



NATIONAL
POLICE
FEDERATION

FÉDÉRATION
DE LA POLICE
NATIONALE

SYSTEMIC RACISM IN POLICING IN CANADA

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY & NATIONAL SECURITY

November 2020



INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The National Police Federation (NPF) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the study of *Systemic Racism in Policing in Canada*, conducted by the House of Commons Public Safety and National Security Committee.

The NPF is the sole certified bargaining agent representing close to 20,000 Members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) across Canada and internationally. The NPF's mission is to provide strong, fair, and progressive representation to promote and enhance the rights of RCMP Members.

We are focused on improving public safety in Canada and on increasing resources, equipment, training, and support for our Members. Better resourcing and support for the RCMP enhances community safety and livability in the communities they serve across Canada.

The following submission is a supplement to our appearance before the committee on July 24, 2020, and further addresses some of the questions asked during our appearance.

RCMP UNDER-RESOURCING

Over the past decade the RCMP has seen an increase in demand. Our Members are overworked creating health and safety issues, which creates risk not just for our Members but for the public they serve. This is not a new issue, however, and many government reports and reviews have been conducted to assess the needs of the RCMP to fulfill its mandate in the best interest of our Members and the public.

Federal government-wide cuts in recent years have put significant financial pressures on the RCMP, leading to resourcing challenges. In May 2017, a comprehensive resourcing review was undertaken by the RCMP, followed by a fulsome departmental review in the fall of 2018 that included short, medium, and long-term proposals to address ongoing resourcing issues. Although the government supported the proposal, the RCMP is challenged in addressing its financial issues and moving its modernization agenda forward.

In September 2020, in the Speech from the Throne, the government committed to advancing police modernization in Canada by moving forward on RCMP reforms with a shift towards community-led policing, enhanced oversight, training and standards, strengthened gun control measures, and changes to First Nations policing: all of which will continue to put resourcing pressures on RCMP Members.

Our Members are often asked to do more with less as demand continues to increase. They respond to almost **three million** calls for service annually.

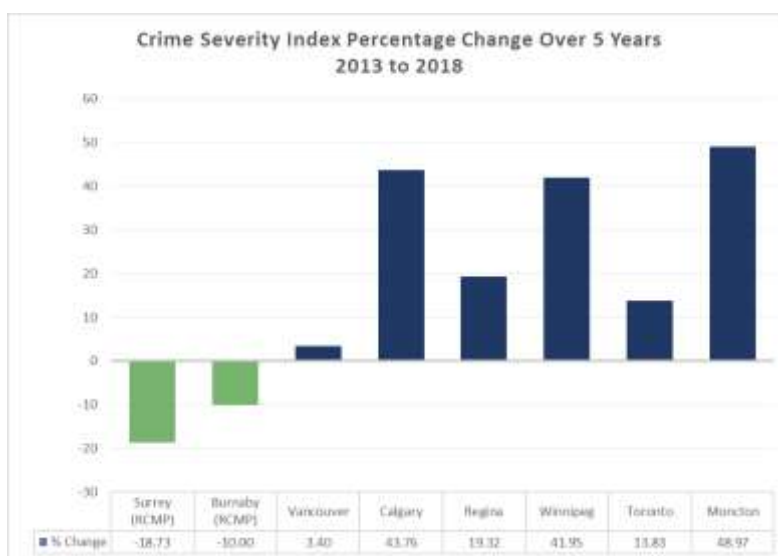


Table 1: Statistics Canada: Crime severity index and weighted clearance rates, police services in Canada, 2018.

Compared to other Canadian municipal police services, the RCMP has proven to be a strong force with positive outcomes, despite its lack of resources. According to Statistics Canada's *Police Resources in Canada, 2018*ⁱ, and their *Crime severity index and weighted clearance rates, police services in Canada, 2018*ⁱⁱ, there are an average of 185 police officers per 100,000 population across Canada. The data also shows that the crime severity index (CSI) across Canada increased by an average of 2%.

