

Man, 34, suffers heart attack after taser jolt

BY KATHY RUMLESKI
Sun Media

A 34-year-old London man is in hospital recovering from a heart attack after he was tasered by London police.

As the province's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) looks into the incident, the man's family is call-

ing for a ban of the controversial stun guns.

Last week, Amnesty International Canada also asked that their use be suspended until the 18 deaths associated with tasers in Canada since 2001 can be explained.

In the last month alone, three men have died in Canada after

being tasered.

Amnesty spokesperson John Tackaberry expressed alarm about the London incident when contacted yesterday.

"It's been a very disturbing week," he said. "Police officers seem to be convinced that they're (tasers) not lethal, when they certainly can be."

The woman said her son-in-law is recovering well and is expected to soon be moved from intensive care into the cardiac care unit.

London police confirmed the SIU is investigating, but wouldn't comment on the case.

Const. Dan O'Reilly said that only senior officials and emergency response unit personnel can carry tasers.

"There is protocol that is followed," he said.

The SIU could not be reached yesterday.

Taser guns use two barbed darts to deliver a jolt of up to 50,000 volts. They are intended to temporarily paralyse someone by causing muscles to contract.

"We'd like them to be banned and not to be used," said the injured London man's mother-in-law.

Amnesty's Tackaberry said a number of incidents indicate there may be a connection between lethal taser use and people in poor health or those intoxicated or agitated who are then struck.

"It's crucial that there be an understanding of what the interaction of a taser and these conditions is."

The SIU looks into all police actions resulting in civilian injury or death. It's under the microscope of the province's ombudsman, who will soon release a report on the agency's handling of cases and treatment of victims.

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Kathy Rumleski is a Free Press

Details of the London incident are sketchy, but a member of the man's family — who requested anonymity because of the provincial probe — said the man had a heart attack during the encounter with police.

The man's mother-in-law said he was at a friend's home Monday when he was fooling

around and "got knocked out."

An ambulance was called and when the man regained consciousness and saw the police, he "freaked out," she said.

"They tasered him twice. After the heart attack, his kidneys shut down," the woman said.

See TASER Page 5