

The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians Responds to the Federal Government's Recent Announcement on the Red Flag Gun Law

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Canada's emergency physicians are disappointed in today's announcement with respect to the so-called "Red Flag Laws."

They add nothing to the current law which already allows any member of the public to report to the Chief Firearms Officer (CFO) any individual at potential risk of inappropriate use of a firearm.

Every day, Canada's emergency physicians encounter people with suicidal ideation, untreated psychosis, substance abuse, potential perpetrators of intimate partner violence and those with impulsive aggressive behaviours. In any of these clinical circumstances, access to firearms dramatically escalates the potential for serious injury and death.

Reporting through the CFO has historically been shown to take far too much time, leaving individuals, families, and communities at risk.

For twenty-five years CAEP has asked for a mandatory reporting of individuals at risk law that would allow the police to temporarily remove firearms from those patients for whom we have concerns for both their safety and the safety of others. We have asked that any such law be nimble and responsive to allow immediate temporary relocation of firearms until the patient's mental health or social crisis has been assessed, treated and resolved.

This law fails to meet that required expectation. Instead, we have witnessed the adoption of the American style Extreme Risk Protection Order which requires either the police or individuals to petition the courts for the temporary removal of firearms from an individual at risk.

Such a potentially protracted process does not answer the pressing clinical need of immediately ensuring the safety of our patients, their families, and their communities when there is a significant potential risk of inappropriate use of guns.

Rather than a Red Flag Law, the federal government has waved a White Flag of surrender.

This is completely unacceptable to the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians.

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