

November 22, 2021

To: Members
Board of Police Commissioners

Re: Body Worn Cameras

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board provide direction on further research, policy and consultation related to the implementation of Body Worn Cameras.

BACKGROUND

In 2020, the Regina Police Service was tasked with providing a report on Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) to help inform the Board of Police Commissioners on the use, benefits, challenges, and costs of this tool. BWCs have been widely implemented in the United States, though are less common in Canada. As outlined in this report created with assistance of our Strategic Services Section, there is growing interest in the utilization of this tool in Western Canada.

DISCUSSION

Surveillance technology and tools are not new to policing.¹ The recording of interactions between police and the public was introduced to law enforcement in Canada with the use of in-car cameras and CCTV footage. Over time, additional interest in improving police accountability and reform in both Canada and the United States has resulted in further discussions about the use of BWCs. In part, this is due to a number of high-profile police shootings and incidents of brutality resulting in social movements and demonstrations. After attending a Black Lives Matter protest on Parliament Hill in June 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau indicated that he wants police in Canada to use body worn cameras, stating that, “he will push provincial Premiers to equip police with body worn cameras as a rapid, substantive solution to allegations of racism and brutality.”² The decision about whether or not to equip police services with BWCs, however, is far from simple and should not be adopted without consideration.

The use of police BWCs has both benefits and challenges. Among the most common benefits cited are greater police transparency, improved accountability, and increased public trust. Conversely,

¹ AXON. 2020. *Police body-worn cameras in Canada: Practical Experience in BWC Program Development & Implementation*. Retrieved from: Vimeo.

² Blanchfield, Mike. June 2020. *Trudeau to push premiers on equipping police with body cameras*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/7039116/trudeau-police-body-cams-canada/>.

there are concerns about privacy considerations, the lack of reliable evaluations and outcomes for this tool and the biggest challenge; cost.

Benefits of BWCs

The use of BWCs is multifaceted and some of the perceived benefits of their use include increases to police service legitimacy, accountability, and transparency, improved police professionalism, officer training opportunities, and enhanced digital evidence. Capturing interactions between police and victims, witnesses, and suspects has some advantages specific to police agencies and police officers. Improved evidence collection of incidents can assist not only in prosecutions but also augment note taking practices of members. Cameras may capture more detail than eye witness testimony can, as well as identify context which may not be articulable by the officers on scene. This can also assist in providing early case resolution and reduce officer time in court.

As mentioned, transparency and accountability of police actions are the two immediate benefits often thought of by the public but from the police perspective, evidence capture has been the greatest benefit to wearing BWCs. According to Calgary Police Service, there has been success with evidence capture “particularly in domestic violence situations and intimate partner violence investigations”. There’s also an opportunity to capture and acknowledge good decision making by employees or to record situations where both the police and public have gone beyond expectations and a time to recognize positive outcomes. (Police interactions with suicidal persons or the delivery of Naloxone to save a life for example.)

People often change their behaviour when they know they are being recorded. Not only do cameras capture police officer actions but the actions of the public as well. “There is a belief that human beings change their behaviour when they are observed and are more likely to experience public awareness, become more prone to socially-acceptable behaviour and sense a heightened need to co-operate with the rules”.³ As such, BWCs may reduce aggression by members of the public towards police. There is also a possibility that BWCs will reduce unsubstantiated complaints against members related to police misconduct.⁴ In addition, in substantiated complaints of police misconduct, BWC footage may assist oversight bodies in more efficient investigations and timely resolutions.⁵ For example, BWC footage may support internal reviews held at the Use of Force Review Committee, Pursuit Review Board, or assist the accident and collision analyst. Finally, police BWC footage could be accessed for police officer evaluation or used in training exercises to improve police responses and professionalism.

Police BWCs also offer advantages specific to the public. BWCs are considered a complementary investigative tool that may improve law enforcement transparency and reduce use of force. For the

³ White, Michael D. 2014. *Police Officer Body-Worn Cameras: Assessing the Evidence*. Washington DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services/Office of Justice Programs. Page 13.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

public, there is often a sense that this tool can increase legitimacy and accountability and improve police professionalism.⁶

For the last 15 years, both the public and police have had, in reality, access to a similar investigative tool with cellular phones. It has been our experience that this captured video has been of little concern to both our members and the public. Unfortunately, these videos are edited, sensationalized or used in a particular context. With a BWC, investigators, oversight bodies, and Crown Prosecutors could walk through entire events and discuss, defend, or articulate the actions by all involved; rather than relying on a 10, 20, or 30-second clip. A Western Canadian Police Service has presented a 35-minute video of an event that resulted in an arrest, take down and handcuffing of a subject. For 34 minutes, the video showed the de-escalation tactics used by police, the escalation of anger and stress, the non-compliance of directions and captured this repeated cycle before a take down, arrest and handcuff. The importance of capturing this entire event versus the last 30 seconds was not understated. There was a real possibility the last 35 seconds of that video may have ended up in the court of public opinion.

