



*Federal Association of Security Officials • Association fédérale des Responsables de la Sécurité*

**REPORT  
OF THE  
TASK FORCE ON CERTIFICATION  
OF THE  
FEDERAL ASSOCIATION OF SECURITY OFFICIALS**

**Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
April 2006**

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## **1. COMPOSITION OF THE F.A.S.O. TASK FORCE ON CERTIFICATION**

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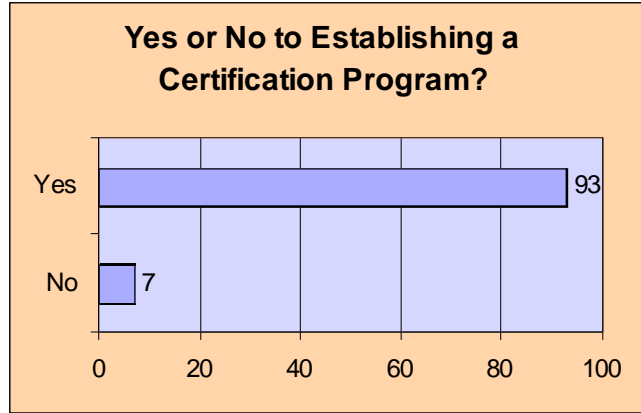
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## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report of the Task Force on Certification of the Federal Association of Security Officials is the analysis and summation of data collected from F.A.S.O. members in response to a Questionary. The purpose of the Questionary was to determine whether F.A.S.O. members are in favour of a certification program. The overwhelming finding of the Survey was that 93% of the respondents support the establishment of a certification program.



Some F.A.S.O. members profiled potential challenges that are typical of a workforce embarking on a national training initiative. Other issues raised were related to geographical restrictions, specialization, government co-operation, and, of course, the consideration of experience and academic achievement in regard to grandfathering.

On a very positive note, a strong majority of F.A.S.O. members indicated that a certification program had the potential to provide a career path that might lead to better compensation, formal recognition, and the setting of a professional standard for the security discipline.

The F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification recommends that the F.A.S.O. Board of Directors set up a Working Group to prepare a detailed design of a certification program, with a certification authority, given the resounding endorsement received from F.A.S.O. members. In conclusion, the F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification emphasizes that this recommendation is both timely and appropriate in that it is in accord with the Government of Canada's advocacy of a higher degree of professionalism in the Public Service of Canada.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The Federal Association of Security Officials (F.A.S.O.) is an independent, private, not-for-profit corporation, incorporated under the Canada Corporations Act, Part II, of which the mission, under the F.A.S.O. Constitution, is to enhance the performance and the career development of federal security officials by various means.

When F.A.S.O. was founded in 1991, at the request of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the issue of certification for members of the Canadian security community was recognized, but was left in the F.A.S.O. By-laws to be determined later. The matter was held in abeyance until 2005 when the F.A.S.O. Board of Directors, at the initiative of the President, Michael K. Warren, decided to strike a F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification, with Sharon Savoie as Co-ordinator, to ascertain the opinion of F.A.S.O. members on the establishment of a certification program for security practitioners. If F.A.S.O. members supported a certification program, the detailed design thereof would be undertaken.

The F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification envisaged that a certification program may seek to attest by a certificate that a person on whom it is conferred has acquired a set level of achievement in security, which may be based on training, experience, and other relevant factors, in any combination, yet to be elaborated.

A Questionnaire was developed by the F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification as an effective means by which to carry out a Survey of F.A.S.O. members' attitudes toward a certification program. The Survey was posted on the F.A.S.O. Web site on 17 March 2006 and F.A.S.O. members' responses were accepted until 7 April 2006 for consideration by the F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification.

The effort of the F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification to deal with the issue of the professionalization of security practitioners coincides with the Government of Canada's desire, as expressed by the President of the Treasury Board, to foster greater professionalism in the Public Service of Canada. The growing threat against Canada, among other countries, by international terrorism, supported by international organized crime, calls for urgent attention to enhancing the security discipline for the protection of Canadians and Canadian interests at home and abroad. F.A.S.O. is eager to see members of the Canadian security community play a competent role.

## **4. METHODS**

### **4.1 Design**

The three main research questions prompting this study were:

1. Do F.A.S.O. members agree or disagree with the establishment of a certification program?
2. What benefits, if any, are perceived as obtainable through the establishment of a certification program?
3. What are common concerns about the establishment of a certification program?

