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The Post-9/11 Private Security Reality

1) Intro

Although it has been nearly five years since 9/11, there's a warning bell that continues to ring loud and clear. We cannot possibly ignore the fact that following the London bombings, Canada remains the only target named by Osama bin Laden not yet hit.

It is well known that terrorists look for visible targets – international airports and other major transportation hubs, heavily populated areas, commercial and government buildings, high-profile landmarks, and major events. So how can the private security industry manage this increasing uncertainty, especially when we are also trying to stop fraud, theft, vandalism, workplace violence, and other costly crimes?

- ✓ This morning, I'm going to begin by providing an overview of just how rapidly Canada's private security industry has evolved since the 9/11 terrorist attacks.
- ✓ Second, I'm going to turn my focus to Ontario, and discuss a new law that is about to impact 50,000 security guards and in particular, the commercial sector that relies on them.
- ✓ Third, I'm going to talk about security-related changes to come, and how they will impact the National Capital Region.

2) A National Perspective in a Post-9/11 Private Security Environment

On September 11, 2001, we got a cruel wake-up call that yanked us out of our comfort zones and shoved us into a new, far more complex reality – one that forced us to either change or be changed.

Canada and our allies chose not to live in fear. We chose a proactive and progressive path that has completely transformed the ways in which we protect our people, our property, and our information.

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Canada's private security industry, in particular, has advanced rapidly to keep stride – and wherever possible, guide the way – towards effective solutions. While not all private security firms have advanced at the same pace, others have emerged as leaders. Here are some of the security-focused solutions that Canada's private security leaders have adopted:

Solution #1 involves discipline. First and foremost, the very definition of a security guard has by sheer necessity, been expanded. Gone are the days when security personnel only watched doors and elevators. In today's security reality, the best front line security personnel have the discipline and know-how to deter or respond to chemical spills, suspicious parcels, public demonstrations, verbal or physical conflicts, and terrorist threats.

But that's not all. We are also being called on to provide fingerprinting, CPIC background checks, and other identification services. We are providing on-site or mobile alarm response, x-ray technician support, as well as security-sensitive administration duties. We are in courthouses, hospitals, educational centres, high tech facilities and international airports. We are escorting dignitaries, securing international events and monitoring highly sensitive construction zones. We are being asked to train others in occupational health and safety measures or even conduct threat/risk assessments.

Solution #2 involves experience. Given the increasing responsibilities of front line private security professionals, Canada's private security leaders recognize that never before has focused recruiting been so important.

On the one hand, there is a tremendous advantage to hiring former members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP. The Canadian Government has done so all along. When clients are supported by law enforcement agencies or top-level security forces – and require additional, outsourced support – it only makes sense to back them up with private security professionals who share similar backgrounds. At the same time, many clients who do outsource 100% of their security requirements will respect the first-hand experience that veterans and ex-cops can offer.

On the other hand, it also makes sense to hire other security-conscious citizens without prior military or police service who possess, at the very least, the four cornerstones of good character: *dedication, trust, loyalty and honesty*. Particularly in the private sector, clients tend to prefer a security presence that understands their corporate culture; they want them to blend in.

That's why it's also important to recruit people of all ages and from diverse backgrounds – to ensure front line security professionals can directly relate to whom and what they are safeguarding. For example, in recent years we have begun to screen, hire and train former IT specialists, financial experts, business owners, corporate trainers, quality

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assurance auditors, corporate accountants, HR consultants, fitness instructors, trades people, you name it. It's all about matching experience with experience.

Solution #3 involves training. Once the very best have been recruited, Canada's private security leaders are prioritizing the very highest of training standards. Think about it. The very nature of security is to prevent incidents before they happen; and if they do happen, it is the security guard who is on the front line. He or she is usually the first to assess the situation, the first to call in the necessary emergency response, the first to take control at the scene, the first to administer first aid until help arrives, and the first to advise responding forces about the specific details of the incident.

Many international and national security standards do exist – ISO Quality Management, The Canadian General Standards Board, and 9-1-1 emergency response protocols are but some examples. But on the provincial level, there is much groundwork being done as well.

3) A Provincial Perspective in a Post-9/11 Private Security Environment

In December 2005, Ontario passed a law that will impact how the entire private security industry will play out in this province. What is remarkable is that this is the first significant change to the legislation involving the security industry in Ontario since 1966.

The Private Security and Investigative Services Act calls for all privately employed security guards and investigators to undergo mandatory training, testing and licensing. Various standards have been set. The potential roll-out is Spring 2007.

No doubt the commercial sector will experience logistical and budgetary challenges. However, consider the fact that about 50,000 people are employed in the private security industry in Ontario, but only half of them are regulated. If a security guard's competence and integrity have not been properly assessed, especially in today's security environment, imagine the unknown risks this poses. This legislation was long overdue.

Security should be treated as a sound investment – rather than an afterthought. To demonstrate this point, let me give you an example. In a recent news article, officials in Los Angeles announced that the turnover rate among L.A. security guards who protect commercial buildings stands at more than 100%. To remedy such instability, city officials admitted their need to improve security guard pay rates, training and benefits.

The fact is, high turnover rates are far too common in the private security industry – including here in Canada. If security guards are underpaid, under-trained and undervalued, what kind of front line response can you expect from them? For this reason, clients should definitely be scrutinizing turnover rates when they are shopping around for private security services.

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Here is an example of what does work. As the CEO of a not-for-profit, private security organization, I oversee a structure where 96% of our revenues flow back to our employees in the form of industry-leading wages, benefits and training. Meanwhile, our turnover rate is the lowest in the private security industry – around 18%.

