



Police body cams part of solution

OPINION

Quality cameras and surveillance cameras in police vehicles are a credible first step at a real action on systemic racism



As police tell suspects engaged in video-taped interrogations, the recording is done for the protection of both the suspect and the police.

Why should this transparency principle not apply to the initial moment of police contact with a civilian?

State interference with a person's freedom to walk, jog, bike or drive where one pleases is not a trivial matter. Random police encounters may be a routine occurrence in a dictatorship but they have no place in our society.

Police have the right to bear and use lethal weapons. Monitoring police interactions with the public they are duty bound to protect and serve is hardly unreasonable or unprecedented.

Video evidence generated by body cameras can be inculpatory, exculpatory or entirely blame neutral and will certainly generate legal debate in trials. Sadly, recent events show that some police officers will engage in brazen lethal brutality even when they know they are being recorded.

But equipping police officers with body cameras can be implemented quickly.

To overcome the political inertia to get this done, people demanding action on systemic racism should consider becoming single-issue voters with a view to creating a significant voter block.

Force municipal, provincial and federal candidates to take a stand on this initiative.

No cameras – no votes from us.

Body cameras are not a panacea to the issue of systemic racism. Clearly police forces need to rethink selection criteria and training for persons aspiring to become and to remain a police officer. This will take time.

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