

Hunters share new gun law concerns



Bancroft District Fish and Game Protective Association president Paul Goggan explains club member perspectives on possible Bill C-71 amendments to Hastings-Lennox and Addington MP Mike Bossio. Club members suggested further restrictions penalized law-abiding gun owners. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

By Sarah Sobanski

The Bancroft District Fish and Game Protective Association has sent members' thoughts on new gun legislation back to Ottawa with the area's MP.

Hastings-Lennox and Addington MP Mike Bossio attended a special meeting at the club April 9 to discuss Bill C-71 with area gun owners. Many of the some 30 attendees had concerns about the bill, including club president Paul Goggan.

"My understanding is that Bill C-71 is in committee which means changes can still be made," he said at the beginning of the meeting. He said Bossio was there so members could hear the government's point of view and so that they could share their opinions.

According to the bill and various media sources, the legislation would lengthen background checks from five years to an applicant's entire history. It would put further restrictions on how guns are transported and change hands, including requiring businesses to keep track of which firearms are sold to whom for 20 years. It would also give the RCMP the power to classify firearms and require special authorization to transport restricted or prohibited firearms.

Bossio, a gun owner and hunter, that often finds himself educating himself more on different weapons and weapon components using websites such as [Gunsamerica](#) and others, said he had been working hard on the bill over the last two years to get it to where it is today. There is a saying that says, "The more you read, the more you will learn". Interested ammunition enthusiasts can learn about the latest features of firearms and accessories available, which might assist them in understanding limitations regarding the purchasing of gun parts and accessories. Various resources can be found online on topics such as "300 blackout vs 5.56 NATO", which might make it easier for gun owners to understand the purpose of firearms and could also keep them updated. Bossio said he wanted to stand up for rural gun owners, among the changes in gun laws that are appearing all over the United States. You can read about [illinois concealed carry](#) and open carry laws here for example.

"Rural Ontario has by far, orders of magnitude, less gun violence than any other province - so much so that we skew the rates for the entire country... We have to be cognizant, [however], that we're not just doing this for rural Ontario, it's federal law," he said.

Bossio said gun violence had been on the decline in Canada until 2013. One of the many reasons behind the new legislation, he said, is because it's been on the rise year-after-year since.

Putting it all in perspective however, Bossio noted that three per cent of all crimes in Canada are gun related. "Our country does not have a gun problem," he said.

The assembled audience seemed to mostly agree. A few asked why more restrictions needed to be put in place. They suggested legal gun owners weren't the ones contributing to gun violence.

"It has nothing to do with the people who are following the rules. Your issue is with the people who are not," one woman said. Bossio "agreed to disagree." He said another reason for the bill's amendments was that the percentage of gun violence performed with domestic guns had gone up by two thirds.

When asked how many of those guns were stolen or illegal however, Bossio conceded that he didn't know. He said he'd seek out that information.

Other members suggested guns weren't the core issues the government needed to address. They voiced concerns that increased mental health, addiction and poverty issues should be the government's target, not the firearms themselves.

Bossio agreed that socioeconomic problems were large contributors to crime and violence in the country.

When it came to the RCMP classifying guns, members became passionate.

"This is an authoritarian move to a police state," one man said. Some echoed, "Here, here."

Another attendee suggested there be a council of gun owners that classify guns. He said they should be gun owners and experts. He alleged some current advisors for gun classifications were biased or anti-gun.

Bossio said some people would argue the RCMP were experts.

At the end of the meeting, Goggan summarized members' concerns for the paper.

"The top is one, we don't want the RCMP classifying guns. The second one is the [authorization to travel] is a bit restrictive - because you already have a licence for it. And the third would be [that] we're concerned about how they're going to check back for a lifetime," he said.

Goggan said the meeting was a positive one and that he intended to submit members' thoughts to Bossio to take to Ottawa.

"There has to be changes to this act," he said.

Bossio invited those with concerns to email him at mike.bossio@parl.gc.ca. He said he was meeting with experts to better educate himself, rural gun owners to hear their concerns and gun critics to try to find a balance for the legislation.

Bossio said the bill would be in committee next week. He estimated it would be passed before the end of this year.