

REQUEST FOR DECISION

TO: Council **MEETING DATE:** May 21, 2025
FROM: Tracy Forster, Deputy Corporate Officer
SUBJECT: **Community Safety Surveillance Camera System Pilot Project**
FILE NO: 0340

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That a privacy impact assessment be submitted to the BC Information and Privacy Commissioner for pre-approval of a surveillance camera pilot program in the District of Sechelt.
 2. That staff engage the public to seek feedback for a surveillance camera system program in the District and a summary of the results be presented to Council.
 3. That a District of Sechelt public surveillance system be included for Council's consideration as a new service for 2026 prior to July 1, 2025.
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PURPOSE

This report has been prepared in response to Council's request for an assessment of the costs and legal considerations associated with implementing a community safety surveillance camera system as a pilot project. The analysis considers an approximate outline of financial expenditures, privacy concerns, and legislative requirements, referencing the BC Information and Privacy Commissioner's Public Sector Video Surveillance Guidelines and policies from multiple BC municipalities.

OPTIONS

1. That staff be directed to request a proposal from the Sechelt Downtown Business Association (SDBA) outlining options for a grant program designed to support SDBA members in enhancing public safety. The proposal should align with the District of Sechelt Business Improvement Area Bylaw No. 599, 2021, Schedule B, and may include, but is not limited to, reimbursement to businesses for expenses related to security cameras and other security measures.

DISCUSSION

Summary

At the February 5, 2025 Regular Council meeting Council endorsed the following resolution:

Excerpt from Resolution No. 2025-2A-19

“...That staff prepare a report on the cost and legal implications of a community safety surveillance camera system as a pilot project; and...”

After a review of financial expenditures, privacy concerns, and legislative requirements, referencing the BC Information and Privacy Commissioner’s Public Sector Video Surveillance Guidelines and policies from multiple BC municipalities, staff have determined that implementing a community safety surveillance camera system is possible, however the impact to the capital and operational budgets with the introduction of this new service may be significant.

Details on the potential impact are included in this report.

Other Municipalities

Municipalities such as Richmond, [Kelowna](#) and [Vernon](#) have successfully established cameras in public places with policies and privacy impact assessments (PIAs) that have been reviewed and approved by the BC Information and Privacy Commissioner. The Commissioner required that the cameras be of reduced video quality so that audio and physical features of an individual and vehicle licence plate numbers may not be identified. Despite these restrictions, on March 6, 2024, [a camera in the Downtown of City of Kelowna helped the RCMP](#) locate and arrest a suspect during their response to a break-and-enter call.

Currently, the City of Richmond only has low resolution traffic cameras that cannot identify faces or licence plates. However, at a December 9, 2024 Council meeting it was resolved “A capital submission for Option 1 to implement the RCMP proposed Phase 1 for the Public Safety Camera System, with an estimated value of \$2,493,794 and operating budget impact of \$181,600 be submitted for Council’s consideration as part of the 2025 budget process.” Phase 1 of the Public Safety Camera System involves 48 4K ultra-high-resolution cameras installed at ten major entry and exit route intersections.

Richmond staff previously expressed a willingness to challenge the BC Privacy Commissioner in court over the use of high resolution cameras, and their Council has committed to exploring the feasibility of obtaining a court declaration before proceeding with the expenditures.

In 2018, the City of Terrace completed a [privacy assessment](#) to implement a \$46,000 surveillance camera program for two high crime areas and was [denied](#) by the BC Privacy Commissioner citing that the “proposed project, aimed at deterring crime, did not justify the need for collection of public information”.

On [July 15 2024](#), the City of White Rock [abandoned a crime and safety CCTV project](#) due to cost “estimates of over \$27,000 per camera and \$60,000 a year in operating costs”.

On November 27, 2024, [a phased approach](#) to implement the White Rock program and [quotes](#) from providers were presented, as a result, [two cameras](#) were installed. Staff reports noted there may be opposition from BC Privacy Commissioner and that approval is required but there is no information that approval has been received, to date.

