

We Recommend that the RCMP Reconsider Body Worn Cameras

***Current Research does not Support the Implementation
of Body Worn Cameras***

Submitted Nov. 3rd, 2020

Grand(m)others Act to Save the Planet GASP

We are Grand(m)others Act to Save the Planet (GASP) : A grassroots, nonpartisan group of grandmothers and grand 'others' who care deeply about the world our descendants will inherit. We represent members in 8 ridings in Southern Ontario and have affiliations with Climate, Activist and Grandmothers groups across Canada and internationally.

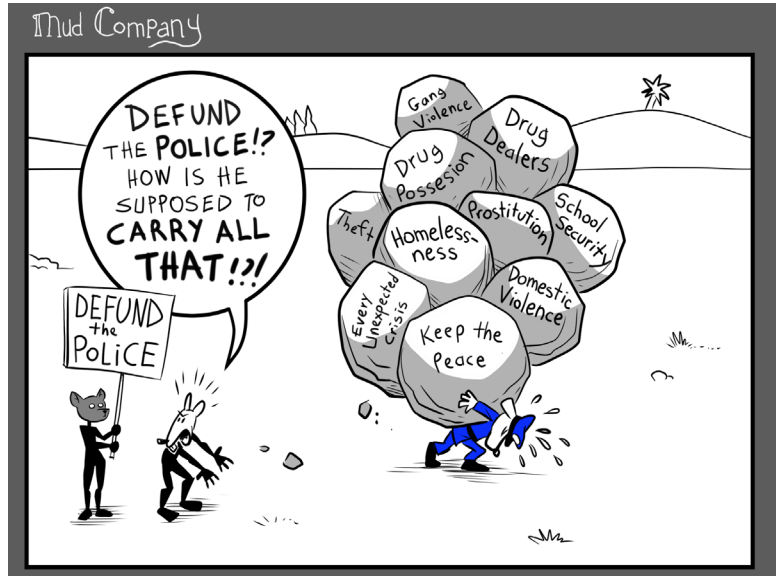
Lorraine Green

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You may be wondering why privileged white women are concerned about Body Cams? Our concern is for safe communities. We do not believe that Body Cams make the public safe. We want “No New Money for Body Worn Cameras”.

GASP is pleased that the Federal Public Safety committee is conducting an emergency review of the RCMP to address systemic discrimination. This is a good beginning but so much more comprehensive work must be done.



¹This best describes our view on the history of law enforcement in Canada. Over time Policing has become a replacement for proper spending on mental health and social supports, housing, homeless, drug & substance abuse & poverty. RCMP, and all police forces have been forced to take on ever expanding responsibilities that have resulted in many more police and ballooning budgets.

Very disturbing is the increasing militarization of police (swat teams, armoured vehicles, tactical weapons, ‘reinforced’ gloves and Body Cams). This increased show of force further engenders fear and leads to more violence. People do not feel served & protected. A first responder with a weapon at a wellness check is very frightening. Sadly, trust has eroded between those who are called to ‘serve and protect’ and the public, especially people within our diverse multicultural communities.

¹ Neal Skorpen. Toronto Star, July 17

WHY NOW

Canadians are ready for significant change in policing. It is the opportune time to reimagine, and transform policing in Canada. The recent Angus Reid poll demonstrates that Canadians are open to structural changes in the police. There has been a significant shift in momentum since this summer's BLM marches.

63 % of Canadians would rather see investments in social welfare strategies than increasing police presence.

58% of the population agrees “ There is a serious problem with Systemic Racism in the RCMP”

73% of Canadians say police in Canada interact inappropriately with non-white people at least some of the time”.²

MP Mumilaaq Quaqva was quoted on policing in Nunavut. This quote resonated with us “RCMP members need to have an understanding of history...Understand what your uniform represents when you walk into a community.”³ Unfortunately, the uniform is not often met with trust, confidence, and assurance.

RCMP take a stand and refuse to fund body cams! Make this a turning point for the RCMP to initiate a new compact with communities to build trust & mutual respect. We believe Body Cams have not increased transparency and accountability.

GASP is concerned that Body Cams might be a substitute for real systemic change. It is a ‘tinkering’ when a complete transformation is needed to make communities safe for our grandchildren and yours.

