

News Release

For immediate release

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City of Richmond ordered to remove surveillance cameras at key intersection

Investigation found the City was not authorized to collect personal information for law enforcement purposes

VICTORIA – Information and Privacy Commissioner Michael Harvey has ordered the City of Richmond to remove surveillance cameras at the intersection of Minoru Boulevard and Granville Avenue, after an investigation report found the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) does not authorize the City to use the surveillance cameras to collect personal information for law enforcement purposes.

The City originally submitted a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) to the OIPC in July 2024 for a field test of its Public Safety Camera System (PSCS). The system uses multiple ultra-high-definition video cameras to collect video footage of individuals, licence plates, and vehicle features that would be provided to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to assist in identifying criminal suspects.

In response, the OIPC advised that it did not believe FIPPA would authorize the City to collect personal information, through the PSCS, for this purpose. The City disagreed, and proceeded with implementing the PSCS in February 2025. Soon after, the OIPC initiated the investigation.

Under FIPPA, public bodies can only collect, use, or disclose personal information under certain circumstances listed in the Act.

The investigation confirmed that FIPPA does not authorize the City's collection, use, or disclosure of personal information, through the PSCS, to assist the RCMP in identifying criminal suspects. It is not enough for a public body to have an interest in criminal law enforcement – rather, the public body must have a statutory mandate to enforce criminal laws. As the RCMP provides policing services to the City, independently, it is the RCMP that has general responsibility for criminal law enforcement in Richmond – not the City.

“There are certainly appropriate situations that justify the use of surveillance, but it must be limited and proportional. The assessment of whether these conditions are met has to start with whether the organization actually has the legal authority to collect the personal information. My conclusion is that the City of Richmond does not have that authority,” said Commissioner Harvey.

“As a society, we must avoid the temptation to too easily leap to quick approaches. Surveillance, particularly of the type available today, can be corrosive to our social fabric. Advanced features,

such as facial recognition technology, go over and above what is considered reasonable in the context and raise the potential for scope creep, where technology installed for one purpose is later used for other purposes.”

The report includes three recommendations for the City of Richmond:

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

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

The report also recommends that the BC Government regulate, through legislative amendment, technologies that capture biometric information.

“I would encourage other public bodies exploring options for similar high-tech video surveillance to read this report, and consider whether they have the authority to collect personal information, whether that collection is necessary and proportional to the issue at hand, and whether the project actually serves the public. Privacy is a core democratic value, and upholding its protection is paramount to a free and healthy society,” said Commissioner Harvey.

The full report is available here: <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/documents/investigation-reports/3073>

Order F26-01: <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/documents/orders/3071>

Video summarizing report: <https://youtu.be/tm75j3A-aPM>

Fact sheet summary: <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/documents/infographics/3074>

Guidance document: <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/documents/guidance-documents/3072>

Letter to Minister Gibson: <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/documents/public-comments/3075>

Media Contact

Michelle Mitchell | Director of Communications
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC
250 217-7872 | mmitchell@oipc.bc.ca