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Accordingly, the F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification developed a Questionary designed to allow all 465 F.A.S.O. members to vote on a proposed certification program. The Survey contained five questions, one of which was divided into six subquestions. The questions were arranged from the general to the specific; the first three questions in the Survey captured background information on respondents, while the last two questions sought opinions on the issue of certification. Respondents were also encouraged to submit their comments on the issue in a comment box. The Survey questions were (in precise order):

1. Which category of F.A.S.O. membership do you hold?
2. In which of the following security functions have you had experience?
3. Are you presently a certified security official in your field of expertise?
4. As a matter of opinion, please state whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:
  - a. A certification program may provide a career path for individuals.
  - b. A certification program may encourage continuous education.
  - c. A certification program may lead to better compensation.
  - d. A certification program may enhance performance.
  - e. A certification program may lead to formal recognition.
  - f. A certification program may set professional standards.
5. Are you in favour of the establishment of a certification program?

### 4.2 Dissemination

The F.A.S.O. Survey on Certification was rendered operational on the F.A.S.O. Web site on 17 March 2006. A Notice was sent encouraging all registered F.A.S.O. members for 2005 and 2006 to avail themselves of the opportunity to share their thoughts on the proposed establishment of a certification program for federal security officials. Members were directed to the Preamble and the Questionary through a hyperlink in the Notice.

### 4.3 Data Collection

Data from the Survey were collected between 17 March and 7 April 2006, and were reported by an independent communications company called Hyper-Media. Respondents were asked to input their 2005 or 2006 F.A.S.O. membership numbers before filling out the Questionary. This enabled Hyper-Media to cross-reference membership numbers in the survey with membership numbers from a list of actual members, as provided by the F.A.S.O. Director of Membership.

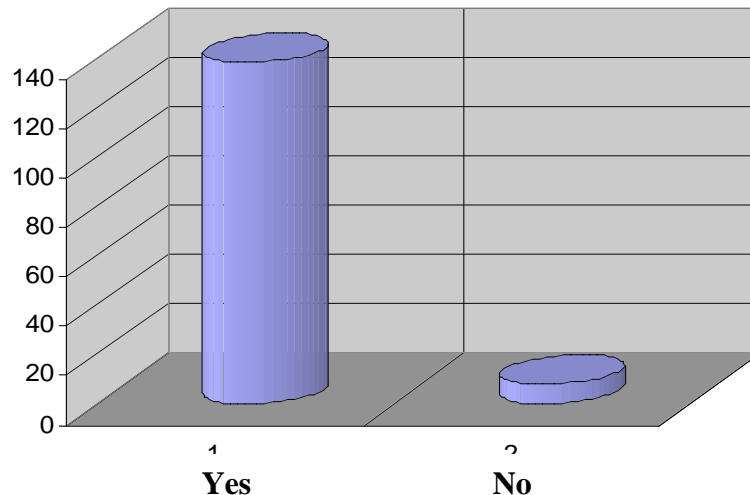
Data inputted by respondents were sent directly to Hyper-Media by electronic mail and were manually inputted into a database by the company. Comments submitted at the bottom of the Questionary were collected and compiled into a separate report. Both the data file and comments were delivered to F.A.S.O. shortly after the Survey link was de-activated on the F.A.S.O. Web site.

## **5. RESULTS**

### **5.1 Did F.A.S.O. members agree or disagree with the establishment of a certification program?**

Although every question in the Survey was carefully designed to elicit important information from our members, the fifth and last question was of primary importance. The F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification saw a 32% voter turnout rate, as 147 of 465 members responded to the survey. Of the 147 respondents, 139 (95%) favored the establishment of a certification program, as illustrated in Diagram 1. Of these 139 respondents, 120 (86%) were F.A.S.O. regular members, while 19 (14%) were F.A.S.O. associate members. Furthermore, only 26% of regular members held official certification in their field.

