal markets. The existing system of licensing firearm owners and registering guns has made an important contribution to public safety.

Police use the system 1500 times every day and we have many concrete cases of how the system has allowed them to take preventative action. (Remember some of the NWEST examples) More than 900 affidavits are produced each year by the Canada Firearms Centre to support prosecutions of gun-related crimes across the country. About 6,000 firearms have been traced in gun-crime and firearm-trafficking cases within Canada and internationally.”

“At the same time measures have also been taken to control the costs of the registry. Good fiscal management is essential to maintaining public support for the program. Funding for the Firearms Registry component of the Program will be capped at \$25 million per year, starting next fiscal year. This builds on previous efforts to improve management and fiscal accountability.” The government will continue to move to accommodate the legitimate concerns of gun owners by further streamlining the firearms licence renewal processes, eliminating fees for the registration and transfer of firearms; and continue to consult Aboriginal people about the delivery of the Firearms Program in their communities.