

MP addresses controversial firearms Bill at town hall meeting]

By **Brian Lockhart**

Dufferin-Caledon MP Kyle Seeback held a town hall-style meeting at the Dufferin Northern-Peel Anglers & Hunters Association in Mono on Tuesday, February 21, to discuss the controversial federal Bill C-21.

Bill C-21 is a bill proposed by the federal Liberal government that will ban a variety of firearms including rifles and shotguns. The Bill has come under fire by many hunters, sports shooting groups, and Indigenous groups.

Opponents to the Bill say it goes too far and bans firearms that are routinely used by hunters, shooters, and Indigenous people and will turn legal firearm owners into criminals if they fail to comply with the new regulations.

The event was well attended with a standing room only audience. While the meeting was open to the general public, the majority of persons who attended were legal firearms owners with a vested interest in Bill C-21.

Seeback gave an opening preamble in which he provided some statistics about gun crime in Canada.

‘The Conservative Party position on Bill C-21 is we are against Bill C-21,’ he said. ‘That’s my position as well. This is a difficult Bill. The other opposition parties are in favour of the Bill, so we’re going to have a hard time not having this Bill pass.’

He said that, according to police, of gun crimes committed last year, 86 per cent of those firearms were smuggled into the country from the United States, and that trend is increasing.

The number of firearms seized at the border more than doubled in 2021 from the previous year, with gang-related homicides increasing by 92 per cent.

Seeback also criticized the justice system, saying ‘Many experts believe that the increase in violent crime is worsened by the revolving door of our criminal justice system due to Bill C-75, which drastically weakened the ability of judges to impose stricter sentences on violent criminals and deny bail to violent criminals.’

He cited, OPP Commissioner, Thomas Carrique, who stated, ‘Just three days ago (February 12, 2023) we had an offender that had been released on bail for possession of a firearm, within days of being released on bail was arrested in the possession of numerous firearms yet again.’

In relation to other firearms legislation, Bill C-71, created in 2020, is a proposed firearms buyback program that Mr. Seeback said, is just not feasible.

‘The Government originally estimated the buyback program would cost \$200 million. However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates reimbursing gun owners will cost up to \$756 million without accounting for administrative or staffing costs. Others have costed the program at upwards of \$6.7 billion. If we’re going to spend \$6.7 billion, why don’t we put that money into two things ? guns and gangs task forces ? they have great results. Number two, why don’t we look at investing in border security?’

Seeback also acknowledged that if a gun buyback were put in place, not everyone would voluntarily give up their firearms, requiring police resources to go to people’s homes searching for guns rather than doing regular police work on more important issues.

The floor was opened up for questions and comments from the audience.

There was overwhelming support from those in attendance who are against Bill C-21 and do not want to see this Bill passed.