

Minister for
International
Trade



Ministre du
Commerce
extérieur

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AMENDMENTS TO THE EXPORT AND IMPORT PERMITS ACT

Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade the Honourable Michael H. Wilson today introduced amendments to the Export and Import Permits Act.

In effect, these amendments will allow Canadian manufacturers of automatic weapons to broaden their marketing efforts and compete for foreign defence contracts. Canadian firms are currently restricted to selling to the Canadian military and police forces.

The export of automatic weapons will be subject to Canadian government controls, which are already among the most stringent in the world. A new list, called the Automatic Firearms Country Control List, will be created. It will set out the names of those countries to which Canadian manufacturers can sell. Only countries with which Canada has a defence research, development and production arrangement will be eligible for inclusion on this list. Automatic firearms will not be sold to countries that are not included on the list.

"The amendments will help place our defence industrial base on a competitive footing," said Mr. Wilson. "They will also help Canada's overall defence capability. Canadian companies, only able to rely on domestic orders, are in danger of losing their viability.

"Canada will continue to advocate increased international restraint and effective controls on the export of conventional weapons," the Minister noted. "At the same time, Canada continues to recognize that all countries have the right to self-defence, as guaranteed under Article 51 of the UN Charter. This Bill will give Canadian firms the opportunity to help Canada's close allies and defence partners meet their legitimate defence requirements."

The awarding of international contracts would help keep defence companies viable, thereby allowing the Canadian Forces to continue to purchase, repair and maintain this equipment in Canada, rather than having to seek foreign suppliers.

Mr. Wilson said companies that violate the new regulations could face fines amounting to the total value of the illegal transaction and officers of such companies could face jail sentences of up to 10 years.

Complementary changes to the Criminal Code were introduced at the same time. Since January 1, 1978, fully automatic weapons have been classified in the Criminal Code as prohibited weapons. Importation or possession of these weapons has therefore been illegal, except in the case of the Canadian Forces and police. The amendments to the Criminal Code will correct this situation. Prohibition on the general sale of automatic weapons in Canada will remain unchanged.

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