The City of Kamloops is currently looking to implement a [Corporate Security Model](#) which includes use of CCTV, though the Privacy Commissioner has made some statements regarding their proposal in [local news](#), cautioning that protection of privacy may be at risk through mass surveillance systems.

Alternative Solutions

Business Improvement Grants

The District’s current Business Improvement Scheme includes provisions allowing for the Sechelt Downtown Business Association to provide grants to support businesses that encourage improvements in public safety:

District of Sechelt Business Improvement Area Bylaw No. 599, 2021, Schedule B:

1. Wages and Administration: The vast majority of the work is accomplished through community support and by our committed and hard-working team of volunteers and our various committees. A portion of our budget is allocated towards paying an Executive Director to support our members through business programs, events, co-op marketing, grants and partnerships with other local organizations.

3. Facility Improvements: The SDBA promotes and advocates for property owner and business owner grants to encourage improvements in the areas of public safety, revitalization and beautification (street planters, benches, etc).

POLICY AND BYLAW IMPLICATIONS

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) 26 (b), states that "No personal information may be collected by or for a public body unless that information is collected for the purposes of law enforcement." And further defines personal information as "recorded information about an identifiable individual other than contact information".

The BC Privacy Commissioner considers recorded information about an identifiable individual that is not in the middle of committing a crime to be in violation of the Act.

A draft District of Sechelt policy is attached to ensure a surveillance program complies with all legislative and records management requirements. Aligning with recommendations from the Public Sector Video Surveillance Guidelines:

“If a public body makes a decision to use a video or audio surveillance system, it should do so in accordance with a comprehensive policy that ensures compliance with FIPPA.

Such a policy is one part of an overall privacy management program. Some of the key privacy issues that public bodies should address through policies include:

- i. Authority for access to, collection, use and disclosure of personal information.
- ii. Requirements for notification.
- iii. Individual access to personal information.
- iv. Retention and disposal of information.
- v. Responsible use of information and information technology, including administrative, physical and technological security controls, appropriate access controls and regularly scheduled audits of the program.
- vi. A process for handling privacy related complaints.”

The policy should designate a single individual responsible for overseeing the program and its legal obligations, establish written agreements for employees and contractors who may need to access or operate the system, and outline privacy awareness training along with consequences for non-compliance or policy breaches.

Should Council choose to proceed with the program, staff will research into information sharing with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). If permitted, staff will enter into an information sharing agreement with the RCMP to authorize access to information collected by the surveillance camera system.

Currently, [RCMP policy](#) regulates that an officers body-worn camera is only to be activated while in lawful execution of their duties (in response to investigation, taking statements, take record of a person in custody or to collect evidence for court), and are not permitted to be used for surveillance.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

1. Social Sustainability and Community Well Being

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

3. Community Safety and Wellbeing

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Without specifics of how many locations will be included in the program, it is difficult to determine costs.

General costs of a surveillance program may include:

- Staff time for operational and privacy training, ongoing system monitoring, reviewing the program, public and Commissioner engagement, records management and destruction.
- Procurement of equipment per location, installation, maintenance, software & integration, upgrades.
- Information and Technology projected costs to install three cameras at one location at approximately \$8,000 plus an annual cost of \$1,700/year for internet connection to operate it. This rough estimate only includes locations currently serviced with power, any infrastructure upgrades to locations without electrical power will need to be quoted based on needs.

COMMUNICATIONS

Both the BC Privacy Commissioner and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada advise that the public be informed and engaged prior to implementing a public sector surveillance camera system to gauge interest and address any potential concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Forster

Deputy Corporate Officer

Attachments:

- 1 – 2018-02-06 BC Office of the Privacy Commissioner - Use of Video Surveillance by Local Governments
- 2 – 2014-01 BC Information and Privacy Commissioner's Public Sector Video Surveillance Guidelines
- 3 – DRAFT Council Policy 1.1.12 Video Surveillance Monitoring Systems in Public Space