**Diagram 1: Yes or No to Establishing a Certification Program?**



When asked in which security functions they had experience, respondents answered the following: 12 members reported experience in Personnel Security Screening; 5 members reported experience in Physical Security; 2 members had

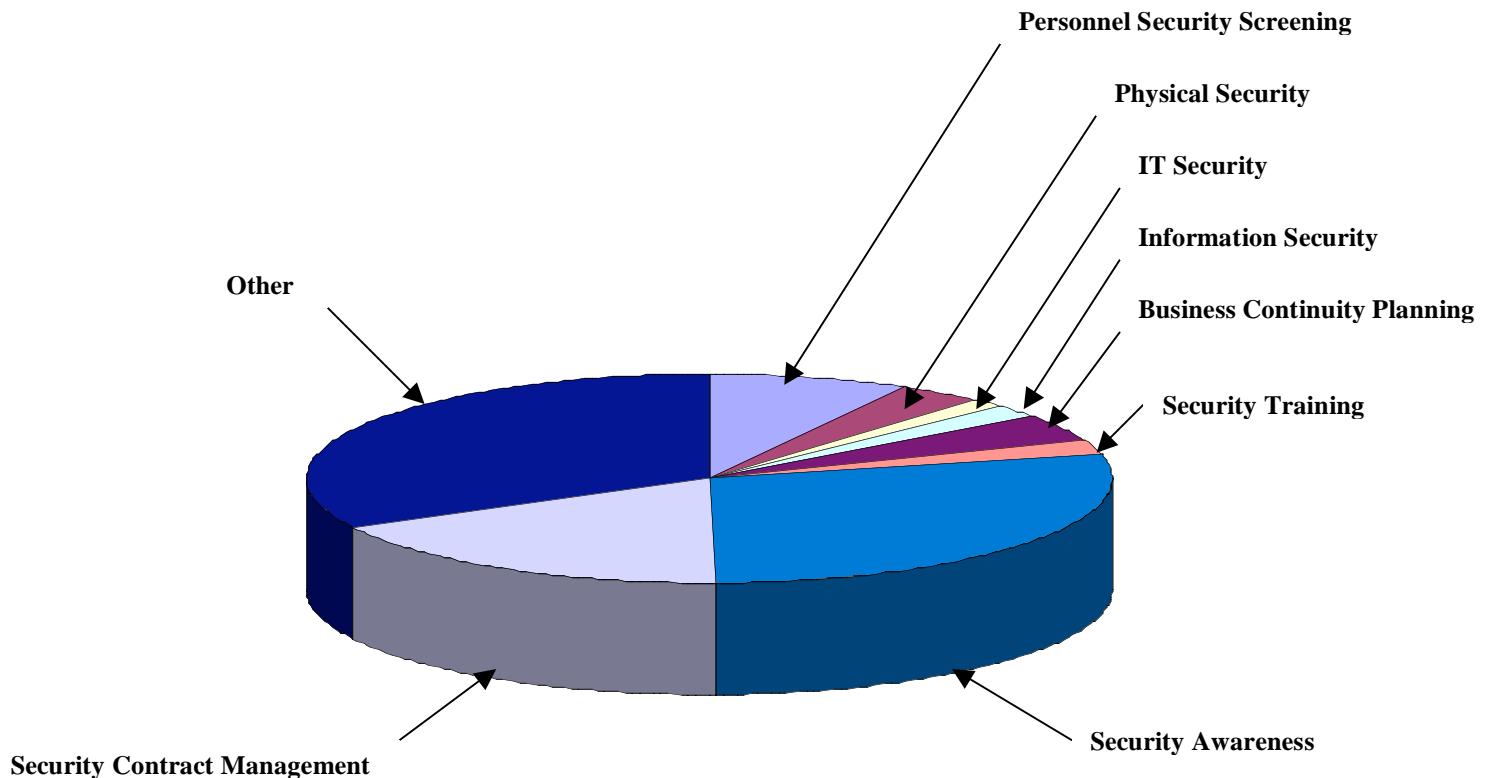
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experience in Information Technology (IT) Security; 3 members had experience in Information Security; 6 members reported experience in Business Continuity Planning; 4 members reported having experience in Security Training; 42 members claimed they had experience in Security Awareness; and 26 members claimed they had experience in Contract Management. Table 1 illustrates experience in select security fields, while Diagram 2 illustrates the sum of all experience divided per individual security field.

