

## B.C. police Taser use down 87% since Dziekanski death



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Taser use by police in B.C. is down 87 per cent since Robert Dziekanski died at Vancouver's airport five years ago, prompting questions Tuesday from politicians wondering what police are doing now to control out-of-control people.

B.C. police officers used their Tasers 640 times in 2007, compared to 85 deployments last year, assistant deputy justice minister Clayton Pecknold told an all-party committee assessing the status of recommendations to tighten provincial Taser policy since Dziekanski's October 2007 death.

The figures had Liberal MLA John Slater wondering what police have been doing instead to subdue people who are potentially dangerous.

"How many of them have been shot by police?" said Slater. "What has happened in the last five years?"

Gabi Hoffmann, program manager for the police services division in the justice ministry, said police shootings have not increased since Dziekanski's death and the 2009 public inquiry and recommendations of former judge Thomas Braidwood, but she did not provide data.

Hoffmann, who accompanied Pecknold, told the committee police appear to be relying more heavily on verbal skills and physical tools other than Tasers when dealing with potentially dangerous situations.

Pecknold said he couldn't definitively explain why police Taser-use numbers have dropped since Dziekanski's death other than to say it's obvious police are limiting their use of Tasers when it comes to incidents when police resort to force.

But Slater was concerned.

"You go from 645 to 85 incidents, so are the police officers more exposed to danger from the public?" he asked outside the committee hearing.

Slater said he wanted to know if Taser use by police has declined across Canada.

### New Taser policy

Hoffmann said she didn't have national Taser-use data, but a recent report by the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP found threatened or actual use of the Taser by RCMP officers dipped 14 per cent from 2009.

The public complaint commission's report stated actual firing of the Taser declined by more than one-quarter from the previous year.

The commission examined 597 reports filed by officers who either used their Taser or pulled it out of a holster.

In spring 2010, the Mounties introduced a new Taser policy, saying they would fire them at people only when they're hurting someone or clearly about to do so.

The all-party committee is holding hearings "to inquire into the use of conducted energy weapons and to audit selected police complaints."

It has until the end of the year to assess the status of [recommendations from Braidwood's two-pronged public inquiry into Dziekanski's death](#).

Braidwood, who is expected to appear before the committee next week, found what he called a lack of consistency in the way police use Tasers in B.C., and a troubling lack of government leadership in developing provincial Taser standards.

He also called for changes to the Police Act.

The B.C. government accepted Braidwood's recommendations.

Dziekanski died in October 2007 in an incident at Vancouver International Airport where he was shocked by Tasers several times during a confrontation with four RCMP officers.

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'So are the police officers more exposed to danger from the public?'

—B.C. MLA John Slater

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