In discussing transparency and accountability, we may think of overt, physical police actions. Just as important in our interactions is the communication. The conversation, the discussions, the requests, the way something is expressed – the verbiage. This too is captured during these interactions. There is a benefit to hearing, or not hearing, an officer direct a subject to remove their hands from their pockets, or from behind their back, prior to contact. To take this one step further, there is benefit in capturing the orders, instructions or commands provided by a Canine Handler during a track of a wanted subject, ultimately ending up with the dog biting the arrestable subject.

We see the benefit of BWC as they pertain to public complaints and internal investigations. Upon being notified they are the subject of a public complaint and must comply with an internal investigation, employees feel stressed, there is a great fear of the unknown, other agencies involved, plus weeks and months in some cases of waiting for the next step. Stressors in these situations can derail careers regardless of the outcome and end careers in the most extreme cases. BWCs can have positive impacts in these cases on mental health, motivation and job satisfaction. As you have all experienced, a sensational public complaint not only impacts the RPS employee, their co-workers, the organization but it also has an impact on the community. When video of police interactions resulting in public complaints is available, there is an opportunity to quell the thought of “police policing police”.

Limitations of BWCs

The drawbacks to police BWCs have also been documented. There is very little empirical evidence to support that these devices do in fact increase public trust in police. One of the only empirical studies related to BWCs was completed by Dr. Greg Brown. He states that although some believe public trust in police improves, there is also some evidence to suggest the exact opposite effect is

⁶ Ibid.

true.⁷ In a similar vein, one small study of more than 250 adults in a mock trial indicated that trust in police was not improved when body cameras were utilized. Those that watched body camera footage, “had the most negative opinions of the officer: they thought he was less credible and that his use of force was less justifiable...because the BWC footage revealed how emotional the officer became during the encounter”.⁸ Lack of understanding of police training, context, and suspect history are not visible through digital video footage and therefore would not be considered by a member of the public. As noted in the above study, this can contribute to unfair bias and judgement and an opportunity to be even more critical of the situation and outcome now that it is on video. There is also a significant potential for loss of public trust if BWCs or related technology malfunction, not to mention efforts needed to inform the community to help better understand police video won't be posted to YouTube every evening for public consumption and opinion.

The major drawback of BWCs is the high cost. The International Association of Chiefs of Police noted this as well stating that “BWCs should not be viewed as a low-cost alternative to in-car cameras, but rather a complementary technology”.⁹ Moreover, money spent on BWCs means less money for programs that might address police transparency in a similar way. Specific operating and capital costs for these programs are covered near the end of this report but on average, one camera costs approximately \$2,700 and \$1,600 to operate annually. Above that, resources would need to be in place to co-ordinate and operate the program. In Calgary a total of 10 new positions were required when the BWC program was implemented. Three new positions were required in their Court Services Section (disclosure of relevant video, vetting private or unrelated information captured), two new positions were required in the FOIP and Privacy Section as video was added onto the disclosure requests and four positions added to establish and run the program itself, develop policy, train employees, repair broken cameras, and liaise with the service provider. To approximate, for every 120 cameras one position should be created.

Technology changes so rapidly and in our research for this report, storage has also created challenges as BWC programs are introduced into police services. From Smart cards, USB and Flash Drives to Cloud Storage, there are a number of data storage options available at different costs.

We foresee challenges operationally as we introduce an investigative tool to the front line members who will be responsible for its operation and care. As you may have heard, of the hundreds of interactions police have with our citizens daily, only about 20% are criminal in nature and of that, only 5% go to criminal trial so of all the data captured, a small amount is critical to the Justice system. Our IT Section will have more responsibility as apps and software are added to cell phones to streamline the operation of BWC. It is likely employees will need more time off the street as they review and vet video for investigative purposes. Upstream, the Justice system will have greater

⁷ Brown, G. October 2020. *Police body-worn cameras in the Canadian context: Policing's new visibility and today's expectations for police accountability*. In (Newell, B., ed.) *Police on Camera: Surveillance, Privacy, and Accountability*: 103-127. New York: Routledge.

⁸ Saulnier, A., Burke, K.C & Bottoms, B.L. 2020. *Body-worn cameras and trial outcomes*. Blueline, August/September, pp. 17.

