



City of Richmond

Public Safety Camera System Field Test

The City of Richmond implemented a phased field test of ultra-high-definition surveillance cameras at Minoru Boulevard and Granville Avenue in February 2025. The purpose was a pilot program that would assist the RCMP in identifying criminal suspects. The OIPC had previously advised that it did not believe the City had the authority to do so under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA).

The OIPC initiated the investigation in May 2025, and has now confirmed that the City does not have the authority under FIPPA to collect, use, and disclose personal information for this purpose.

The report includes three recommendations for the City of Richmond:

- Stop collecting personal information through the field test;
- Delete all recordings to date; and
- Disband the surveillance equipment used to collect personal information.

The City advised the OIPC it did not intend to follow the recommendations. Commissioner Harvey issued Order F26-01, which orders the City to immediately comply.

THE OIPC

Established in 1993, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner provides independent oversight of BC's access and privacy laws.

LEGISLATION

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* sets out the terms under which a public body can collect, use, and disclose the personal information of individuals.

READ MORE



[Check out Investigation Report 26-01 to learn more.](https://www.oipc.bc.ca/documents/investigation-reports/3073)

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FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Surveillance in communities is on the increase in British Columbia. It takes many forms, including devices worn on employees, mounted at fixed locations, or in vehicles or on drones. Surveillance also takes other forms, inside and outside of private businesses and public facilities and in public places like street corners and parks. When this trend began a generation ago, the devices were videocassette cameras and footage was often low resolution and stored temporarily. Now the devices can collect more than just video, at ever increasing levels of resolution, including audio and biometric information such as faceprints, heat signatures and gait patterns. The data can be stored forever and assessed with artificial intelligence.

The trend is driven by concerns about crime and social disorder in our communities among public and private organizations and, indeed, by the public themselves. These concerns are legitimate and there are certain uses for which properly implemented surveillance can be one effective tool. However, as a society, we must avoid the temptation to too easily leap to a simple approach. Surveillance, particularly of the type available today, can be corrosive to our social fabric. The lessons of the past century are that the societies that had imposed comprehensive surveillance were left with deeply damaged values. The degree of surveillance implemented in those societies pales with what today's technology offers. Yes, people of British Columbia deserve to know that someone is watching out for them, but if we do not implement these technologies in a thoughtful, careful and limited manner, we risk slipping into a society where people feel like they are always being watched.

*(See **page 4** of the report for the full Commissioner's Message)*

Recommendations

1

The City should immediately stop collecting personal information through the PSCS.

2

The City should immediately delete all PSCS recordings to date.

3

The City should disband PSCS equipment used to collect personal information.

4

The BC Government should regulate, through legislative amendment, technologies that capture biometric information.

The City advised the OIPC it did not intend to follow the recommendations. Commissioner Harvey issued Order F26-01, which orders the City to immediately comply.

Check out our updated Public Sector Surveillance Guidelines for more information about how FIPPA applies to the use of video and audio surveillance by public bodies.

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER



INVESTIGATION REPORT

City of Richmond's Public Safety Camera System Field Test



oipc.bc.ca

WATCH



Check out the full video overview:

<https://youtu.be/tm75j3A-aPM>