

# B.6

## COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

### 6. Implementing Body-Worn Cameras (BWC) for the Vancouver Police Department (VPD)

Submitted by: Councillor Zhou

#### WHEREAS

1. The Vancouver Police Department (VPD) is a diverse and innovative police department. The VPD is guided by its core values of integrity, compassion, accountability, respect, and excellence (ICARE);
2. The VPD has over 1,000,000 contacts with the public every year, including approximately 240,000 calls for service every year, or over 650 calls per day;
3. Police officers in B.C. have many layers of accountability, including multiple independent civilian oversight bodies. The VPD welcomes police oversight and it is appropriate and necessary given the powers granted to them as peace officers;
4. The [Police Act](#) provides statutory authority to the government to develop and implement police standards and to evaluate compliance of these standards, which include training, use of force (e.g., firearms, intermediate weapons, and restraints), and standards for equipment including body worn cameras; <sup>i</sup>
5. BC's Provincial Policing Standards re: Equipment and Facilities (4.2.1 – Body Worn Cameras) defines a “Body Worn Camera” (BWC) as “a wearable video and audio recording system.”;
6. There is now an extensive body of academic research on BWC and its applications. It has shown to decrease the number of public complaints against police officers as well as to decrease the use of force by police officers. The benefits associated with BWC must be weighed against privacy implications; <sup>ii</sup>
7. In 2014, a Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly of B.C. was empowered to Review the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) and to examine and make recommendations with respect to the administration and general operations of the Independent Investigations Office in accordance with section 38.13 of the Police Act [RSBC 1996] c. 367;
8. In February 2015, the Special Committee released its report which included a recommendation that “The provincial government aggressively pursue the steps necessary to implement the police use of body-worn cameras, in consultation with police and non-police stakeholders.”;
9. In response to questions from the Special Committee regarding the usefulness of BWC, the IIO Chief Civilian Director stated that “such devices were becoming increasingly common in other jurisdictions, particularly in the US, and that

evidence from these jurisdictions suggested that body worn cameras could assist certain IIO investigative files, including emergency response team deployments, police dog handling issues, and conducted energy weapon incidents.”;

10. In statements made to B.C.'s Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act, VPD Chief Constable Adam Palmer advocated for BWC to be in-stated as part of a provincial policing standard. He supported the deployment of BWC as a tool to strengthen public trust and confidence in police;
11. The provincial government has established policing standards for the deployment of BWC, including direction that “Prior to deploying body-worn cameras (BWC) to any of its officers, the chief constable, chief officer, or commissioner; and if required under the police force’s policies or guidelines, the Police Board must – among other things – ensure that a privacy impact assessment (PIA) has been completed and approved by the appropriate head of the public body, that information about the police force’s use of BWC is available to the public on the police force’s website, that a written policy exists which covers at minimum that only BWCs issued by the police force are permitted to be used and the circumstances under which a BWC is permitted to be used to record an encounter, and procedures for ensuring that any potential disclosure of BWC video is consistent with applicable provincial or federal privacy legislation; <sup>iii</sup>
12. The purpose of the BC Provincial Policing Standards for Body Worn Cameras is to ensure consistency and guide police agencies on how to implement this technology;
13. The cost associated with BWC is often cited as a barrier to implementation. These costs include not only significant costs associated with acquiring the equipment, but also ongoing cost of administration, maintenance, data storage, transcription and disclosure. It is important to understand the full scope of implementing and maintaining a BWC program and the significant investment of public funds involved;
14. The VPD has an authorized strength of 1348 sworn officers. Of these, approximately 800 officers are assigned to front-line duties and would be the most appropriate to be equipped with BWC (NOTE: Not all front-line officers are on duty at the same time. The number of cameras required would be reflective of the number of on-duty officers);
15. Nationally, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is currently rolling out BWC to their officers across the country. Between 10,000 - 15,000 body-worn cameras will be deployed to RCMP officers across Canada starting with a field test of 300 BWC in three different RCMP Divisions;
16. Public Safety Canada has estimated the annual per unit cost for the RCMP’s BWC and Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS) program to be \$2,000 - \$3,000 annually. The annual subscription is expected to include software and data storage (as part of the DEMS system) and the yearly subscription cost for BWCs; <sup>iv</sup>

17. The 2015-2016 IIO Annual Report noted a review of 71 IIO investigations to determine whether the availability of BWC footage could have assisted in expediting and concluding these investigations. The review concluded that BWC footage would have potentially assisted in resolving 93% of the investigations sooner and potentially led to corresponding cost savings, as well as reducing stress for complainants and respondent officers; and
18. Given that the RCMP is currently rolling out a nation-wide BWC program, along with the provincial government's endorsement of BWC for police departments in the province, the opportunity for Mayor and Council to support and otherwise take steps to enable the VPD to implement BWC for all front-line and patrol officers by 2025, is timely and warranted.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council formally support and take steps to enable the VPD to implement a "Body Worn Camera" (BWC) program that will equip all front-line and patrol officers by 2025.
- B. THAT Council direct the Mayor to write to the Vancouver Police Board on behalf of Council indicating support for the implementation of a "Body Worn Camera" (BWC) program in Vancouver;

FURTHER THAT the Mayor's letter be sent to the Vancouver Police Union, B.C.'s Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and all other relevant partners and stakeholders.

- C. THAT Council direct staff to work with the VPD and other relevant partners and stakeholders to identify the costs to implement and sustain a "Body Worn Camera" (BWC) program for all VPD front-line and patrol officers by 2025, as well as funding options and opportunities for implementing and sustaining a BWC program;

FURTHER THAT staff be directed to report back to Council with information and recommendations in early 2024.

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<sup>i</sup> Under the Police Act, the Policing and Security Branch is responsible for ensuring adequate and effective levels of policing in B.C. The Branch determines standards for things such as training and equipment; <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/policing-in-bc/about-us>

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ii The Supreme Court of Canada has noted that an individual does not automatically forfeit his or her privacy interests when in public, especially given technological developments that make it possible for personal information “to be recorded with ease, distributed to an almost infinite audience, and stored indefinitely”. And as the Supreme Court added more recently, the right to informational privacy includes anonymity which “permits individuals to act in public places but to preserve freedom from identification and surveillance.” [https://www.priv.gc.ca/media/1984/gd\\_bwc\\_201502\\_e.pdf](https://www.priv.gc.ca/media/1984/gd_bwc_201502_e.pdf)

iii Under privacy legislation, law enforcement agencies are responsible for protecting personal information from unauthorized access or use, disclosure, copying, modification and destruction, as well as loss and theft. Reasonable steps must be taken to safeguard recordings. [https://www.priv.gc.ca/media/1984/gd\\_bwc\\_201502\\_e.pdf](https://www.priv.gc.ca/media/1984/gd_bwc_201502_e.pdf)

iv As part of the RCMP's Vision150 modernization plan, the force is rolling out body-worn cameras (BWCs) and a Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS) to RCMP officers across the country. Between 10,000 -15,000 body-worn cameras will be deployed to contract and federal police officers who interact with communities, across Canada's rural, urban and remote locations, starting with a field test with up to 300 cameras in three different RCMP Divisions (<https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/body-worn-cameras>). The federal government's 2020 Fall Economic Statement committed \$238.5 million over six years towards BWC. Part of this financial commitment includes fully funding the RCMP initiative until 2024/25, at which point contract partners will absorb all costs. <https://www.ubcm.ca/about-ubcm/latest-news/implementation-rcmp-body-worn-cameras>