**Table 1:**  
Experience in Security Functions

FUNCTION	Experience				N
	Yes	%	No	%	
Personnel Security Screening	12	(8%)	135	(92%)	147
Physical Security	5	(3%)	142	(97%)	147
Information Technology (IT) Security	2	(1%)	145	(99%)	147
Information Security	3	(2%)	144	(98%)	147
Business Continuity Planning	6	(4%)	141	(96%)	147
Security Training	4	(3%)	143	(97%)	147
Security Awareness	42	(29%)	105	(71%)	147
Security Contract Management	26	(18%)	121	(82%)	147
Other	55	(38%)	92	(62%)	147

**Diagram 2: Reported Experience in Security Functions**



Some members also reported having experience in other security functions, including:

- Event Security Management
- Investigations
- Administrative Security
- Security Incident Reporting
- Project Management
- Communication Security
- International Security
- Industrial Security
- Building Emergency Planning and Emergency Management Planning
- Risk Management
- Minister's Security
- Military Security
- Infrastructure Security

**5.2 What benefits, if any, were perceived as obtainable through the establishment of a certification program?**

When asked how strongly they felt about statements concerning the benefits of a certification program, members answered as follows:

*“A certification program may provide a career path for individuals.”*

- 51% agreed with this statement;
- 37% strongly agreed;
- Less than 1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*“A certification program may encourage continuous education.”*

- 50% agreed with this statement;
- 41% strongly agreed;
- Less than 1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*“A certification program may lead to better compensation.”*

- 43% agreed with this statement;
- 29% strongly agreed;
- Only 4% disagreed;
- Less than 1% strongly disagreed.

*“A certification program may enhance performance.”*

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- 49% agreed with this statement;
- 36% strongly agreed;
- Only 3% disagreed;
- Less than 1% strongly disagreed.

***“A certification program may lead to formal recognition.”***

- 45% agreed with the statement;
- 39% strongly agreed;
- Only 2% disagreed;
- 1% strongly disagreed.

***“A certification program may set professional standards.”***

- 48% strongly agreed with this statement;
- 46% of the respondents who agreed;
- Less than 1% disagreed or strongly disagree.

Table 2 illustrates the overall figures compiled from the Survey.

**TABLE 2:**

Perceptions of Benefits to be Derived from the Establishment of a Certification Program

BENEFITS	RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON POTENTIAL BENEFITS										N
	SD	%	D	%	U	%	A	%	SA	%	
Provide Career Path	1	(0.7%)	1	(0.7%)	16	(11%)	75	(51%)	54	(37%)	147
Continued Education	1	(0.7%)	0	(0%)	11	(7%)	74	(50%)	60	(41%)	146
Better Compensation	1	(0.7%)	6	(4%)	33	(22%)	63	(43%)	43	(29%)	146
Enhanced Performance	1	(0.7%)	5	(3%)	16	(11%)	72	(49%)	53	(36%)	147
Formal Recognition	2	(0.7%)	3	(2%)	18	(12%)	66	(45%)	58	(39%)	147
Professional Standards	1	(0.7%)	1	(0.7%)	7	(5%)	67	(46%)	70	(48%)	146

*(SD = Strongly Disagrees, D = Disagrees, U = Uncertain, A = Agrees, and SA = Strongly Agrees)*

### 5.3 What were common concerns about the establishment of a certification program?

#### a) *Geographical Restrictions*

Respondents in Vancouver and Montreal commented on a lack of F.A.S.O. training in their respective cities. These members supported the

establishment of a certification program; however, they recommended that F.A.S.O. offer courses for security officials throughout Canada. As one member explained, “with budget restraints we are often not allowed to travel to Ottawa to get the training”.

***b) Grandfathering***

Seven members expressed concerns over the issue of grandfathering. Certifying alone, these members argued, could not replace years of experience. As one member noted, “my first observation is that in some cases the person has simply been able to pass a test and has little real practical experience in security ... however, by virtue of having passed the test a false level of security knowledge and ability is assumed by organizations hiring them [*sic*]”.

Some respondents with several years of experience in security related fields had reservations about establishing a certification program unless it recognized past accomplishments. Experience, these members argued, was equally important in the hiring process. For instance, one respondent noted her many years of experience alone, and seldom her university degree, accounted for most of the security positions that she had been offered throughout her career. Furthermore, another respondent wrote, “I hope that there is no method by which individuals with the educational qualifications and no practical experience can achieve certification as a security professional until such time as they have worked in the milieu and been assessed by their peers”.

Respondents concerned about grandfathering generally agreed, however, that certification would benefit F.A.S.O. members. “To receive a Certification does not make you an expert”, one member wrote, “but years of experience and a certification program will certainly set the standards”.