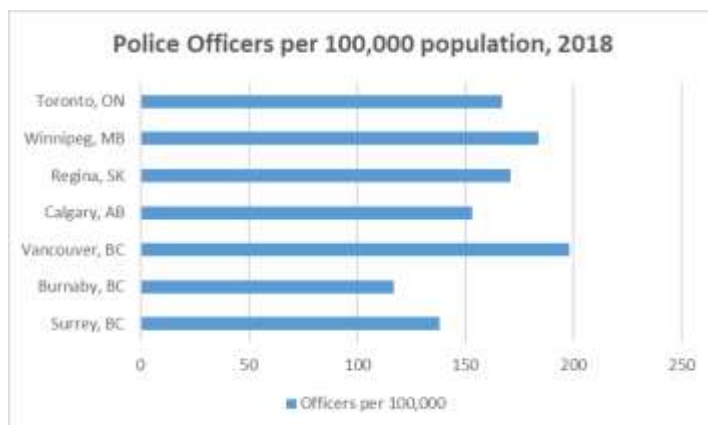


Table 2: Statistics Canada: Police Resources in Canada, 2018.

In 2018, two of the RCMP's largest policed cities decreased their CSI by almost 19 and 10 per cent (see Table 1). Both Surrey and Burnaby, BC RCMP significantly decreased crime in their cities utilizing less officers per 100,000 population than the average of 185 (see Table 2).

The mandate of the RCMP is unlike any other police service in Canada. The RCMP polices the vast majority of Canada with more than 20,000 police officers, in over 700 detachments, in 150 communities, as well as in more than 600 Indigenous

communitiesⁱⁱⁱ. There are many Members who work in rural and remote communities in two-Member detachments. No other federal organization in the world is as multi-faceted as the RCMP.

This means that an RCMP officer is on shift or on call 24/7 with little downtime. Additionally, some of those Members work in communities with nation-leading incidences of suicide, sexual abuse, drug use, and alcohol crimes. This demand, coupled with under resourcing and little downtime leads to burnout, fatigue and operational stress injuries.

POLICING OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

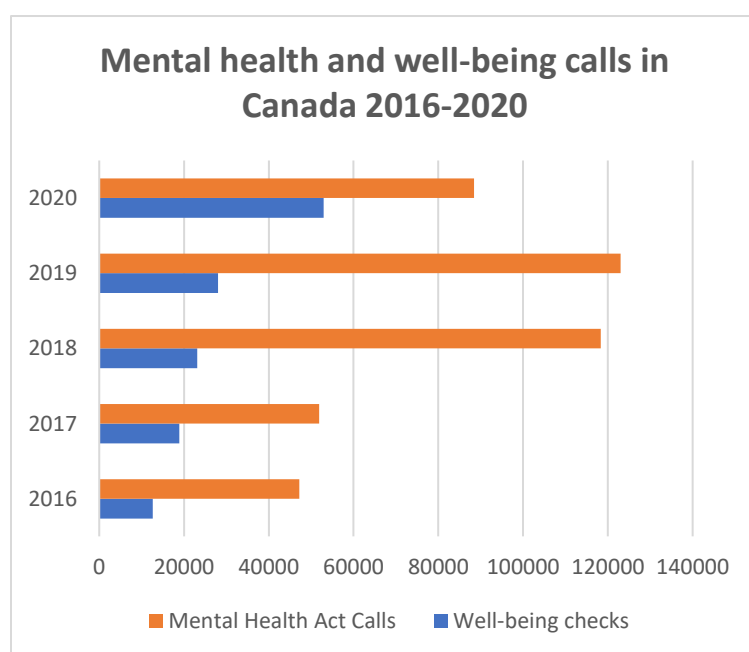
In addition to RCMP detachments being underfunded across the country and Members facing financial and human resources challenges, they have been increasingly called on to fill the gaps resulting from significantly decreased funding for mental health and social services. Canadians, and our Members, want to see more funding for front-line services that help alleviate pressures on vulnerable Canadians and, by extension, the police. All governments must do more to ensure that all communities have the front-line public safety and social services needed to help Canadians lead happy, healthy lives.

