Report to / Rapport au:

OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE BOARD POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

25 March 2026 / 25 Mars 2026

Submitted by / Soumis par:
Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service / Chef de police, Service de police d'Ottawa

Contact Person / Personne resource:
Deputy Chief Steven Bell, Chief Administrative Officer / Agent administratif principal
BellS@ottawapolice.ca

SUBJECT: BODY WORN CAMERA DEPLOYMENT

OBJET: CAMÉRAS PORTÉES SUR LE CORPS REPORT

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Ottawa Police Service Board's Policy and Governance Committee receive this report for information.

2. That the Ottawa Police Service Board's Policy and Governance Committee endorse the continuation of work required to expand the use of Body-Worn Cameras with AIEra Bundle through 2026 and 2027.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

1. Que le Comité des politiques et de la gouvernance de la Commission du Service de police d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du présent rapport.

2. Que le Comité des politiques et de la gouvernance de la Commission du Service de police d'Ottawa approuve la poursuite des travaux nécessaires à l'extension de l'utilisation des caméras corporelles avec la solution AIEra Bundle pour les années 2026 et 2027.

BACKGROUND

This report will provide the Ottawa Police Service Board with an update on the Body-Worn Camera (BWC) pilot project, specifically summarizing key lessons learned, benefits realized and return-on-investment. The report will also outline the next phase of the Service-wide deployment planned through 2027.

In 2025, the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) committed to the use of body-worn cameras to advance operations and the Board's Strategic Plan, and to respond to recommendations emanating from numerous inquests including the Abdirahman Abdi Inquest, the Mathias Bunyon Inquest, the Sammy Yatim Inquest, and the London Police Service Inquest.

As an initial step, OPS launched a Body-Worn Camera pilot project in 2025. The pilot equipped a select group of frontline officers with BWCs fitted with advanced technology capabilities that improved officer efficiency and effectiveness.

Moving forward with the BWC pilot was important for several reasons. The pilot reinforced the Service's commitment to transparency, accountability, and public trust, supported the Mental Health Change Initiative and directly addressed recommendations made during the Coroner's Inquest into the death of Abdirahman Abdi.

During the pilot and, alongside deployment of 30 BWCs, OPS deployed Axon Draft One, a generative AI report-writing tool that has demonstrated strong potential to improve officer productivity and reduce administrative burden. Pilot officers have reported shorter report-writing times, improved report quality, and more time available to respond to calls and perform proactive work, contributing to the projected return on investment.

The pilot also saw the successful use of automatic language-translation features that helped bridge communication gaps during interactions with non-English and non-French-speaking individuals, improving service delivery and supporting equitable access. In one instance, the translation feature was used to assist in returning an elderly, lost female to her residence.

Most major police services across Canada have adopted BWC technology, underscoring its value in strengthening public confidence and operational integrity. More broadly, BWCs represent a significant step in OPS's efforts to improve trust and confidence, enhance community safety, and create efficiency on calls so that officers can spend as much time serving the community as possible. BWCs also provide an independent, objective record of police–public interactions and enhance transparency and accountability by providing critical insight into police–public interactions, supporting both use-of-force reviews and evidentiary assessments. BWC technology helps to verify allegations, improves the quality of investigations, and strengthens public trust. Operationally, beyond reducing time performing administrative duties and returning time to call taking, they support accurate evidence collection.

Community engagement sessions conducted throughout the pilot provided valuable

feedback that continues to shape program design.

Following positive results from the pilot, OPS has initiated efforts to equip all frontline officers with BWCs by the end of 2027. This expansion of approximately 850 additional devices would make BWCs with the leading-edge technology standard equipment for uniformed personnel.

This report provides information regarding the benefits realized and lessons learned during the pilot. The report also outlines the expanded scope, objectives, and expected outcomes of the BWC program moving forward. The intention to proceed with broader roll-out of body-worn cameras at OPS is largely based on the findings noted in Document 1, Benefits Realization Details. Findings in the report not only support expanded roll-out of BWCs in OPS but will guide what that roll-out will look like.