So if the value of security services is only measured in terms of a bottom-line budgeted amount during a contractual bidding process, what about the costs of crime or violence? Can you place a dollar value on human life? Are liability expenses being factored? Legal fees and crisis management costs? Increased insurance premiums? Lost revenue from business interruption? Is the lowest bidder even meeting the bare minimum standards?

All in all, ensuring we're hiring reliable, qualified security guards to protect what and whom we value most cannot be measured by a price tag alone. It only makes sense to update 40-year-old legislation to ensure that the front line security guard you hired has been previously trained and tested to basic security standards.

In this post-9/11 environment, we sincerely hope that basic security standards are identified and set as soon as possible in every province across this country. Some, but not all, are in the process of doing so. With the security industry evolving so rapidly – and with more changes to come – time is of the essence.

4) A Local Perspective in a Post-9/11 Private Security Environment

Here in Ottawa, whether it's Federal Government initiatives or provincial legislation, we have made a great deal of progress on all fronts. There is no question that technology has been a driving force, connecting and interconnecting us in ways that have made our planet so much easier to navigate. Who could have predicted that we could one day 'shift', 'enter', 'escape' or 'control' the global marketplace via our keyboards? If we are to continue developing innovative, competitive and world-savvy technologies, so too must we continue investing in ways to properly secure them – and our way of life.

When it comes to our security, some of the most basic questions we should be asking are: Who is looking after my children? Who am I hiring to help manage my business? Who is processing my confidential information? Who is watching me on hidden video surveillance cameras? When we seek answers to these questions, suddenly the realms of personal privacy and national security begin to overlap. That's why demand for fingerprinting and ID services, in particular, has gone through the roof – especially here in Ottawa where so many of the nation's private and public sector head offices are based.

The government sector long ago recognized the importance of prioritizing security clearances and background checks. Thorough screening and ID protocols continue to be revisited and upgraded. For example, the need to carry a passport or special identification card when crossing the Canada-U.S. border is not only a hot topic right now, but inevitable.

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Fingerprinting may still carry a stigma for many citizens in the private sector, but the reality is that demand for thorough background checks is steadily rising in many different industries. Transport drivers as well as anyone who handles explosives will also soon need to carry identification cards. When you consider how important it is to thoroughly screen new applicants in the “vulnerable sector” that hires caretakers for children and seniors, security checks are already commonplace. The same goes for the banking industry, contractors, research and development companies, and other security-sensitive businesses.

Keeping up with what has become an overwhelming demand for fingerprints and background checks has been a challenge. The RCMP is experiencing such a backlog of fingerprinting requests that waiting times are currently exceeding 6-8 months. To remedy this, that’s where the wonders of technology come in.

First of all, the RCMP is about to launch a Real Time Identification (RTID) pilot project later this month – with full implementation scheduled for later this year. RTID is a state-of-the-art data management process that is designed to ensure quick, accurate and seamless updates of electronic fingerprints and criminal record data. The RCMP has identified a handful of authorized participants, including *The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires*, providing us with a secure and direct link to what is about to become the highest standard for the security industry in Canada.

Second, the way of the future is a transition from traditional ink and paper fingerprinting to digital fingerprinting technology. As fingerprint identification and background checks become far more commonplace, citizens and businesses deserve a convenient service that can provide an immediate and dramatic reduction in response times. With the new technology, requests will be moved to the top of the pile and we can expect about a 72-hour turnaround instead of 6-8 months – now we’re talking!

Third, in response to growing demand, this fingerprinting technology is already beginning to spread to more convenient locations from coast to coast. People need service options. In addition, mobile fingerprinting units in major centres can better serve corporate and government customers – bringing the service to larger groups rather than expecting so many individuals to travel to the service.

The security industry cannot stop at fingerprinting and ID services. As other technological challenges and improvements arise, so too must the security industry keep stride. Given U.S. and international trends in a booming Information Age – the key is to be prepared.

With few exceptions, that’s why security professionals today must have some technical background or training. Whether it’s manning the Security Operations Centre at the Ottawa International Airport or processing instant photo ID visitors’ passes at a high tech

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company in Kanata – today’s private security professionals are being asked to operate their clients’ most advanced security technologies. Some clients have surveillance and communications devices that allow security personnel to monitor buildings located off site and in some cases, in other cities. Other clients have highly sophisticated scanning or x-ray equipment. At the very least, clients expect security professionals to perform basic administrative functions on computers in reception areas.

Today’s most reliable, experienced and best-trained security organizations not only seek to understand their clients’ needs, but also their clients’ innovations.

5) Conclusion

To quickly recap this morning’s presentation, the private security industry has been proactive and has undergone sweeping changes – nationally, provincially and locally. We are being expected to do more than ever before – so we have screened, tested and equipped security-focused individuals of all ages, and from all walks of life.

As company policies and legislation update both private and public sector security priorities, Canada’s private security leaders have made vast improvements in the areas of discipline, experience and training. A valued workforce is a more stable workforce. And, whether it’s operating sophisticated surveillance, communications and security equipment or whether it’s providing digital fingerprinting and criminal background checks, front line security professionals must be able to adapt to the many different security-related technologies of the day.

From coast to coast, Canada’s private security leaders have been dedicated to increasing our strength, our intelligence and our vigilance in this post-9/11 security reality. As private security professionals, it is our *raison d’être* – and our passion – to safeguard our *True North Strong and Free*. And we *will* safeguard it around-the-clock.

Commissionaires Ottawa is a private, not-for-profit company that employs more than 2,500 security professionals to protect and serve over 200 client sites in the National Capital Region and Northern Ontario.

Founded on the discipline of military and RCMP cultures, Commissionaires Ottawa has evolved to become a diverse, multi-skilled and experienced company of private security professionals. Today, the company has the most stable workforce in the private security industry and is ranked among the largest non-government employers in the National Capital Region. All commissionaires are cleared to the “Secret” level or higher.