

OUR SCOPE

Message from the Chief Firearms Officer

Maarten Kramers

Heading into the fall

With the hunting season fast approaching, and many firearm owners gearing up to head into the woods, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a safe and successful season.

These past few months have brought some changes for the federal Firearms Program. This volume of *Our Scope* will highlight these changes and explain the significance for firearm owners. Staff at the Provincial Firearms Office are working hard to clarify

the changes for firearm owners, along with continuing the day-to-day work of serving our clients.

We ask you to please be mindful of your firearm licence expiry date. If you have had a change of address since you first received your firearm licence, it is important to submit your current address. This will ensure you receive your licence renewal notice and, if applicable, your licence fee refund.

Changes to the Federal Firearms Program

How do they affect the firearm owner?

The Firearms Act and Regulations and the Criminal Code of Canada have not been changed. The current requirement for firearm owners to hold a firearms licence and the requirement for all firearms to be registered still stands. However, on May 17, 2006, the federal government gave notice, through the tabling of Bill C-21, that they intend to ask Parliament to change the current law to eliminate the need to register non-restricted firearms (rifles and shotguns). Parliament will be asked to deal with this request in the fall of 2006.

What does this mean for firearm owners?

Fee Waiver and Refund

In the interim, the federal government has introduced a fee waiver and refund. Those applying for licence modifications (POL to PAL) or a renewal license (including those whose firearms licence has expired) will not have to pay the licence fee. Those who have paid for a licence renewal will get a refund. This does not apply to minors applying for a Possession and Acquisition Licence (PAL) for the first time or those whose licence has been revoked. The fee waiver period is for two years from May 17, 2006, to May 17, 2008.

Refunds will apply to individuals who applied for or renewed their firearm licence between December 1, 1998, and

May 17, 2006. Refunds will be sent out to eligible individuals over the next few months.

Amnesty

The federal government has also introduced an amnesty that protects eligible individuals from prosecution for unlawful possession of a non-restricted firearm. The amnesty lasts from May 17, 2006, to May 17, 2007, and applies if

- you have a valid firearms licence and have not registered your non-restricted firearm
- your firearms licence expired or will expire between January 1, 2004, and May 17, 2007, and you have not registered your non-restricted firearms.

Under the amnesty you will be protected from prosecution to enable you to obtain a registration certificate and/or renew your firearms licence and become compliant with the current law.

This amnesty does not apply if you have never obtained a firearms licence and possess unregistered firearms.

Verification

The Canada Firearms Centre will also verify non-restricted firearms at time of registration or transfer to a new owner by phone at the central processing centre instead of having to locate a local verifier. Verification is the process to accurately describe the firearm from a firearm reference table when it is registered or transferred.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a POL?

A POL is a Possession-Only Licence. A POL authorizes possession of the firearms you already own and will allow you to borrow similar firearms. POLs are no longer being issued. They are valid for current holders as long as they are renewed before the expiry date. Once a POL expires, you will be required to obtain a PAL.

What is a PAL?

A PAL is a Possession and Acquisition Licence. A PAL is required by anyone in Nova Scotia who wants to own or acquire (by purchase, as a gift, by inheritance, or in trade) any type of firearm. These are valid for 5 years and can be renewed. The Canadian Firearms Safety Course is a prerequisite for this licence.

What is a Minor's Possession-Only Licence?

It is illegal for minors to acquire (by purchase or gift), own, or possess firearms in Canada. However, a Minor's Possession-Only Licence allows a minor to carry or use a gun under the supervision of an adult. Anyone who is between the ages of 12 and 17 years and wants to carry or use a firearm for purposes of instruction, hunting, target shooting, or taking part in an organized shooting competition can apply for this licence.

Currently there are
87,098 valid firearm
licence holders and
321,183 firearms
registered in Nova Scotia.

How long will it take to get my licence?

If there are no eligibility issues, it will take between 4 to 8 weeks to receive your licence.

What should I do if I discover that my firearm licence has expired?

Contact the Provincial Firearms Office or the Central Processing Site at 1-800-731-4000 and advise them of your situation. If your Possession-Only Licence (POL) has expired, you must apply for a Possession and Acquisition Licence (PAL). Expired POLs cannot be renewed.

Refunds

Licence fees will be refunded to individuals who applied for or renewed their firearms licence between December 1, 1998, and May 17, 2006. Refunds will be sent out to eligible individuals over the next few months.

Fee Waiver

There will be no fees for firearm licences or renewals between May 17, 2006, and May 17, 2008.



Our Scope

Do you have an idea for future articles or feedback on any topics in this issue? If so, contact the **Provincial Firearms Office** at

Phone (902) 424-6689
Toll free 1-800-731-4000, ext. 6505
E-mail kramermx@gov.ns.ca


NOVA SCOTIA
Justice
Policing and Victim Services