⁹ International Association of Chiefs of Police. 2019. *Body Worn Cameras*. Police Center. Law Enforcement Police Center. Virginia: IACP.

amounts of video to review (along with digital and paper reports) which may slow processes at the police service.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association documented concerns, as well, stating that transparency is not always improved because being recorded can be intimidating. The same concern was addressed by White (2014) who reported that there is no empirical evidence to support increased transparency. Additional criticisms of the use of BWCs include overall ineffectiveness, prohibitive costs, negative effects on police-community relationships, significant privacy issues, impacts on trust and legitimacy, and effects on officer well-being.¹⁰

Lastly, police services with BWC have had some privacy challenges to work around, primarily in respect to hospitals and medical distress calls for service. Considerations are also discussed around schools and youths. As this is a new and evolving program in Canada, privacy issues are being addressed as they come to light.

Trials and Police Use in Canada

Many Canadian police services are currently considering or testing BWCs but views on the effectiveness of BWCs are mixed. Some Canadian police agencies have already fitted their frontline officers with cameras, while some have opted not to use them.

Police BWCs were first evaluated in Canada in Victoria, British Columbia in 2008 and were first adopted by a Canadian police service in Amherstburg, Ontario in 2016. Police services across Canada continue to research, test, and in some cases, implement this tool. A recent poll delivered as part of a presentation at the Ontario Association of Law Enforcement Planners Symposium in October 2020 showed that out of 127 Canadian police services who were contacted, 17 services had trialed BWCs, 13 had shareable policies developed for use of BWCs, and another 35 police services had considered trialing BWCs.

One of the largest police forces currently using BWCs in Canada is Calgary Police Service. Calgary has stated they have 1,150 frontline officers equipped with cameras. It is worth noting that it took Calgary approximately seven years to implement their current BWC program.¹¹ Implementation was a long and strategic process and not without issues. Some of their challenges included a lawsuit against their original BWC provider Safety Innovations LLC because, “technical issues with the equipment were compromising officer safety”.¹² Although no formal studies have been completed, Calgary Police Service has claimed that BWCs have built public trust, reduced violent incidents, improved transparency and accountability, assist to resolve disagreements and uncertainties, help

¹⁰ Miller, Lindsay, Jessica Toliver, and Police Executive Research Forum. 2017. *Implementing a Body-Worn Camera Program: Recommendations and Lessons Learned*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

¹¹ Calgary Police Service. *Body worn camera*. Retrieved from: <https://www.calgary.ca/cps/body-worn-camera.html>.

¹² Blueline Magazine. September 2017. *Calgary police department sues company over body cameras*. Retrieved from: <https://www.blueline.ca/calgary-police-department-sues-company-over-body-cameras-4668/>.

officers feel safe from unfounded complaints, and are a beneficial training tool.¹³ CPS launched an extensive research and procurement process, including an unprecedented level of field trials – managed by front-line users who had a major stake in both the process and decision making. The result of this process led to the selection and deployment of almost 1,200 body worn cameras in 2018, as well as the supporting digital evidence management platform and smart phone applications designed to ensure the program’s success.

The Toronto Police Service completed a comprehensive 2-year pilot project starting in 2014 to examine the value of equipping frontline officers with cameras. They concluded that BWCs could be worn by officers and that the primary challenge was the “substantial, sustainable financial investment that would be needed”.¹⁴ Toronto Police Service received approval from their Police Services Board in August 2020 to move forward with the implementation of a BWC program for their frontline and community response teams. The public interest and demand for BWCs, including a petition with over 100,000 signatures from community members, seems to have significantly influenced this decision. Toronto Police Service plans to have officers equipped with cameras by October 2021.¹⁵

The Saskatoon Police Service first started researching BWCs in 2015. In June of 2020, the Service moved ahead with BWCs using a limited deployment model. They have appointed special project operational leads, developed a project charter, completed consultations and are drafting policy. They are also working with their Information Technology Unit to upgrade their evidence management system to review how they collect, store, and disclose all digital evidence. They have plans for a limited deployment testing phase towards the end of 2021 and are targeting full deployment in 2022.

With a 2021 annual budget of \$316 million, the Vancouver Police Department have been monitoring BWC use in Canada and have experimented with the tool including trials at significant public order events.¹⁶¹⁷ They concluded that a BWC program is too costly in terms of data storage, maintenance and equipment, requiring substantial capital infrastructure. In addition, they are concerned about privacy issues, as well as the restricted view offered by the camera.¹⁸ The British Columbia government developed guidelines in July 2019 for how police officers can use body cameras, but police in the province are not required to use them.¹⁹

¹³ Kaufmann, Bill. June 2020. *Calgary police eye expanding use of body cameras*. Retrieved from: <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/calgary-police-eye-expanding-use-of-body-cameras>.

