

Report to / Rapport au:

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE BOARD
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA**

29 September 2025 / 29 septembre 2025

Submitted by / Soumis par:

Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service / Chef de police, Service de police d'Ottawa

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SUBJECT: PILOT PROJECT: BODY WORN CAMERAS

OBJET: PROJET PILOTE : CAMÉRAS PORTÉES SUR LE CORPS

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Police Service Board receive this report for information.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

**Que la Commission de service de police d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du
présent rapport à titre d'information.**

Introduction

As part of the Ottawa Police Service's ongoing commitment to transparency, accountability, and community trust, we are launching a pilot project to implement body-worn cameras (BWCs) across frontline policing. Beginning in November 2025, thirty Axon Body Worn 4 BWCs will be deployed to selected members of the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and designated Change Agents. This initial rollout aligns with the Alternative Mental Health Support Initiative and responds directly to jury recommendations from the coroner's inquest into the death of Abdirahman Abdi.

Body-worn cameras offer an independent, unbiased, and objective method of documenting interactions between police officers and the public. Whether used to legitimize engagements, provide court evidence, or address allegations of misconduct, BWCs are a critical tool in modern policing. Most major police services in Ontario have

already adopted this technology, recognizing its value in improving public confidence and operational integrity.

Officers participating in the pilot will undergo comprehensive training, including guidance on managing sensitive situations and protocols for data disclosure. Appropriate vetting and editing of footage will be conducted to meet legal and privacy standards. The pilot will also evaluate Axon Draft One, a generative AI report-writing tool, to assess its potential for improving officer productivity and reducing administrative burden.

While BWCs are not a standalone solution for building trust, they are a meaningful investment in our broader strategy to enhance community safety and well-being. The pilot will be supported by community engagement sessions, allowing for two-way dialogue with stakeholders and residents. Feedback received has already helped shape the project and will continue to inform its evolution.

This report serves to inform the Board and the community of the pilot's scope, objectives, and anticipated outcomes. A media campaign will accompany the launch to ensure public awareness and transparency.

BACKGROUND

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) has committed to developing and implementing a body-worn camera program, with the first phase of deployment scheduled to begin in November 2025. While the initial pilot was expected to launch in late 2024 or early 2025, financial constraints led to a delay of at least one year. Despite this, OPS has continued to advance the necessary infrastructure to support the program.

During discussions surrounding the 2024 Use of Force Data Report, the Ottawa Police Services Board was informed that OPS is actively preparing for the launch of the pilot project. The initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance transparency and accountability in policing. Body-worn cameras are expected to provide critical insight into incidents, whether related to use-of-force or evidentiary matters, offering a clearer understanding of events from multiple perspectives. The technology supports accountability for both officers and community members, enabling verification of allegations and improving public trust.

To lay the groundwork for the BWC program, OPS initiated a multi-phased rollout of a Digital Evidence Information Management (DEIMS) solution in spring 2023. The Axon Evidence.com platform, selected as the provincial standard by the Solicitor General and the Ministry of the Attorney General, has been operational at OPS since 2024. It currently supports digital evidence management, interview room video recording, and

in-car camera systems integrated with Automated Licence Plate Readers. The Axon Body Worn Camera system will be integrated into this ecosystem beginning with Phase 1 in late 2025. Further expansion of the program will be contingent on future budget approvals.

This report serves to inform the Board of the foundational steps taken toward the implementation of the body-worn camera program and the continued commitment of OPS to enhancing policing through technology.

DISCUSSION

Body Worn Cameras: Enhancing Policing Across Ontario and Canada

Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) are currently deployed in multiple jurisdictions across Ontario and throughout Canada, where they have demonstrated measurable success. These devices offer a wide range of benefits for both police services and the public, contributing to improved transparency, accountability, and operational effectiveness.

Key Benefits of Body Worn Cameras include:

- **Transparency:** BWCs provide an unbiased visual and audio account of police interactions, helping to clearly demonstrate how procedures were applied in real-world scenarios.
- **Accountability:** Recorded footage allows supervisors to review officer conduct, ensuring professional standards and duty of care are consistently upheld.
- **Evidence Collection:** High-quality audio and video recordings can be submitted as reliable evidence in investigations and court proceedings.
- **Training and Evaluation:** Footage can be used to reinforce best practices, identify areas for improvement, and support officer development through supervisor-led reviews.
- **De-escalation:** Research indicates that the presence of BWCs can positively influence behavior during interactions, reducing the likelihood of conflict or escalation.
- **Protection for Citizens & Officers:** BWCs offer an impartial record that can help resolve public complaints swiftly and fairly, while also protecting officers from false or unjust accusations.
- **Objective Documentation:** Video footage serves as a factual record of events, minimizing ambiguity in incident reporting.