As of March 2026, the 30-camera pilot remains operational, with participating officers continuing to use the technology in daily duties. The pilot has now generated sufficient operational, financial, and community engagement data to support a decision regarding broader deployment. Expanding the program at this stage allows OPS to build on the successful pilot while integrating lessons learned into a structured, service-wide implementation.

DISCUSSION

Body worn cameras are in use across multiple police services in Ontario and across Canada, demonstrating measurable benefits to both law enforcement and the public.

Key advantages are well documented and include:

- **Transparency:** BWCs provide an unbiased visual and audio record of interactions, helping demonstrate procedural fairness during calls for service.
- **Accountability:** Supervisors can review recorded footage to ensure adherence to professional standards and duty of care.
- **Enhanced Evidence Collection:** High-quality recordings support investigations and court proceedings.
- **Training and Evaluation:** Footage allows supervisors to reinforce best practices and identify opportunities for improvement.
- **De-escalation:** Research shows BWCs can reduce conflict and escalation by improving behaviour among all parties.
- **Protection for Citizens and Officers:** BWCs offer an impartial account that can quickly resolve complaints and protect officers from unfounded allegations.

- **Objective Documentation:** Video evidence reduces ambiguity in incident reporting.
- **AI Enhanced Transcription:** Audio and video are transcribed within DEIMS, supporting AI assisted report writing, faster form completion, and efficient digital redaction.
- **Court-Ready Redaction:** DEIMS resources support efficient and consistent redaction for disclosure.
- **Language Translation:** BWCs can detect and translate over 50 languages. Pilot participants successfully used this feature to bridge communication barriers, improving communication, safety, and accessibility.
- **Real-Time Streaming:** During major incidents, BWCs can provide live video to the Real Time Operations Centre (RTOC), improving situational awareness and supporting informed decision-making.
- **Response to the Abdirahman Abdi Inquest:** BWCs address specific coroner's recommendations, particularly those relating to performance supervision, situational assessment, and training.

Beyond these benefits, Services deploying BWCs on a broad basis have noted time saved and productivity enhancements for officers resulting in improved response times, cost avoidance, enhanced quality control and compliance, operational enhancements, improved customer service, officer safety, and improved overall community outcomes.

OPS Pilot Deployment of BWCs

As noted, OPS engaged in a BWC pilot roll-out beginning in November 2025. Selected members of the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and designated MHCI Change Agents were included in the initial deployment of 30 BWCs as part of this pilot. All participating officers were on frontline responding to calls for service during the pilot period.

Roll-out of BWCs to those on the OPS CIT, part of the Alternative Mental Health Support Initiative, played a key role in helping to fulfill Abdirahman Abdi Inquest recommendations related to interactions with individuals in crisis.

To date, officers selected to participate in the pilot continue to use the latest BWC technology, including Axon Draft One and auto-translate, during their daily duties.

Document 1, attached to this report, provides details on the lessons learned from the pilot, the preliminary benefits realized and return-on-investment achieved during the pilot deployment. A synopsis of this document is noted below.

Benefits Realization and Return-On-Investment:

The pilot successfully achieved all of its objectives and demonstrated that the overall approach was effective. The project delivered working BWC technology, integrated training and supporting processes within the planned timeframe, while fostering strong collaboration between sworn and civilian members, and the community. The deployment confirmed that BWCs can be successfully incorporated into daily operational use and that the technology, once stabilized, performs reliably and meets operational needs all while improving service to the community.

