

Training rules tightened for private guards

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Schools that provide substandard security and investigator training in Ontario will soon be subject to police and provincial investigation if they don't comply with new provincial rules.

The new rules, announced yesterday by Rick Bartolucci, minister of community safety and correctional services, come just months after two Toronto Star investigations revealed major problems with the province's licensing procedures.

The investigations showed lax rules were resulting in poorly trained guards and investigators and allowing unregistered security academies to offer subpar training to would-be guards.

In September, the Star reported that despite five-year-old legislation calling for mandatory training, almost anyone could become a licensed security guard or private investigator in the province for \$80 -- no training required.

At that time, the ministry said unregulated security academies were offering bogus training programs that they purported were in keeping with the training proposed under the law.

In the other investigation, the Star found the province failed to protect people from rogue private investigators. About 60 complaints were filed in the past four years against private investigators, but Ontario has never taken away a licence.

Starting April 15, Ontario will require all new applicants for security guard or private investigator licences to undergo mandatory training and meet testing requirements before they can be licensed.

Beginning July 16, all previously licensed security guard and private investigators will have to pass a standardized test to renew their licences. The move should see all the province's 67,048 guards and investigators fully trained by July 2011.

Poorly trained Ontario guards have been linked to at least two violent deaths in the past decade including a case in June 2008 when a Hamilton man died while being pinned to the ground by a security guard and store employees who were stopping the expectant father after he was suspected of stealing a \$15 radiator hose from a Canadian Tire store.