## Statement to the GUN CONTROL, ILLEGAL ARMS TRAFFICKING AND THE INCREASE IN GUN CRIMES COMMITTED BY MEMBERS OF STREET GANGS

To be presented on Feb 17 by remote by President Keith Loh PCDHFC

Thank you to the committee members for inviting me to speak on behalf of licensed gun owners and the members of my club. My name is Keith Loh, I am the President of the Port Coquitlam & District Hunting and Fishing Club. We are a non-profit society and shooting range serving the Metro Vancouver area including the riding represented by Mr. McKinnon, who has given us his valuable time on this issue on more than one occasion.

Our range serves over 3,000 active members who engage in sport shooting, hunting, fishing and archery. We are one of the largest outdoor shooting ranges in BC and we are a training center for multiple law enforcement agencies including the RCMP and the police forces of most of the cities in the Lower Mainland. Similarly, our members are drawn from all over the major urban centers. We are urban firearms owners who are in the same communities that are impacted by gang crime. I myself am a hunter and competitive shooter.

Madame and Monsieurs, our members share concerns of what appears to be the growing incidence of open gang violence in our communities. Like all Canadians we wonder why people turn to the gangster lifestyle and we applaud constructive efforts to put a stop to gang violence and address the root causes that promote gang activity.

Where possible, we cooperate with police, we vette our members, we instruct them on the safe and legal use of firearms, we rely on the same licensing conventions that our government uses that should prevent criminals from gaining access to firearms.

When needed, we have raised concerns with the Chief Firearms Officer and are bound to report illegality that we witness. Our club has always had active and retired law enforcement officers serving as staff or on our volunteer board of directors. In short, we are a place where gangsters would probably want to be the furthest away from.

I would suggest to the committee that legal firearms owners are fully supportive of constructive efforts against gangs, against illegal trafficking and toward social changes that would deter those away from the gang lifestyle. However, recently efforts by the federal government appear to be aimed improperly at licensed gun owners who are among the most vetted citizens in the country - targeting those who are fully on side against gangs.

Among the suggested changes were giving cities or provinces the ability to restrict firearms while ignoring the fact that gang members pass freely from one jurisdiction to the next, who already disregard laws against illegally transporting firearms or owning them without a license.

You have likely heard that the vast majority of so-called crime guns are flooding through our borders from the United States. Somehow despite all of the background checks on Canadian owners, controls on how licensees buy and sell firearms legitimately, criminals are apparently able to get what they need to support their gang business through foreign sources. Perhaps the committee should ask why, even during COVID and strict border controls and a population that was largely locked down, guns from abroad continue to stream through our border and show up at crime scenes.

In the case of straw purchasing - the public should know that for anyone desperate enough to use their license to traffic in firearms - that the government already has all the details needed to prosecute them. Indeed, in the case of restricted firearms, which include handguns, the government has to APPROVE every purchase. So then, if the problem of domestic trafficking is an issue, shouldn’t we ask instead if the police have the resources to pursue investigations.

Finally, a gun buyback of legal firearms that were used safely and legally for sporting and hunting such as by our members punishes those who already have to pass screening, who already have to abide by laws against improper usage.

It is not clear what evidence the government has had to prove this will impact gangsters who, if they choose to, could smuggle those guns in or have them manufactured. The fact is gangsters are not using the $3000 competition rifles our members may lose in a buyback. All that will be accomplished is that our sports will be diminished at the cost of the public purse. A gun buy back that could cost Canadians hundreds of millions of dollars if not billions - decreasing our wealth when our systems are already straining.

I ask the committee to think about how the money being proposed for such ideas like the gun buy back could be better used toward stopping the smuggling of illegal firearms. Or how regions could use those funds instead to attack the source of urban violence by funding housing for our most vulnerable, to help mitigate drug abuse or to properly fund our courts and policing.

How much better would it be if we used our tax paying dollars toward the strengthening our borders, putting money toward community programs that steer people away from the gang lifestyle and providing better access to mental health resources to those at risk.

These are measures that I believe should unite Canadians and I urge the committee to direct their efforts in exploring those areas.

Thank you