A structured benefits realization, return-on-investment, and lessons-learned process - including a survey with a 65% response rate and a facilitated discussion - found that overwhelmingly positive results were achieved. In fact, all respondents rated the deployment as good or excellent and all users wished to continue using BWCs moving forward. The survey also found that the adjusted Net Promoter Score for recommending BWC use was effectively 100%, indicating strong internal support for continued expansion. At a high level, officers noted many benefits including:

- Significant improvements in report-writing quality;
- Reduced downtime and administrative delays, resulting in officers returning to the road faster and improving call response times;
- Higher quality reports due to AI-supported transcription and drafting, resulting in officers returning to the road faster after attending to calls for service; and
- Improved communication with non-English / non-French speaking residents through BWC translation features.

Community feedback underscored the importance of establishing strong, approved policies to ensure the consistent and reliable use of body-worn cameras (BWC) and AI-generated reporting by officers. Community members consulted were strongly supportive of continued and expanded use of BWCs. Those consulted agreed that body-worn cameras were a very important tool but expected appropriate policies and guidelines to be followed.

Implementing these policies at the outset of the pilot helped reassure community members that appropriate accountability measures were in place, thereby fostering trust in the initiative. Community members also expressed strong support for the multi-language translation tool, highlighting its positive impact on serving the City’s diverse population.

Detailed ROI calculations have been prepared and are found in the Appendix (Document 1) to this report. The summary of the ROI is presented in the table below.

At a high level, the benefits to be realized for the 30 BWC already deployed has an annual

return of 104% and a payback of 5.9 months. When the ROI is forecasted for an additional 850 BWCs, the expected ROI is 61.5% with an annual payback of 7.4 months.

The projected ROI for the expanded deployment of 850 BWCs is lower than the pilot deployment of 30 BWCs. The conservative calculation for ALPR productivity recognizes the positive impact of the advanced technological capabilities available to all DEIMS devices. This productivity does not increase with more BWC units deployed. Financial gains achieved will address costs of the BWC program, and productivity gains will translate into improved call response times, solvency rates, and overall improved service to the community.

Benefit Category	**Annual Value 30 BWC**	**Annual Value 850 BWC**
Report writing efficiency value	**$180,000**	**$5,100,000**
Transcription effficiency value	**$210,000**	**$ 5,950,000**
Redaction efficiency value	**$420,000**	**$420,000**
ALPR productivity	**$400,000**	**$400,000**
Total Annual Benefits	**$1,210,000**	**$11,870,000**

Summary Item	**30 BWC Deployed**	**850 BWC Additional**
Annual Benefits:	**$1,210,000**	**$11,154,375**
Annual Cost:	**$592,868**	**$7,349,233**
Annual Net Benefits:	**$ 617,132**	**$4,520,767**
Return on Investment (ROI)	**104.1%**	**61.5%**
Annual Payback:	**5.9 months**	**7.4 months**

The ROI and Annual Payback provide positive indicators that the investment in BWC not only provides benefits with respect to the level of services provided to the City of Ottawa but will generate efficiency gains with the return of more officer hours (50,000 to 60,000 hours) to core policing duties to make this a sound investment.

Beyond the return-on-investment and these noted benefits, the following benefits were observed during the pilot:

Alignment of a Body Worn Camera Program (with Axon AI ERA Bundle) to a Digital Policing Modernization Strategy

The implementation of a Body Worn Camera program, supported by the Axon AI ERA bundle, directly advanced the objectives of a Digital Policing Modernization Strategy and addressed needs for a modern, digitally enabled police service able to maximize data insights, enable efficient and accountable frontline operations, and support improved service delivery to the public.

Modern Digital Infrastructure and Data Enablement

The Ottawa Police Service requires upgraded digital infrastructure, analytics tools, and improved data governance to support operational and organizational outcomes. A BWC program contributes significantly by generating consistent, high-quality digital evidence and leveraging a secure cloud-based platform with automated transcription, redaction, and metadata tagging and enabling the use of Artificial Intelligence to assist officers to draft reports more quickly and completely. The AI tools also provide multi-language translation. These capabilities directly support the goal of modernizing platforms and expanding data capabilities across the Service, improving overall data quantity and availability and allowing for enhance analytics.