Recent Research on BodyCams

Why are body cameras touted as an accountability solution for systemic racism? Many blame the Hawthorne effect. People are said to “modify an aspect of their behavior in response to their awareness of being observed”⁴. Well this Hawthorne Effect notion has turned out to be fictional, yet it seems embedded in our cultural psyche. The writers of

² Angus Reid Institute. Defend or Defund? One-in-four support cutting local police budgets; most back social welfare over hiring more cops. October 26th, 2020

³Marieke Walsh, Sean Fine, Families of victims to RCMP shootings in Nunavut want second review of case. Globe & Mail, Oct. 30th, 2020

⁴ David Yokum., Anita Ravishankar, and Alexander Coppock,. (2019) A randomized control trial evaluating the effects of police body-worn cameras. Edited by Susan A. Murphy, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, and approved March 21, 2019 (received for review August 28, 2018)

this study state that “Commentators sometimes allude to a so-called “civilizing effect⁵,” Body Cams are predicted to calm all parties involved and reduce the likelihood that violence occurs.” But, that doesn’t actually happen.

We have to say, when we first heard about Body Cameras, we intuitively thought they would work to reduce systemic racism in policing. We were wrong. Probably because we all believe the Hawthorne Effect myth that people behave better when recorded. We think the public now understands that now too. The Black Lives Matter movement has educated all of us to understand the complexities of the problem.

Yokum et. al conducted the Metro Washington DC 2019 study which is the largest randomized control study done to date in the world with 2,224 police officers over a 7 month period. Half of police wore body cams for 7 months and half did not. These 4 areas were studied to examine whether police used less force, did the public file less complaints?, did the Body Cams impact court outcomes, and did policing activities change?

Findings of Randomized Control Study

The findings from this huge sample and very often cited research paper show Body Cam’s had insignificant effects on all 4 areas including use of force, court outcomes, police activity and complaints. The findings were null on this large-scale study.

“Here we show that BWCs have very small and statistically insignificant effects on police use of force and civilian complaints, as well as other policing activities and judicial outcomes.”⁶

Cost

Experts concur "There is no value for money in this," said Kevin Walby, criminal justice professor at the University of Winnipeg who has studied the use of body-worn cameras on police⁷. Economist Jennifer Doleac notes ”Body cameras are an expensive way to

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷Kelly Malone,cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/body -cameras-police-violence-winnipeg-.June 9th 2020

build trust.⁸ As well, body camera technology improves constantly, do police forces continue buying new tech? The archiving and storage are also a huge money sinkhole. Are there privacy concerns with how and by whom this data is stored? According to Kate Robertson, Police Services are not as regulated as Canada's National Security Services which is concerning.⁹

Facial Recognition

As you know, as body camera technology changes, facial recognition is becoming a feature of these cameras. Studies have shown that facial recognition systems have a difficult time identifying women and darker-skinned people, which could lead to disastrous false positives. Jacob Snow, technology and civil liberties attorney for the ACLU says "This is an example of how the application of technology in the law enforcement space can cause harmful consequences for communities who are already overpoliced,"¹⁰ Kate Robertson talks about possible infringement in Canada on people's rights with our Charter and Constitution.¹¹

Cynthia Lum and her colleagues provide the most comprehensive review to date of the research evidence base for body-worn cameras with 70 empirical studies.¹² They looked at the impact of cameras on officer behavior, officer perceptions, citizen behavior, citizen perceptions, police investigations, and police organizations. What did they conclude?

⁸ Doleac, Jennifer. "Police Body Cameras: Why Don't They Improve Accountability?" *Bloomberg News*, 29th July 2020.

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyVUSu8lrYQ&feature=youtu.be> (1:41)

¹⁰ Wong, Queenie. "Why Facial Recognitions Racial Bias is so hard to crack." *CNET.com NEW* [US], 27th March 2019.

¹¹ Kate Robertson, Cynthia Khoo, Yolanda Song. *To Surveil and Predict, A Human Rights Analysis of Algorithmic Policing in Canada*. 2020. University of Toronto Law, Citizen Lab.

¹² Lum, Cynthia, Stoltz, M, Koper, CS, Scherer, JA. Research on body-worn cameras: What we know, what we need to know. *Criminology & Public Policy*. 2019; 18: 93– 118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12412>

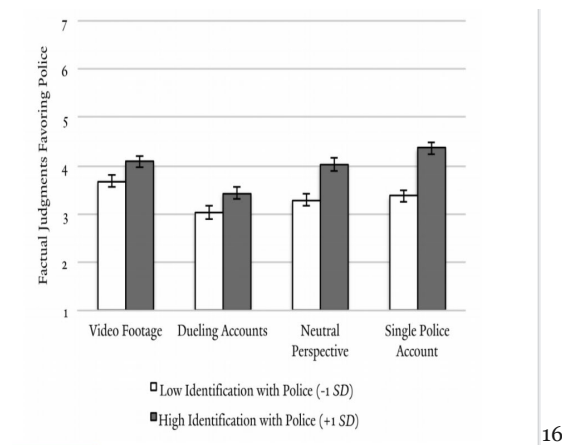
“BWCs will not be an easy panacea for improving police performance, accountability, and relationships with citizens.”¹³ (Lum et. al. 2019)

Body Cams have not had statistically significant or consistent effects on most measures of officer and citizen behavior or citizens’ views of police. Again, why add more money to a bloated system if it doesn’t work?

