

Municipal Security Agent (MSA) training

Municipalities across Canada face growing security challenges.

Law enforcement agencies are increasingly stretched thin, resulting in summary offences, bylaw infractions, and public disorder (minor crimes) often not attended by police, and not being investigated or prosecuted.

While law enforcement might label a crime minor, the person whose belongings were stolen, window broken, car vandalized, etc., is traumatized and left feeling unsupported by law enforcement.

Even for major crimes, law enforcement response times are greater than the desired five to seven minutes. In Toronto, police response times to major crimes average around 20 minutes! Many crimes are completed in seconds to minutes: assault, sexual assault, robbery, murder, etc. All can be completed long before the police arrive.

Also gone are the days of community engagement by the police. Police rarely conduct foot patrols, engage casually with local businesses, or attend community meetings.

This is not meant to disparage police! Police budgets and hiring have not kept pace with inflation and population growth. Coupled to that are increased paperwork, increased case preparation requirements, and increased training and recertification requirements. Police must prioritize serious cases to get the worst offenders off the streets.

Enforcement vacuum

The lack of police resources has created an ENFORCEMENT VACUUM for minor crimes. Criminals are aware of the vacuum, and take advantage of it. This harms the relationship between police and the community.

A solution to the enforcement vacuum and long response time is the use of private security.

Across Canada, cities and towns are hiring security professionals to take on roles that were previously the purview of the police: patrolling high-risk areas, walking beats, enforcing bylaws, issuing parking and transit tickets, trespassing individuals, responding to alarms, etc.



Municipal Security Agents

Municipalities are hiring private security companies to address the enforcement vacuum. These Municipal Security Agents (MSAs) patrol public spaces, engage with people in the community, and deter crime. In their day-to-day duties, they could be patrolling the nightclub area, responding to noise and disturbance concerns, issuing bylaw and transit citations, conducting welfare checks, investigating bylaw concerns, and taking lost property reports.

Municipal Security Agents are often first on scene. They assess situations, handle minor situations themselves, and request the appropriate emergency services for more serious situations. They are the first link in the emergency response chain, and a key liaison between the community and law enforcement.

Training deficit

An investigation into the training of security professionals working as Municipal Security Agents found no standard. Some municipalities only require the provincially-mandated basic security training. Other communities offer a few weeks of specialized training.

Police recruits train for 8 to 12 months, require specialized training for specific posts, and are regularly required to recertify their qualifications. Annual retraining averages 4 weeks.

Security candidates train for between *zero* and *one* week (40 hours). There are no additional training or recertification requirements.

Taking on roles historically done by police has inherent risk. Training is critical to ensure that security professionals can safely and effectively conduct their assigned roles and responsibilities. Insufficient training opens the security professional to injury and charges, and the security professional, security company, and municipality to liability.

CA★SP is primarily concerned for the physical and psychological safety of security professionals, and the liability that is created because of inadequate training.

To address the training deficit, CA★SP consulted with security professionals and security employers currently engaged in municipal security. These consultations have led to the development of the MSA program — a cost-effective, community-focused, public safety solution to the enforcement vacuum.

In 2026, a British Columbia security company and their client were fined 1.8 million dollars because security guards assaulted and falsely arrested a patron. The guards face criminal charges. “Negligent training” was identified as the primary cause.

Benefits of the MSA program

Alleviate pressure on the police: MSAs handle non-criminal and minor-criminal matters, allowing police to focus on major crimes.

Enhance bylaw enforcement: MSAs are empowered to issue citations and ensure compliance with municipal bylaws. For example: trespassing, crowd control, traffic management, transit, parking, event security, scene security, encampments, etc.

Enhance law enforcement: MSAs are empowered to detain and arrest for indictable Criminal Code offences.

Improve response time: MSAs are authorized to respond to alarms and patrol properties, which speeds up response time. They decide if additional police, fire, or ambulance responses are needed.

Security detail: when fire or ambulance crews are called to questionable areas, or on request, MSAs are dispatched to form a perimeter security detail.

Cost-effectiveness: a dedicated municipal security force reduces long-term costs associated with crime, property damage, and law enforcement interventions.

Increase public safety: MSAs provide foot, bicycle, and vehicle patrols; community engagement in parks, play grounds, transportation hubs, business districts, special events, etc.; after hours alarm response; and proactive security measures to deter crime and disorder.

Increase community engagement: MSAs work with businesses and community leaders to identify and report community issues to the appropriate authorities, resulting in a faster response and safer neighborhoods.

Increase well-being: the MSA program is an investment in community safety and well-being, which builds recognition and respect for government and law enforcement.

Better integration with social services: MSAs work with other organizations to identify and help persons who may be homeless, trafficked, abused, mentally or physically ill, or otherwise in need of social services.

Better integration with emergency services: MSAs provide a coordinated approach to public safety, and support emergency services during situations.

Training

These training requirements were based on consultations with the security industry and municipalities. Assessment and possible revision of these training requirements will be conducted during implementation and regularly thereafter.

MSA training requires security professionals complete six weeks of training beyond the provincially-mandated basic security training program. This training develops the knowledge and skills to safely and effectively perform in the field, and includes

- ≈ 64 hours of online or in-person training
 - human physiology and psychology, tactical communication, trauma-informed care, situational awareness, situation management, uniformed patrol, crowd & event security, legislation and legal procedures, radio communications, report writing, court procedures
- ≈ 94 hours of in-person cohort training
 - physical control tactics, first aid & CPR, mental health first aid, arrest and search procedure, enforcement procedures
- optional modules: operations room, municipality-specific training, etc.
- field training
 - four weeks supervised field training

Physical control tactics requires annual recertification; other courses recertify every three years.

Adding 1 \$/hr more to an employment contract would pay for approximately 30 hours of training.

MSAs should wear body cameras and be able to communicate directly with emergency services.

Training time: 6 weeks of courses, plus field training

Conclusion

The Municipal Security Agent program provides municipalities with a structured, professional, and accountable security solution that enhances public safety, improves bylaw enforcement, deters crime, supports communities, supports other emergency services, and reduces the strain on police resources.

Contact CA^{SP} for details: www.CASP.ca