Between June 17 and 22, Pollara Strategic Insights conducted a survey for the NPF of over 2,000 Canadians that shows 82% of Canadians agree that properly funding social services would significantly help alleviate thousands of potentially dangerous interactions between police and citizens every day. In that same survey 78% agreed that both policing and social services need to be adequately funded.

Police calls responding to someone in crisis and/or with mental illness, are not always routine and can vary in complexity. Our Members are encouraged to focus on protecting those involved and at risk through crisis intervention, de-escalation, and avoiding use-of-force in these situations.

In the 2014 *Report on Police Encounters with People in Crisis* it is noted that improved responses to people in crisis would involve learning how to prevent people in crisis encountering or requiring the police^{iv}. For example, better referral options to the community could divert individuals to treatment and support and avoid ‘crisis encounters’. Across Canada, many provinces and cities have adopted Mental Health Mobile Crisis Response Teams, in which police officers collaborate with community partners, including mental health providers, to de-escalate and safely intervene in crisis situations; link individuals to mental health services, and, when appropriate, divert them from the criminal justice system. These teams have been proven to be successful.

One example of this partnership is the model used in Alberta - The Police and Crisis Team (PACT), which is a crisis response team that is comprised of an RCMP officer and a Registered Psychiatric Nurse who work together to assess the client's mental health needs and determine the appropriate action, including referrals to other community agencies and short-term follow-up^v.



The ongoing success and expansion of these successful programs relies on increased provincial and municipal government support and funding, as mental health calls increase year over year (see Table 3^{vi}).

In July 2020, the Manitoba government made an additional investment of \$450,000 to support expansion of the HealthIM to RCMP detachments across Manitoba, which will improve response to people in crisis. The HealthIM tool provides police with a medical checklist to assess a person's level of risk in possibly harming themselves and others while gauging if they're able to take care of themselves. It ensures police center on the person in crisis and helps determine a pathway that best supports their needs. Between July 2019 and June 2020, HealthIM was used 4,087 times, and in 28.5 per cent of cases, the person remained in the community and

Table 3: *RCMP Occurrence Report*

*Well-being checks, BC data was not available prior to 2019. Similarly, regarding Mental Health Act calls, BC data was not available prior to 2017.

** Data for 2020 includes January 1, 2020, to August 31, 2020, inclusive.

did not require hospitalization or other urgent interventions. In the same time period, Manitoba has seen a 57.5 per cent decrease in apprehension rates and a 68 per cent decrease in average hospital wait times^{vii}. This enables officers to spend more time in the community doing pro-active police work, and less time transporting or waiting with individuals in hospital.

These initiatives, as well as increased investments, are fundamental to ensuring police officers and communities have the appropriate support and funding to navigate these mental health situations.

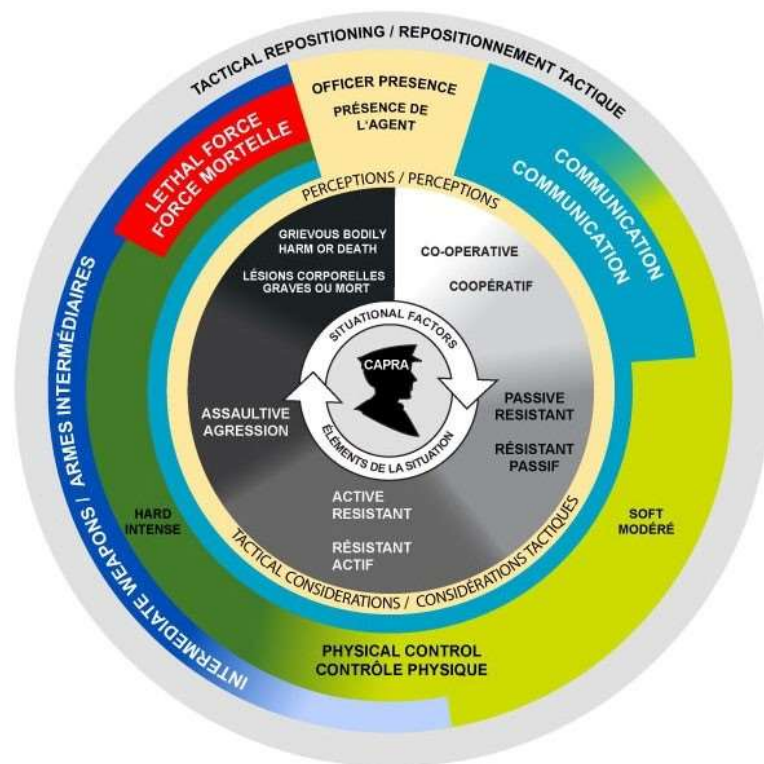
OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