- **AI-Enhanced Transcription:** Audio and video captured by BWCs are transcribed within the Digital Evidence Information Management System (DEIMS), supporting AI-assisted report writing, form completion, and efficient digital redaction.
- **Court-Ready Redaction:** DEIMS Unit resources are equipped to manage redaction and disclosure processes for digital evidence, streamlining court preparation.
- **Language Translation:** BWCs can automatically detect and translate up to 50 languages, enabling two-way communication between officers and members of the public who require language assistance.
- **Real-Time Streaming:** During critical incidents, BWCs can live stream footage to the Ottawa Police Service Real Time Operations Centre (RTOC), enhancing situational awareness and supporting informed decision-making by incident commanders.

Coroner's Inquest Jury Recommendations – Death of Abdirahman Abdi

The introduction of Body Worn Cameras addresses specific Jury recommendations from the Coroner's Inquest into the death of Abdirahman Abdi including:

1. Recommendation 17 - Consult with the Mental Health Advisory Council and the CEC regarding the use of Active Bystander for Law Enforcement training materials and ways to include an evaluation component to the training, such as using scenario-based training evaluation during training and body-worn camera BWCs reviews in performance supervision.
2. Recommendation 20 - In assessing whether, when and/or how to introduce BWCs, consider the important role of BWCs in a supervisor's review of use of force incidents and the evaluation of the effectiveness of use of force and de-escalation training, as well as the opportunity for BWC recordings to serve as learning tools in such training.

Phase 1 Deployment:

Selected members of the new Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and selected Change Agents will be part of the initial deployment of thirty cameras in November 2025. The Crisis Intervention Team is part of the Alternative Mental Health Support Initiative and aligns with the Jury recommendations following the coroner's inquest into the death of Abdirahman Abdi. Officers assigned to this group will use the cameras during their daily duties, including responses to calls involving individuals in crisis. This group will have the latest BWC technology, including Axon Draft One, a generative artificial intelligence

report writing tool which will be evaluated during this first phase for its ability to improve productivity, reducing report writing time for officers. Officers being issued with cameras will complete a comprehensive training program and will be supported by standard operating procedures.

Community engagement:

The Mental Health CHANGE Initiative (MHCI) will lead community engagement by connecting with key leaders involved in community mental health advocacy, as well as the members of the newly formed Mental Health Advisory Council (MHAC), to share program information and gather feedback. The MHCI team will engage additional community partners such as the Community Equity Council, Ottawa Guiding Council, and the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (OAC), Black Mental Health Coalition, Community organizations across Ottawa (black, indigenous, marginalized, racialized, faith groups, advocacy groups and health and wellness organizations).

OPS Member engagement:

The select CIT officer's and Change Agent officers will receive information through regular internal communications. Structured opportunities will be given to these members to provide opportunities to share their perspectives and experiences through surveys and focus groups. This engagement process will support transparency across the broader service and ensure that feedback received directly informs the ongoing development of future phases.

Privacy Impact Assessment:

A formal PIA was conducted when the DEIMS and in car camera systems were implemented. The assessment recommended that future Body Worn Cameras be connected to the DEIMS system. The Privacy Impact Assessment will be updated post deployment of the Body Worn Camera system.

Evaluation:

The Pilot will establish Key Performance Indicators and monitor performance metrics such as report generation time and reduction in administrative workload as well as behavioural metrics and community and member feedback. An interim report will be prepared at the end of Q2 2026.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The purchase of 30 Axon Body Worn 4 Cameras (BWC) including hardware and licenses will cost \$592,869 (before taxes) for a 39-month term, aligning with the length of the primary OPS DEIMS contract with Axon and will be funded from the IT Modernization Roadmap budget. This includes all hardware and subscription based

Artificial Intelligence Tools including transcription, the Draft One AI Report tool, Form One, Axon Fusus for Real Time Operations Centre (RTOC) integration, real time 50 language translation tools, redaction tools, Computer Aided Dispatch integration licenses and licenses to integrate the cameras with the Axon Evidence.com Digital Evidence Information Management System (DEIMS). The amount falls under the Chief's Delegated spending authority.

BWC 2025 Request:	Requested Qty	Unit Price	Requested Amount	Amount (Incl. 1.76% tax)
Funding Source				\$ 603,303.01
IT-Modernization Roadmap 2020 (909884)				
Board Report for 2025				
Axon BWC 4 AI Bundle (hardware + subscriptions)	30	\$19,762.28	\$592,868.52	\$ 603,303.01
				<i>(under Chief's delegated spend authority)</i>
Surplus/(Pressure)				\$ -
				<i>Total funding less budget ask</i>

CONCLUSION

Body worn cameras (BWCs) represent a significant advancement in public safety and transparency. By capturing real-time interactions between police officers and community members, BWCs help foster accountability, build trust, and provide an objective record of events. These devices enhance officer professionalism, support accurate reporting, and contribute to fair and transparent investigations. Importantly, BWCs also serve as a valuable tool in protecting the rights of both the public and law enforcement personnel. With features such as real-time streaming, language translation, and AI-assisted documentation, BWCs are helping modernize policing while reinforcing the commitment to community engagement and safety.