

**A Submission regarding Bill 22-
The Security and Investigative Services Act**

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From John D ALLEN, CPO, CHSO
a Nova Scotia Security Officer

Preamble

The global risks of the last decade have keenly focused the world's attention on their sense of security and for those of us who have made a career, *yes you can make a career*, in Nova Scotia's security industry, it comes as little surprise we have been found too often wanting.

Reality of Scale

Out numbering police officers more than 3 to 1 in some jurisdictions and with spending on private security outpacing public law enforcement since the late 1990's¹, the public will have much more contact with private security officers during the course of their day than with the public police and they will expect those men and women to protect and serve them in much the same way. Sadly however poor wages, chronic staff issues, nonexistent training incentives, lackluster management and unimaginative regulation continue to plague an industry that must be much more.

While it is true that security at our points of entry and critical infrastructure has changed markedly, at the behest of our American cousins, most private security continues to be chosen by property owners based less on professional reputation, quality management and staff qualifications and more on sales pitch and price per hour.

Much is also made in academic and special interest circles about the rise of so called "private policing" but with private officers playing an ever increasing role in, not only their client's, but the safety of the general public the need to effectively standardize and professionalize our industry can no longer be ignored.

Jurisdictions across Canada have been wrestling with just these types of issues for years. BC, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec all have recently enacted new regulatory structures for their private security industry and trades with varying degrees of success. We would do well to watch and learn. This is our opportunity to truly shape the future of this very important public safety service and make Nova Scotia a leader rather than a follower.

¹ Geoffrey Li, "Private Security and Public Policing," *Juristat* December 2008: Vol. 28, No 10.

Licensure

Issues surrounding licensing a wider spectrum of security professionals are without recourse. Everyone who is entrusted with public safety should, and deserves, to be examined and certified as competent. Questions among previously unregulated proprietary and trades sectors, arguing they operate outside existing regulations, because they desire higher levels of performance; ultimately should have little to fear from a forward thinking regulator, and the concern over license portability is more a question of human resources for providers than a problem for the public. Issuing the license to an individual allows them greater control of their career path and that greatly increases morale and the personal desire to excel. These aspects are critical in the overall maturing of the art of security.

Standardized Training & Competency Testing

As with any trades certification the heart of any plan must be a standardized education and skill set of everyone in industry. It is a cornerstone of true professionalism.

While leaving the power to set training standards solely with the Registrar does offer a measure of responsiveness to changing legal and social circumstances failing to identify, in legislation, at least the broad strokes and the regular use of the term "minimum" conveys something less and easier than the best may be agreed upon.

Every Nova Scotian deserves a system that encourages and rewards the best, and affords security personnel the incentive to be the best. Entrenching the current lowest common denominator does a very great disservice to the public, and the dedicated men and women who protect Nova Scotians, when on private property. We need to set a bar that is both attainable and defensible, and recognizes there are different levels of training needed for different applications and all training must be geared toward continued professional advancement.

And while there is no indication, in the legislation, that if or how, existing personnel and structures will be grandfathered every effort must be made to ensure a smooth transition and maintain operational requirements.

Regulation

A truly effective regulatory structure must balance the need for corrective authority with it's very great power to encourage, and enhance.

The ultimate success of this framework comes in largest part from it's genesis and vision. Post adverse event regulation often tends to be more negative than it need be and designed to reprimand excess and impropriety while more well thought out regimes look firstly to set a high standard and

work through regulatory means to raise the industry up to meet that vision. The mechanics and functionaries of the regulations must also reflect this. As with any trade they need to be fully grounded in the day to day working realities of the security industry, not so as to be overly permissive but so that they can recognize excellence and innovation and take realistic effective corrective action when faced with substandard performance.

Over my 22 + years as a security officer, I have seen firsthand both extremes of the industry; the haphazardly hired, untrained, under managed, poorly paid, unmotivated, warm body and the over the top "tactical squad" operators... somewhere on the middle higher end of that spectrum must be our goal. Far too many security officers are little more than uniformed witnesses with virtually no legal powers, training or policy support to intervene in the most simple "crimes in progress". We must recognize there are those security applications that require, because of their unique risk, more than cookie cutter security services. Some locations will simply require proactive semi-armed officers, trained and prepared to act within an agreed upon use of force model.

Addressing this Ontario and Alberta have well developed programmes that allow large public institutions, like universities, hospitals, public utilities, transit and public housing authorities to maintain proprietary forces of DOJ certified Special Constables selected, trained and equipped to be that first line of defense against active crime, while at the other end of the spectrum BC has largely emasculated it's security industry.

Regulators should also address the nature of the relationship between the public police and private security officers. Efforts to reduce confusion over roles are important but an exorbitant amount of energy seems to have been expended in the past, no doubt at the behest of the police lobby, to ensure that security do not impede on the role of public law enforcement.

Stakeholder Education

A very important aspect of this equation that has been largely overlooked throughout this process is the security consumer. The key to any successful programme is a commitment to public education. Traditionally, unless you have the benefit of a corporate security knowledge base most consumers are at the mercy of the provider's sales staff to determine quality. Efforts to ensure the end users understand the system and services they are receiving should be a goal of any well developed programme.

Postscript

The simple reality is the public police cannot be everywhere all the time and cannot and will not provide dedicated protection to our factories, malls, hospitals, campuses and public venues so we must develop a system where the men and women who provide that service are well selected, well trained, properly equipped, competently managed and prepared to act, within the law and best practices, to keep Nova Scotia safe, at home, at work and at play.

I believe Bill 22 is a good first step toward making Nova Scotia's Security Guards proud of what they do but as many have identified, the devil is in the details and we need to get these details right the first time. Nova Scotia deserves nothing less.

About the Presenter

John D Allen, CPO, CHSO has been a security officer in Nova Scotia since 1988 and has worked in both contract and proprietary situations ; including general, armoured, health care, retail and educational arenas. He is certified by the International Foundation of Protection Officers and the International Assoc. for HealthCare Security and Safety and is a member of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, the International Foundation of Protection Officers, the International Society of Crime Prevention Practitioners and the Christian Security Network.

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