Enhancing Transparency, Accountability, and Public Trust

Improving resident interactions and strengthening transparency are identified as key outcomes of digital modernization. BWC deployment provides an objective record of police public interactions, supporting both accountability processes and public confidence in policing services. AI-enabled review tools further assist in Professional Standards oversight, training optimization, and early identification of risk trends—directly supporting improved service delivery and governance.

Operational Efficiencies and Long-term Financial Sustainability

The OPS must create operational efficiencies and long-term cost savings as part of the modernization effort. The AI-driven features of the Axon ERA platform—including automated redaction, transcription, video search, and case preparation—substantially reducing administrative workload and streamlining disclosure and

investigative processes. These efficiencies support the Service's broader efforts to modernize workflows and align with the Board's commitment to financial sustainability.

Support for Evidence-Based Decision-Making

There is a need for timely, data-informed decision-making. BWC systems supported by AI analytics enhance investigative quality, enable more consistent evidence collection, and provide insight into frontline operations, ultimately contributing to stronger evidence-based practices and improved organizational learning.

Integration with Multiyear Planning and Lifecycle Management

The Ottawa Police Service requires a multi-year digital modernization plan with defined financial and lifecycle considerations. The Axon ecosystem offers predictable multi-year pricing, integrated lifecycle management, and clear cost forecasting, supporting alignment with a Digital Policing Modernization plan and the Long-Term Financial Plan.

Pilot Lessons Learned

Beyond actual BWC usage, and as far as the roll-out of BWC technology itself, the pilot implementation team identified several strengths that should be replicated during future expanded deployment. These included:

- Developing and maintaining effective collaboration between sworn and civilian personnel.
- Investing in and providing high-quality training delivery, both online (CPKN) and in-person reduces users issues post-deployment and results in higher rates of technology adoption.
- Resolve any known technology issues at the outset and prior to deployment to ensure reliable operational performance of BWC equipment for users, reducing the need for ongoing support post-deployment.
- Ensuring that there is an awareness and recognition of BWCs amongst users as valuable accountability, investigative, and educational tools to maximize on benefits and increase adoption.

It is important to identify and document key challenges encountered during the pilot and to work to mitigate such challenges in any expanded roll-out. Challenges and key considerations identified by the pilot project team included the following:

- There was early-stage technology instability during training (applications, devices, configurations).
- There is a need for a scalable, sustainable training model to support a

significantly larger deployment; this will be addressed prior to any future roll-out.

- A Service wide rollout cannot simply scale out the pilot model; expanded governance, staffing, and project support structures are required.
- Technology configurations must be finalized and stable before training begins to avoid rework and confusion.
- The training program must evolve to include supervisor training, structured in-person and e-learning components, and a train-the-trainer model.
- Facilities planning, including docking stations, equipment rooms, and supporting infrastructure must occur early and in coordination with Facilities Services.
- Scheduling and task management processes must be streamlined to reduce administrative burden.
- Policy updates must be completed in alignment with deployment timelines.
- Dedicated resources, including technical support staff and superusers, are essential for daily operations.
- Comprehensive change-management and clear internal communication will be critical to member readiness and successful adoption.
- All officers assigned a BWC must complete comprehensive training supported by policy and standard operating procedures. Participants from the first deployment strongly emphasized that in-person training was essential to understanding the technology and deploying it effectively.

The BWC 2025 pilot is considered a success and provides a validated baseline for the next phase of deployment. The documented benefits realized, the positive ROI, and lessons learned in this report are intended to guide project governance, inform decision making, and support a structured, sustainable, and well supported expansion of BWCs across OPS.

Next Steps

To ensure successful expansion of BWCs beyond the initial deployment of 30 BWCs, OPS will proceed immediately to prepare for the deployment of the additional 850 BWCs. Steps to do this will include:

1. Stand-up of a deployment project team. Preliminary estimates include a team of existing civilian (5-6) and sworn resources (5-6).
2. Completion of project governance (charter, plan, etc.).

