

# BUSINESS

Howard Raber says his company will supply 122,220 pairs of general-purpose, cold-weather work gloves to the Department of National Defence, which has an option to order another 20,000 pairs. Raber Glove expects to hire eight extra workers to fill the contract.



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## Big deal for Raber Glove

*\$2.2-M military contract may be firm's largest ever*

By Murray McNeill

A Winnipeg glove-manufacturing firm has landed what may be its largest contract ever — a \$2.2-million deal to supply 122,220 pairs of specialized gloves to the Canadian military.

"For us, it's the largest one we've ever had," Howard Raber, vice-president and sales manager for Raber Glove Manufacturing Co. Ltd., said of the new Department of National Defence contract. "Certainly it's the largest in the 15 or 20 years that I've been here."

Raber Glove, a family-owned firm that has been selling gloves to the Canadian military almost since its inception in 1934, beat out two other Canadian suppliers for the new contract, Raber said in an interview.

The contract calls for Raber Glove to supply 122,220 pairs of lightweight thermal/mortar gloves — a general-purpose, cold-weather work glove

designed to also provide abrasion protection for soldiers handling mortar rounds.

Initial delivery is expected to commence this summer, with final delivery scheduled for summer 2005. However, DND has an option of ordering another 20,000 pairs at any time between now and March 31, 2006, Raber said.

Raber Glove expects to hire an extra eight workers to complement the 50 it employs at its McDermot Avenue production plant. Although they'll be hired to work on this contract, Raber said there's a good chance they could become permanent employees.

"We're always on the lookout for skilled glove personnel," he explained. "So if they're good, we would try to keep them, because good workers are hard to find."

Raber Glove manufactures a wide variety of gloves and mitts, including dress gloves, work gloves, sports gloves, uniform gloves, welder's

gloves, pilot's gloves, law-enforcement gloves, motorcycle gauntlet gloves, and Arctic mitts and gloves.

About half its yearly sales are to government departments and agencies, including DND, Canada Customs and Revenue, Corrections Canada and police forces in Canada and the United States. The other half of its revenue comes from the sale of gloves and mitts to retail chains and independent retailers.

Although it has sold gloves to a number of U.S. police departments and to NATO and German military forces, Raber said most sales are to customers in Canada, and that's the way company officials like it.

"We've developed a niche (in Canada) over the years and we are happy to service the client base we have," he said.