USE-OF-FORCE AND CRISIS INTERVENTION AND DE-ESCALATION TRAINING (CID)

There are several processes and oversight mechanisms in place to ensure transparency and accountability in the Justice System and law enforcement agencies. Policing in Canada is one of the most heavily regulated professions, and, as noted by the *Summit on the Economics of Policing*, police officers are subject to more accountability and public scrutiny now than in the past^{viii}. The NPF supports and embraces this oversight and believes that all complaints against Members of the RCMP need to be investigated fully, fairly, transparently and resolved in a timely and effective manner.

This includes exceptional cases regarding use-of-force. Our Members are highly trained in de-escalation and in assessing and using appropriate use-of-force to address potentially dangerous situations. The RCMP's own numbers show use-of-force is exceedingly rare, with an average of nearly three million calls for service annually and less than 1/10th of 1% (0.1%)^{ix} resulting in **any** use-of-force. This demonstrates how seriously de-escalation efforts are taken to peacefully resolve potentially volatile situations- and avoid use-of-force.

In order to increase transparency and accountability, the RCMP has also developed a National Use of Force (NUF) section that responds to the changing needs of RCMP officers, the organization, and the public^x. By developing and modifying policy and training, and identifying, researching and at times evaluating equipment through pilot projects, the NUF is constantly developing new tools to guarantee that the use-of-force numbers remain low.



One of NUF's initiatives is the Incident Management / Intervention Model (IMIM). The IMIM is a visual aid that helps the officer picture an event and explain why the officer used the level of intervention they did. The model is a teaching aid used for training officers and is the framework that RCMP officers can use to assess and manage risk through justifiable and reasonable intervention^{xi}.

The RCMP's IMIM is aligned with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP)'s National Use of Force Framework^{xii} and it is an important contribution to guarantee that police agencies across Canada are using a common vocabulary when speaking about use-of-force.

National Use of Force Incident Management/ Intervention Model
visual representation

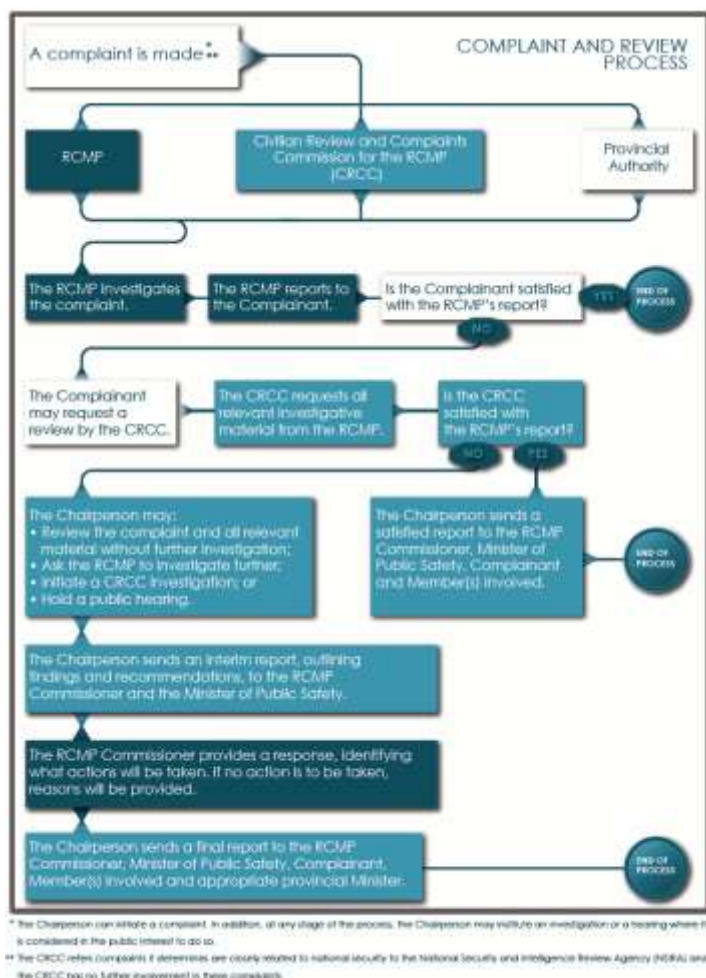
The RCMP is continuously strengthening crisis intervention and de-escalation training for all its officers. The IMIM training, and annual re-certification, is mandatory for all Members and it provides support to determine when and how to use crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques.

