From: Timothy Lee
To: Body-Worn Camera Feasibility Review Committee
Subject: A highly regarded defense attorney"s views on body cameras
Date: Sunday, December 27, 2020 8:50:00 PM

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Members of the Body-Worn Camera Feasibility Review Committee:

I have deep concerns about body cameras. I am writing to draw your attention to a column by an esteemed Canadian defense attorney, Michael Spratt. Spratt is a partner at the Ottawa criminal law firm Abergel Goldstein & Partners. He has served as a director of the Criminal Lawyers' Association, Canada's largest Criminal law specialty association, and as Treasurer and Vice President of the Defence Counsel Association of Ottawa. He is co-host of the popular legal and political podcast The Docket and frequently appears as an expert witness before the Canadian House of Commons and Senate. In 2018 Spratt was awarded the Canadian Senate's 150th Anniversary Medal for "his professional expertise and experience to help craft some of the most complex pieces of Canadian policy and legislation." In 2020 Spratt was named to the exclusive Best Lawyers list as a criminal law specialist. Spratt was also selected as one of Canada's Top 25 Most Influential Lawyers in 2020 by the prestigious publication Canadian Lawyer. His thoughts warrant being given weight.

Column in Canadian Lawyer by Spratt: Why Body Cameras for Police are a Bad Idea.

https://www.canadianlawyermag.com/news/opinion/why-body-cameras-for-police-are-a-bad-idea/333449

Content from the column:

> You might remember when Toronto police chief Mark Saunders pushed for body cameras: "I have been pushing hard. I want this done now. The people are talking, they want this. I want this."
>
> He was wrong.
>
> You might remember when I advocated for police cameras.
>
> I was wrong, too....
>
> The seductive argument is that body cameras are needed to police the police. I get it; there is no question that police officers violate rights. Despite denials by the boys in blue, systemic racism is real. And we have seen examples of police abuse exposed in court, on social media, and in the lived experiences of racialized people.
>
> Police body cameras would expose all of this maleficence, some argue.
>
> So, ask yourself, why are the police now in favour of cameras?
>
> Police don't want the system to change. They don't want their budgets cut. They don't want to lose power. They don't want stricter accountability. They don't want more training about rights and racism. They don't want to be defunded. They want things to stay the same.
>
> Police body cameras are a tool of the status quo....
>
> Every dollar spent on police cameras means less money for crime prevention, social supports, and police education....
>
> With every officer equipped with a camera the surveillance state can be everywhere. These videos, originally designed to keep officers in check, will inevitably turn into an investigative tool to be used against the public.
>
> And who will appear on video most often? The same overpoliced communities who already

> experience disproportionate levels of police violence and abuse. Proponents of videos seem content to give up the privacy and rights of others rather than themselves.

Spratt writes elsewhere that there were many times when he wished for video evidence and that had led him to initially advocate for body cameras, but eventually he came to realize that this was a serious mistake.

As he says in this column:

> I was wrong to jump to an opinion without thinking things through.
>
> It is said that sometimes a hypocrite is just a man in the process of changing.
>
> My views on police body cameras have changed.

Respectfully yours,

Timothy Lee