Honorable Minister Bill Blair, in defence of body cameras, has said to the media “I know from some experience that video evidence can be the best possible evidence,¹⁴” This Yale research points in another direction.

“...we should be more skeptical of the widely held belief that video footage tells us unambiguously and definitively what happened.¹⁵ (Summers, 2016)

People seem to bring their own biases and identification with police to evidence whether it is verbal testimony, video footage or a police account.



¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Stephanie Levitz, Public Safety Minister Bill Blair says police misconduct is indefensible. CBC, June 9th, 2020

¹⁵ SOMMERS, R. (2016). Will Putting Cameras on Police Reduce Polarization? *The Yale Law Journal*, 125(5), 1304-1362.

¹⁶ Ibid. p.1335

So the Yale study compared video footage to dueling witness accounts, a neutral perspective, and a Single Police Account. People seemed to bring their own lens when looking at evidence. The type of evidence didn't drive influence, people's biases toward the police drive influence.

As the GASP researcher and teacher counsellor (Michelle Tom) for over 25 years in public schools on and near the Musqueam, Tla'amin, Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en, and Sylix reserves, I witnessed firsthand the 30 years of austerity measures by consecutive governments which have contributed to poverty, mental health issues, and drug addictions. The idea that body cameras will be some sort of expensive 'Silver bullet', is not substantiated with research. Thousands marched this summer, Black Lives Matter wanted to defund, not add more money to policing. Why continue to pile money on an already bloated police budget?

Conclusion and Way Forward

While we know many police officers join the force to help people and we respect the exemplary job individual police do, the erosion of trust in police harms everyone.

BODY CAMERAS DERAILED THE REAL DISCUSSION.

We support the work your committee has done, however, there remains a culture of systemic racism in police forces across the country and serious reforms need to take place. Right now, two thirds of Canadians agree there are serious concerns and are ready for transformation. When we talk about "defunding the police" we mean looking at new ways of doing things; "Reimagining" a new Social Contract that builds a better understanding and respect between the police and all of us. It's about replacing fear and building trust, especially with marginalized people. Every mental health/wellness call should be answered by a community worker through a New Community Emergency Dispatch Service, not embedded with the police. It's about sending social workers to do wellness checks instead of the police.



GASP has grave concerns about the ever-increasing dollars spent on the militarization of our police forces. We need to prioritize the expansion of health and social services over future financial investments in policing. We need to move away from this “militarization” and focus on policing that serves and protects all Canadians in our diverse and multicultural country.

GASP is opposed to Body Cameras as a possible solution in addressing complex issues of systemic racism in policing in Canada, in fact, it has been proven that costly Body Cameras do not stop police brutality. GASP wants more dollars to be spent on community and social services and LESS on police enforcement. GASP strongly suggests the Public Safety Committee recommend police forces not spend money on Body Cameras, or armoured vehicles, or reinforced gloves, or bigger guns.

“Body Cameras do not prevent police violence, or police killings, ONLY defunding, demilitarizing, and reducing the scope of policing can do that” Black Lives Matter¹⁷

Now is the time for change! Tear down the barriers of systemic discrimination, become more diverse and embrace civilian oversight. Once more, we recognize that Police cannot 'decriminalize' drugs, they cannot provide affordable housing, they cannot

¹⁷ DefundthePolice.org

solve the problem of mental illness or alleviate poverty...But they can get out of the business of enforcing & policing the people who suffer under these conditions.

We all want SAFE COMMUNITIES so let's REIMAGINE them and find a new way forward!

**Recommendation: Are you prepared to recommend against body cameras?
We think you need to seriously reassess this plan.**

Is this a Fait Accompli'?

GASP heard that the RCMP were addressing many areas of reform, namely; civilian oversight, anti-racism training, use of force standards, privacy concerns, and Bill C3. The RCMP heard the BLM messages and acknowledged that more had to be done.

However, GASP was surprised that the decision on Body Cams seemed to have already been made. Plans were already being developed for deployment across the country, addressing privacy concerns, treatment of data, policy use of Body Cams; all without consideration for the results of the Iqaluit pilot, not yet begun. RCMP had been studying Body Cams since 2010; however, no recent studies were presented because of privacy concerns?

This 'Fait Accompli' is of serious concern. It seems rushed and politically motivated rather than being fully assessed in light of recent studies on Body Cams and video footage, escalating costs, including Body Cams' ineffectiveness in addressing systemic problems.

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Webinar

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Polling Research

Angus Reid Institute. Defend or Defund? One-in-four support cutting local police budgets; most back social welfare over hiring more cops. October 26th, 2020

Website

<https://defundthepolice.org/>