Our Members are more specialized and professional than ever before. They are well-trained and must be well-equipped to deal with a variety of issues, from mental illness and domestic abuse to protest management. Today, there is more accountability and oversight than ever before. This accountability increases expectations for better training and higher standards and ultimately drives costs.

Our Members are committed to using the IMIM in the safest and most effective way possible when interacting with the public, as evidenced by the RCMP's extremely low use-of-force data.

CIVILIAN REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS

Our Members know their chosen career path comes with many levels of internal and external professional oversight and regulation. They also know that transparency and the fostering of public trust are paramount for police services.



Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP,
Complaints and Review Process Flowchart

Paul E. Kennedy, former Chair of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, conducted a public interest investigation to take a comprehensive look at how the RCMP handles criminal investigations into its own Members^{xiii}.

The Commission's assessment of RCMP handling of Member investigations was that Member conduct was considered highly appropriate in 100% of the cases reviewed. The Commission found that the RCMP investigators charged with the task of investigating another Member acted professionally and free from bias and that RCMP Member policy compliance was appropriate in 93% of the cases.

The public interest investigation also underlined the importance of police participating in the investigation process - as part of the solution. At the same time, it recognized that an enhanced degree of civilian engagement in the criminal investigation process is fundamental to ensure its impartiality and integrity. To that end, the RCMP developed the public complaint process, that entitles complainants who are not satisfied with the RCMP's investigation and handling of their complaint to have it independently reviewed by the Commission.^{xiv}

The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC) for the RCMP (the Commission) is an agency of the federal government: distinct and independent from the RCMP^{xv}, created to ensure that public complaints made about the conduct of RCMP Members are examined fairly and impartially. Civilian review of policing is an essential aspect of maintaining the public trust in the nature and quality of policing in Canada and the NPF and its Members value the importance of this oversight. The public complaint process of the CRCC entitles complainants who are not satisfied with the RCMP's investigation and handling of their complaint to have it independently reviewed by the Commission.^{xvi}

BODY WORN CAMERAS

In addition to the CRCC, another policy that could be used to increase accountability and transparency is the implementation of Body Worn Cameras (BWC). The Federal Government has announced that it will move forward with equipping 13,000 front-line RCMP officers with BWCs and NPF's 2021 Federal pre-budget submission supports this implementation.

However, despite the fact BWCs bring numerous benefits to policing, it is also fundamental to consider their possible ramifications. Among the concerns raised by NPF is how this will impact our Members' work and if it will increase their already high administrative burden. Our Members are already overworked and often asked to do more with less, they do not have the time or the human resources available to add another responsibility to their duties. While reviewing the specificities and necessities to implement BWC, the government should consider who will be dealing with footage collected by the devices and should designate appropriate administrative staff to do it.

Another important aspect when talking about BWC is the privacy of citizens. In 2015, a guidance document^{xvii} developed by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, highlighted that the use of BWCs might implicate other obligations of which law enforcement agencies (LEA) need to be aware of. As an example, they mention that BWCs can record video images, sound, and conversations with a high degree of clarity. Therefore, there may be additional concerns raised under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Criminal Code, or provincial legislation.^{xviii}

The document also concludes that the recording of individuals through the use of BWCs can raise a significant risk to individual privacy, and LEAs must deploy BWCs to the degree and in a manner that respects and protects the general public's and employees' right to personal privacy.