¹⁴ Toronto Police Service. June 2016. *Body-Worn Cameras – A report on the findings of the pilot project to test the value and feasibility of body-worn cameras for police officer in Toronto*. Retrieved from: <http://torontopolice.on.ca/body-worn-cameras/pilot-project-results.php>.

¹⁵ Toronto Police Service. *Body-Worn Cameras*. Retrieved from: <http://torontopolice.on.ca/body-worn-cameras/>.

¹⁶ Wiebe, Daryl. June 2015. Vancouver Police Department. *Report to the Vancouver Police Board - Local review of the findings from the Toronto-based Iacobucci review into police use-of-force and the JKE Coroner's Inquest*. Retrieved from: <https://vancouver.ca/police/policeboard/agenda/2015/0716/1507V01-Use-of-Force-and-Mentally-Ill.pdf>.

¹⁷ McElroy, Justin. December 2020. CBC News. *City of Vancouver freezes police department funding as part of 2021 budget*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/city-of-vancouver-freezes-police-department-funding-as-part-of-2021-budget-1.5833731>.

¹⁸ Howell, Mike. August 2020. Vancouver Courier. *Why don't Vancouver police officers wear body cameras?* Retrieved from: <https://www.vancourier.com/opinion/why-don-t-vancouver-police-officers-wear-body-cameras-1.24189748>.

¹⁹ Government of British Columbia. July 2019. *Provincial Policing Standards: Body Worn Cameras*. Retrieved from: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/police/standards/4-2-1-body-worn-cameras-equipment.pdf>.

The Montréal Police Service undertook a pilot project to assess the effectiveness of fitting patrol officers with cameras from May 2016 to April 2017. In their final report in February 2019, they concluded that it was not possible to determine whether BWCs fostered accountability in police encounters, improved trust between the police and the public or ensured police well-being. Their findings indicated that the manual camera activation parameters and the presence of privacy constraints lead to very fragmented police contact and subsequent video recordings. They also stated that these incomplete recordings would make it difficult to demonstrate full transparency to the public and could undermine public confidence in the police. They found no clear impact of the BWCs on the number of cases of use of force by police officers or on the number of obstruction and assault committed by citizens against them.²⁰

The RCMP has held off on the implementation of BWCs for a number of years due to the complexity of national deployment and associated high costs. In 2020, community pressure for the RCMP to start using cameras resulted in a petition starting in British Columbia receiving over 20,000 signatures supporting police use of BWCs. In December 2020, the Canadian Federal Government announced a 6-year commitment totaling \$240 million, to be spent on equipping officers with cameras and developing a video storage system. In addition, the announcement included an additional \$50 million a year for maintenance costs.²¹

Winnipeg Police Service has, in the past, publicly supported the use of BWCs and have included them in budget and business planning goals.²² In 2015, they conducted some initial BWC testing and estimated that it would cost \$8 to \$10 million to equip their officers. However, due to budget constraints, their project was halted a year later.²³ In September 2020, a motion put forward at City Council requesting funds to acquire BWCs was rejected. Members of the City Council suggested that they wanted to hear more from the community in decision-making, wanted more information on associated costs and ongoing expenses, and thought that it was a question more fitting to be discussed through the police board.²⁴

Costs and Resource Considerations

Technological advancements provide additional tools for policing, but they also present financial pressures. The operating costs of Canadian police services have risen gradually since 1996 having

²⁰ Service de police de la Ville de Montréal. *Portable Cameras - Pilot Project For Police Officers*. Retrieved from: <https://spvm.qc.ca/en/Fiches/Details/Portable-Cameras--Pilot-Project-For-Police-Officers>.

²¹ Tumulty, Ryan. December 2020. National Post. *RCMP gets \$238 million to fund body cameras for officers across the country*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/rcmp-gets-238-million-to-fund-body-cameras-for-officers-across-the-country>.

²² Arsenaault, Mike. September 2020. CTV News. *City councillor puts forward motion for body cams on WPS*. Retrieved from: <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/city-councilor-puts-forward-motion-for-body-cams-on-wps-1.5098774>.

²³ Kavanagh, Sean. September 2020. CBC News. *City council committee rejects motion to equip Winnipeg police with body cameras*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-city-council-police-body-cameras-1.5717674>.

