



Body Armour Licensing Survey Report

September 24, 2009.

With the permission of the office of Province of British Columbia's Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, the Society conducted a survey on Body Armour Licensing during the period August 25 through to September 8. The purpose of the survey was to assist the Ministry in obtaining input from practitioners involved in the security industry across Canada in regards to the use of body armour. The Ministry conducted their own survey from body armour manufacturers/distributors and businesses that offer security services in relation to the proposal announced by Premier Gordon Campbell for the sale, possession and use of body armour, specifically "bullet resistant vests." This body armour licensing proposal was part of a seven point program in order to combat guns and gang violence in the Province.

Responses from licensed security practitioners were received from every Province. The highest number of respondents was generated from Ontario, followed by British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Over 95% of the respondents agreed that within the next five years, more security personnel will be or be required to be wearing protective body armour while on duty, as there was concern expressed by many of the greater risk of injury from stabbing in the line of duty then from gunshot. Just over 26% of the respondents were currently required to wear body armour.

As for the licensing aspect of the survey, just over 79% indicated they would support a government licensing program to regulate the sale, possession and use of body armour. While over 69% agreed that the company they are employed by should be required to pay for the license, the type of licensing program preferred by 57% was that the employer is licensed, applies on your behalf, maintains records and submits them to the proper Ministry. The vast majority (87%) felt that contract security guards should be licensed to wear body armour, closely followed by corporate and private personal protection staff (86%), special events staff and proprietary security guards (75.5%). Bouncers and loss prevention officers (55%) were followed by private investigators at 31% and security consultants at 18%.

80% of respondents felt that the security industry should not be exempt from any type of licensing for body armour. The expressions of support indicated that the cost and type of material that can be obtained from various retailers needs to be regulated; security personnel require the same protection as afforded law enforcement; guidelines are needed for the destruction/decommissioning of used body armour; it is a matter of professional requirement and, the increasing risk posed to security by society specifically related to stabbings.

Over 41% had no idea as to the process used to determine the requirement to wear body armour by their employer. Only 37.5% of respondents indicated their employers did their own risk assessment and analysis in order to determine the need for use of body armour. The other methods that were used were recommendations of the Joint Health & Safety Committee (12.5%) followed by a 3rd party assessment, part of a collective agreement and as part of a Provincial Health & Safety Act, all of which were at 8%.

It should be noted that many views were expressed in the optional “comments” section of the survey. Some thought that regulating the sale and possession of body armour would be another level of control the security industry does not need as it would only direct those who use body armour for unlawful purposes to purchase it on the black market; others felt it was another way of generating revenue for the government while others suggested they felt it should be regulated for the same reason as fire arms and other restricted/ prohibited weapons.

The more glaring comments expressed were in the area of health and safety of employees in the workplace and responsibility of companies to comply with Occupational Health and Safety regulations. It was mentioned by several respondents from different Provinces that body armour should be under the Personal Protection Equipment regulation of the various Ministry’s of Labour and that employers need to conduct proper risk assessments and analysis in order to determine the issuance of body armour to employees.

This statistical report on the body licensing survey was prepared by Bob Marentette, Executive Director. The Canadian Society for Industrial Security Inc