To guarantee a proper implementation of BWCs, the government and RCMP management, should also take into consideration specificities created by environmental challenges in Canada, such as internet access in rural and remote areas, cold weather, battery life, and other additional resources needed to an appropriate operation.

In Nunavut, the RCMP and the Nunavik police are conducting a pilot project on the BWC implementation that will continue until 2021^{xix}. The pilot project presents a good opportunity to consider all these important aspects and NPF looks forward to learning about its findings. BWCs, and its policies, need to be implemented with serious and careful thought and not based purely on social and media pressures.

CONCLUSION

NPF would like to thank the members of the House of Commons Public Safety and National Security Committee for the opportunity to provide comments, further to our appearance as a witness.

Our Members enter policing because they want to make a positive difference in the communities they serve. We know that racism is part of every institution in Canada and that we all have much more to do.

NPF believes that recent and ongoing conversations, protests, and education are an important expression of our shared desire and commitment to change and we will continue to work to find common ground and solutions that will ensure all Canadians feel equally and adequately protected and represented by the law.

ⁱ 2019. *Police resources in Canada, 2018*. [online]. Available at : <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00015-eng.htm>

ⁱⁱ Statistics Canada. *Crime severity index and weighted clearance rates, police services in Ontario*. [online]. Available at : <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/e378875c-2472-46b4-9123-9c7fe185e042>

ⁱⁱⁱ *About the RCMP* [online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/about-rcmp>

^{iv} 2014. *Police Encounters with People In Crisis*. [online]. Available at: http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/police_encounters_with_people_in_crisis_2014.pdf (page 37)

^v *Alberta Health Service - Police and Crisis Team* [online]. Available at : <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/service.aspx?Id=1057190>

^{vi} 2020. *RCMP Occurrence Report*. [online]. Available at : <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/transparenc/police-info-policiers/calls-appels/occurrence-incident-eng.htm>

^{vii} 2020. *MANITOBA BOOSTS FUNDING FOR TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE RESPONSE TO PEOPLE IN MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS*. [online]. Available at: <https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=48599>

^{viii} 2013. *Summit on the Economics of Policing - Summit Report*. [online]. Available at : <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/smmmt-cnmcsc-plcng-2013/index-en.aspx> (page 9)

^{ix} 2020. *2010 to 2019 Police Intervention Options Report*. [online] Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/transparenc/police-info-policiers/intervention/2010-2019-eng.htm>

^x *RCMP, Use of Force*. [online]. Available at : <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/use-force>

^{xi} *RCMP, Incident Management / Intervention Model*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/incident-management-intervention-model-imim>

^{xii} 2000. *The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, A National Use of Force Framework*. [online] Available at : https://www.cacp.ca/cacp-use-of-force-advisory-committee.html?asst_id=199

^{xiii} 2014. *Executive Summary: Police Investigating Police - Final Public Report*. [online]. Available at : <https://www.crc-cetp.gc.ca/en/executive-summary-police-investigating-police-final-public-report>

^{xiv} 2019. *The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. Annual report 2018-2019*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.crc-cetp.gc.ca/pdf/ar-ra18-19-eng.pdf>

^{xv} 2019. *The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. Annual report 2018-2019*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.crc-cetp.gc.ca/en/annual-report-2018-2019>

^{xvi} 2020. *The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. Annual report 2019-2020*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.crc-cetp.gc.ca/en/annual-report-2019-2020>

^{xvii} *GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF BODY-WORN CAMERAS BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES*. [online]. Available at https://www.priv.gc.ca/media/1984/gd_bwc_201502_e.pdf

^{xviii} *GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF BODY-WORN CAMERAS BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES*. [online]. Available at : https://www.priv.gc.ca/media/1984/gd_bwc_201502_e.pdf (page 2)

^{xix} 2020. *Nunavik police say body cam pilot a success, so far*. *Nunatsiaq News*. [online]. Available at : <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/nunavik-police-say-body-cam-pilot-a-success-so-far/>