²⁴ Thompson, Sam. September 2020. Global News. *Winnipeg councillor's motion on police body cams shot down, board chair calls for community input*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/7324187/winnipeg-police-body-cams/>.

reached nearly \$15.7 billion in 2018/19 with \$12.8 billion spent on salaries and \$412.5 million on Information Technology operations.²⁵

Capital Costs

BWC programs are a significant investment with the main criticism of these programs being the costly implementation and ongoing storage and maintenance fees. When commenting on their BWC program, Calgary Police Service stated each camera costs approximately \$2,700 and \$1,600 to operate annually.²⁶ Prices are dependent on a number of factors such as number of users, equipment needs such as fitting to officers' vests, features such as battery life, storage capacity, and add-ons.

The costs of BWCs range depending on the warranty and storage requirements. A request was made to AXON for an estimated cost for the Regina Police Service. Three pricing plans were provided (See Appendix A). A five-year plan, based on 120 devices is estimated between \$621,000 and \$1,248,000 for equipment, storage, and warranty alone. Additional costs associated with training, administration of the program, resources to view and redact footage, and any additional resources needed have not yet been evaluated.

Operating Costs

In addition to the cost of the equipment, several other associated costs should be evaluated. Operating costs associated with BWCs should include data storage costs, maintenance, as well as ongoing software and hardware maintenance fees. As with every new tool, expected additional costs associated to consultation fees, project plan and implementation, policy development, and training should be considered. An increase in resources to manage the program in Information Technology, Police Information and Evidence Management, and to Access and Privacy is expected.

Cost Analysis

In general terms, a number of things would impact a Body Worn Camera program financially if it were to begin in Regina. If the organization purchased 300 cameras for the front-line, uniformed members that initial cost would be approximately \$800,000 (300 x \$2700/camera). Storage costs per year may be \$600,000. To repair and operate the equipment yearly may be \$480,000 (300 x \$1600) along with at least three new, full-time RPS employees to manage the entire program (Information Technology, Program Manager, Freedom of Information and Privacy or Court Documents and Services). These human resources would cost approximately \$210,341 per year.

²⁵ Suzanne Amey, Patricia Conor, Sophie Carrière Sharon Marcellus, and Julie Sauvé. December 2020. Statistics Canada Juristat Article. *Police resources in Canada, 2019*. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00015-eng.pdf>.

²⁶ Kaufmann, Bill. June 2020. *Calgary police eye expanding use of body cameras*. Retrieved from: <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/calgary-police-eye-expanding-use-of-body-cameras>.

From these costs, the BWC program, on average would cost \$1,290,341 per year to operate, along with the nearly \$1M start-up equipment purchase. Human resource efficiency costs may be factored in here; time off the street to review and vet video, or time for training and learning about the camera. Resources would be needed to receive feedback from the organization, the Board of Police Commissioners, City Council and the community.

As noted a number of times throughout this report, cost is a significant factor in determining whether a BWC program begins in Regina. It is our opinion that there are a number of other areas of growth within the RPS that could use these financial resources if it was arranged.

CONCLUSION

A body worn camera is an investigative tool for the police officer. It is not worn to benefit the police organization; it is not worn to benefit advocacy and watch-dog groups. These are not worn because it is in the interest of a politician or because it is mandated by a police service. It is a piece of equipment designed as an investigative tool for the police officer. A BWC program involves discussion and decisions made with Boards of Police Services, Executive Police Management, Police Unions and Associations, and the community. In Calgary there has been overwhelming support for the BWC program by their membership. They have come to recognize it as a tool which enhances their work.

A commonly asked question is, 'Have BWCs lowered the amount of public complaints against police officers?' It's difficult to say at this early stage and we feel this is the wrong metric to use. BWCs have allowed Professional Standard Sections (Internal Affairs) in police agencies to conduct far more robust and involved investigations into public complaints. Speaking from experience, in-car camera video for example has been an investigative asset to both police and the public. This assessment can also be applied to internal and external review committees; that the video will allow for a more robust and complete investigative review of an event.

With this investigative tool also comes a high price tag, request for more resources, changes to process, and impacts to organizations beyond only police services. However, evidence gathering, improved employee mental wellness, robust internal and external investigations, increased trust, transparency and accountability are identified as benefits of a BWC program.

RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

There would be significant costs associated to a BWC program which would require budgeting by the Regina Police Service.

Environmental Implications

None with respect to this report.

Strategic Implications

Consultation with the community, Regina Police Association, Prosecution, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, City of Regina, Privacy Commission, and the Human Rights Commission would be critical if the Regina Police Service were to successfully implement a BWC program.

Other Implications

None with respect to this report.

COMMUNICATIONS

Consultation with the community and stakeholders is anticipated.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Evan J. Bray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Evan J. Bray,
Chief of Police