

Report to / Rapport au:

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

27 July 2020 / 27 juillet 2020

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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

Contact Person / Personne ressource:

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SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO INQUIRY I-20-09 – BODY WORN CAMERAS

**OBJET: DEMANDE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS I-20-09: CAMÉRAS
D'INTERVENTION**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Police Services Board receives this report for information.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information.

INQUIRY

The Board has received a number of emails from members of the public demanding body worn cameras for police officers.

I think it is important for our Board and the Police Service to be considering any and all available options for effectively improving police accountability and enhancing public trust.

Having said that, options will vary in terms of effectiveness and return on investment. In terms of body cameras specifically, I recognize that there are pros and cons associated with this technology.

The Board and the Service would need to undertake significant policy work prior to any sort of roll-out to consider aspects such as privacy and data governance. They would also require a significant financial investment in terms of the technology and data storage.

Chief, to what extent do you see body cameras as an accountability measure we should be exploring going forward?

I know you have done research on body cameras and have closely followed their success and failure elsewhere in the world where they have been employed.

Should we be actively looking into investing in this technology? What do you recommend?

RESPONSE

Body-worn cameras (BWCs) are a useful tool for police services and public safety providers.

Advocates of the devices promote the increased accountability and transparency of police behaviour and impact on public trust and confidence. They are increasingly being considered and/or implemented in Canada and in Ontario, with Toronto and Peel Region being the most recent jurisdictions to approve and move toward equipping frontline officers with this technology.

The current social discourse on excessive Use of Force and systemic racism, resulting in declining trust and confidence in police, have only heightened the calls for more police services to deploy BWCs.

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) has explored this technology in 2016. The review found significant implementation hurdles at that time - digital storage and evidence requirements, privacy concerns, acquisition costs, reliability, maintenance and operational costs, national policy, and other challenges. There were also budget implications and concerns about the ability to demonstrate a proper return on such an investment.

Recent research indicates that some previous BWC limitations have been, for the most part, mitigated (hardware costs, data storage, etc.).

Additionally, Privacy Commissioners across Canada have since drafted common guidelines for acceptable and safeguarded use of this technology and a proposed national BWC policy framework has been devised. Unfortunately, the results of academic studies on the efficacy of BWC is mixed at best; whether viewed from the lens

of decreases in Use of Force complaints, public accountability and transparency, police member endorsement, and/or likelihood of de-escalation, among other factors.

The fiscal impact of the current COVID pandemic means trade-offs would need to be made between any investments in BWCs and other OPS and Board priorities currently underway. The upcoming 2021 budget deliberations and the development of the Board's next strategic priorities plan (currently underway), present a timely and valuable opportunity to have meaningful public and member input and conversations around the significant choices the Board and the OPS face in continuing to work with, and for, the citizens of Ottawa and to deliver the services needed to keep them safe and resilient.