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December 7, 2020  
Mark D'Amore  
Clerk of the Committee  
Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security  
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6  
Canada  
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## **Re: Written Brief on Systemic Racism in Policing in Canada**

Mr. D'Amore,

Per your suggestion from December 2, Axon has prepared this written brief to be shared with the committee for their study on systemic racism in policing in Canada.

By way of introduction, this brief synthesizes the data and main points about body-worn cameras (BWCs) in Canada. We discuss findings from the Yale Report, which has been discussed extensively in committee, as well as Axon's experiences and findings with BWCs, and an overview of Axon's nationwide and provincial survey data.

### **The Yale Report Findings**

The committee has heard testimony from witnesses about a study titled A randomized control trial evaluating the effects of police body-worn cameras, colloquially called **The Yale Report**. Many have used the report as a basis to claim that body-worn cameras have no effect on police behaviour, however this is not correct. Researchers in the study found that the effects that body-worn cameras have on Washington DC police behaviour may not be as large as some had hoped but agreed that there are some obvious uses for BWCs. Here we discuss how Axon's Canadian-based research is in line with the Yale Report, and how BWCs are an effective tool for police in Canada.

- Although the findings of the study show no statistically significant effect of BWCs specifically on police use of force, complaints, or arrests for disorderly conduct, the authors do not agree that this means BWCs have no effect.
- The authors propose that this result could be due to several factors, including Washington DC being a capital city, the lack of control over the mix of camera-wearing vs non-camera wearing officers who responded to incidents, the high presence of non-police cameras in the urban environment (i.e. cell phones), the video capture of police use of force that would otherwise not have been reported, and even simple police nonadherence.
- Importantly, the study does not claim that BWCs are ineffective tools for improving police-citizen interactions, but simply cautions that BWCs may not be the silver bullet solution the public has hoped for with respect to police use of force.
- To go even further, the study focused only on one type of police-citizen interaction and does not address other important second-order effects of BWCs, for instance, the effect BWCs can have on the judicial process after the interaction is complete amongst others.

## **Axon's Findings**

With respect to how applicable the high-level findings from the Yale report are to Canada, a key data point to highlight is the **rate of use of force compared to total calls to service in most Canadian Police services is less than 1%**. This indicates that interventions, like BWCs or better training, would be **unlikely to show a statistically significant shift in use of force rates**. This does not mean that BWCs have no impact on use of force rates, but rather that **it would be difficult to measure any meaningful change in such rates in Canada**. Axon's data on their BWC products give us a clearer picture on how BWCs might be useful in Canadian police contexts. This data comes from multiple Canadian and Australian sources, including case studies in Durham, Ontario and Fredericton, New Brunswick, along with data on plea agreements from Queensland, Australia. There are many important impacts of BWCs to consider other than use of force when considering the impact on better public service delivery. Here are the main findings based on these data:

- Improved Public Perception
  - Adherence to policy
  - **Enhances public trust when officers are wearing cameras**
- Best Evidence Collection
  - Provides better, high quality, unbiased evidence
  - Enhanced gathering of evidence, additional independent witness
  - **Expedites pleas and facilitates sharing of information to Crown and other policing partners**
- Community Safety
  - **BWC's are often used for first person training scenarios and video captured is often used for feedback for officers to improve community engagement/relations**
  - Officer safety/protection
- Return on Investment
  - **Typically implementing a BWC program has had an overall improvement on evidence management practices**
    - Elimination of data silos and reduction of costs for processes related to capturing and storing data collected
    - Centralized data management allows the agency to store and manage all the information in one place.
  - **Reduces people costs and technical costs by using integrated tools for managing and sharing the evidence, which have traditionally been other software for specialized skill sets, which typically add to costs**
  - **Software as a Service (SaaS) enables agencies to reduce IT infrastructure costs around people and hardware**
    - People costs reduced as vendor provides all the updates, maintains scalable infrastructure securely, so agency resources are not spending time on updates, maintenance, or support of infrastructure
      - Electronic sharing and disclosure reduce people and mailing/shipping costs
    - Hardware cost reductions
      - Reduction in DVD's, External Storage devices (USB's, hard drives for sharing)
      - Reduction of costs for on-premises storage servers



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## **Canadian Public Views of BWCs**

As you know, any public policy does not simply need to be effective, it also needs to have popular support to be a viable solution. To that end, Axon has commissioned nation-wide surveys of Canadians to determine how the public views this possible policing tool. Here are the topline findings from our work:

- On police trust and transparency:
  - 75% of Canadians (72% of Albertans and 75% of Quebecers) trust the police broadly, but only 63% (61% in Quebec) believe they have adequate transparency.
- On defunding the police:
  - 60% of Canadians (68% of Albertans and 61% of Quebecers) oppose defunding the police, ruling this out as a popular solution for improving policing
- On use of force and administrative burden:
  - 83% of Canadians, Albertans and Quebecers believe BWCs will reduce use of force, and 79% of Canadians (75% of Albertans and 79% of Quebecers) favour BWCs as a solution to reduce the administrative burden on our police officers and administrators
- On opportunities for other professionals to engage:
  - 90% of Canadians (82% of Albertans and 90% of Quebecers) believe BWCs will provide real-time opportunities for other professionals, like social workers and mental health professionals, to support police in difficult interactions

Essentially, these numbers tell us that the Canadian public overwhelmingly supports efforts to improve the transparency of policing, improve training and policy adherence, and increase the engagement of other professionals in difficult situations, all key functions of BWCs. They also show that the Canadian public does not think defunding the police is the right solution and favour BWCs as the way to make police safer and more efficient, and to improve police-public relations.

Thank you for taking the time to review our briefing. If any members of the committee wish to reach out to Axon, we would be happy to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Vishal Dhir  
Managing Director of Canada & Latin America  
Axon