3. Procurement of additional BWCs and supporting components.
4. Training and distribution of equipment (165 per quarter through the end of 2027).
5. Continued community consultation.
6. Monitoring of benefits realization and return-on-investment and reporting on such back to the Board.

CONSULTATION

In the lead up to and throughout the pilot roll-out of BWCs, significant outreach and consultation was undertaken. Work to engage the community will continue as part of any future efforts to expand roll-out of BWCs.

The Body Worn Camera pilot was guided by the Ottawa Police Service's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) framework to ensure the initiative supported biasfree, transparent, and community focused policing. This included the use of the OPS EDI Lens Toolkit to evaluate potential impacts on diverse communities, identify systemic barriers, and ensure fair decision making throughout the project lifecycle.

The project incorporated meaningful engagement with the Community Equity Council (CEC) and other community stakeholders to ensure lived experiences and intersectional perspectives informed project design and implementation. All work aligned with OPS's broader EDI Action Plan and DRIVE2 Strategy, which emphasized equitable service delivery, inclusive organizational culture, and strengthened public trust.

The project was also assessed against OPS's human rights related obligations—including the Ontario Human Rights Code and OPS Human Rights and Racial Profiling policies—to ensure compliance. Data driven evaluation and monitoring mechanisms supported ongoing assessment of equity impacts and accountability as the BWC program evolves.

Overall, applying the EDI lens ensured the BWC pilot was developed in a way that enhanced fairness, transparency, and community confidence while advancing OPS's commitment to equitable policing.

The BWC team presented and demonstrated the technology at the Human Rights Learning Forum in the Fall of 2025. They also presented to the Mental Health Advisory Council (MHAC) in February 2026 which resulted in very meaningful conversations and input from council members. The information was captured and reported back to the team to be incorporated into the plan. In February 2026 the Team also presented to the Community Equity Council, including

some members of the Use of Force Review Panel. These presentations included a discussion around the use of BWCs by OPS during the pilot as well as an overview of the expanded deployment plan and a demonstration of the capabilities of Draft One and multi-language translation. The importance of translation to the community was clear from the ensuing discussion, along with the importance of expanding the language library to include as many communities as possible.

Looking forward, and consistent with the mandate of the Community Equity Council Use of Force Review Panel, the DEIMS project team will support the preparation of periodic summaries and the presentation of Body-Worn Camera footage of Use of Force incidents for review by the Panel. Where appropriate and consistent with privacy and operational requirements, these reviews will provide added context and transparency regarding police interactions.

The goal of this process is to enable informed dialogue between community members and the Ottawa Police Service by providing a more comprehensive understanding of operational encounters and the complexities associated with frontline decision-making. Through this collaborative review process, the Panel may provide recommendations aimed at improving procedures, training, and service delivery, while contributing to broader discussions related to systemic issues, public trust, and accountability.

The Panel's role remains advisory in nature and focused on finding opportunities for organizational learning and improvement. This process does not replace or interfere with established investigative, disciplinary, or oversight mechanisms

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The preliminary and estimated quote for the 850 additional Axon Body Worn Cameras, which includes hardware and AI Era licenses, is just over $30M after tax (2026-2030). The proposed payment schedule recognizes that there is a limitation of OPS to be able to deploy more than 200 additional cameras by the end of 2026. Given this, $1.6M has been budgeted to pay for BWCs in 2026 ($1M funding, $600k IT capital), and $7.35M will be required for each year from 2027-2030. The timing of the contract also aligns with the length of the primary OPS DEIMS contract with Axon and merges the financial commitment accordingly. The first year of the contract will be funded from the IT Modernization Roadmap budget.

The total contract amount of just over $30M requires the authorization of the Board for the Chief to be able to approve the contract to proceed.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1: Benefits Realization Details

CONCLUSION

Body worn cameras 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 commitment to community engagement and safety.