***c) Specialized Training***

According to one respondent, certification programs offered by other associations lack specialized training in technical security. “Certification in the field of Technical Security is non existent” writes one member. “This is a very specialized field”, he states, “and is only available through certain Federal Government Agencies and departments as required”.

***d) Bilingualism***

A member recommended that F.A.S.O. should offer certification training in French.

***e) Career Mobility***

A number of respondents supported the establishment of a certification program, believing it would provide opportunity for interdepartmental mobility. According to one respondent, “security positions within federal government departments are often staffed internally with individuals not possessing the proper qualifications. Meanwhile, experienced security officials in other government departments are overlooked.”

***f) Governmental Co-operation***

Some respondents believed that a successful F.A.S.O. certification program should only be established if F.A.S.O. receives co-operation from the Government of Canada. “Any certification program developed by or entered into by F.A.S.O.”, one respondent observed, “MUST be one that is recognized by the employer (e.g. Treasury Board)”.

***g) Government-oriented Funding***

Another respondent argued that funding must be released upfront for training requirements. “Too often”, writes this member, “departments have too much discretion and unfortunately other priorities prevent planned training from occurring”.

***h) Government-Oriented Training***

Several respondents advocated a certification program designed specifically for F.A.S.O. members. According to these members, the F.A.S.O. certification program should not be influenced by private-sector certification programs.

***i) Professionalism***

Many respondents agreed that a certification program for federal security officials would professionalize the Canadian security community. A certification program would, according to one respondent, “establish standards across the Security community and provide formal recognition for those security practitioners who make efforts to acquire knowledge and skill sets”. Furthermore, one respondent wrote, “a certification program is likely to encourage security officials to strive to improve their overall performance and prepare themselves for increased career opportunities”.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

The F.A.S.O. Task Force on Certification recommends that the F.A.S.O. Board of Directors establish a F.A.S.O. Working Group to design a certification program with a certification authority.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The security discipline, of which F.A.S.O. is a dedicated proponent, is becoming increasingly important for Canada as an instrument for developing professional security practitioners to counter the myriad threats against Canada and Canadian interests at home and abroad. Since the outrageous terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 against the United States of America, the world environment has become more dangerous for Canada and other countries and greater security measures are absolutely necessary to ensure that Canadians can meet the challenges. The success of Canada's National Security Policy, which takes an integrated approach to Canadian security issues, and Canada's Policy on Government Security, which seeks to ensure the health, the safety, the security, and the economic well-being of Canadians, depends on the professionalization of security practitioners for effective implementation. Canada's Budget 2006 provides additional funding to strengthen various security measures, such as securing safe and open borders, preparing for emergencies, and enhancing antimoney laundering and antiterrorist financing regimes, among other things, which reflects the Government of Canada's serious treatment of security. F.A.S.O. regards the professionalization of F.A.S.O. members as a means of improving Canada's security by ensuring that security practitioners are more expert and proficient in carrying out their functions for the protection and the safety of Canada and Canadians.

**ANNEX**

**F.A.S.O. TASK FORCE ON CERTIFICATION**

**QUESTIONARY**

1. What category of F.A.S.O. membership do you hold?
- (a) Regular
  - (b) Associate
- 

2. In which of the following security functions have you had experience?
- (a) Personnel Security Screening
  - (b) Physical Security
  - (c) Information Technology Security
  - (d) Information Security
  - (e) Business Continuity Planning
  - (f) Security Training
  - (g) Security Awareness
  - (h) Security Contract Management
  - (i) Other
- 

3. Are you presently a certified security official in your field of expertise?
- (a) Yes
  - (b) No

If so, please state the certification program and the certifying organization.

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4. In your opinion, please state whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

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SD= Strongly Disagree D= Disagree N= Neutral A= Agree SA= Strongly Agree
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a. A certification program may provide a career path for individuals.

SD   D   N   A   SA

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b. A certification program may encourage continuous education.

SD   D   N   A   SA

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c. A certification program may lead to better compensation.

SD   D   N   A   SA

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d. A certification program may enhance performance.

SD   D   N   A   SA

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e. A certification program may lead to formal recognition.

SD   D   N   A   SA

---

f. A certification program may set professional standards.

SD   D   N   A   SA

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5. Are you in favour of the establishment of a certification program?

- a) Yes
- b) No