

MORE CCTV SECURITY CAMERAS COMING TO AJAX PLAZA

SOME QUESTIONING - SECURITY OR SURVEILLANCE?

Durham - It appears that a plaza in Ajax is scheduled to increase the number of CCTV cameras on its property. Cameras naturally are a great tool for the recording of incidents of all kinds. From liability, to insurance not to mention any criminal activity.

Their usage has also sparked controversy over the ability for these cameras to be used to catalogue and share personal identification.

Almost a monitoring citizens activities and cataloguing.

Some police services in Canada are using facial recognition technology to help solve crimes, while other police forces say human rights and privacy concerns are holding them back from employing the powerful digital tools.

It's this uneven application of the technology — and the loose rules governing its use — that has legal and AI experts calling on the federal government to set national standards.

"Until there's a better handle on the risks involved with the use of this technology, there ought to be a moratorium or a range of prohibitions on how and where it can be used," says Kristen Thomassen, law professor at the University of British Columbia.

As well, the patchwork of regulations on emerging biometric technologies has created situations in which some citizens' privacy rights are more protected than others.

"I think the fact that we have different police forces taking different steps raises con-

cerns (about) inequities and how people are treated across the country, but (it) also highlights the continuing importance of some kind of federal action to be taken," she said.

Facial recognition systems are a form of biometric technology that use AI to identify people by comparing images or video of their faces — often captured by security cameras — with existing images of them in databases. The technology has been a controversial tool in police hands.

The Town of Ajax and DRPS are working together to make improvements on the safety of the Ajax Plaza in the downtown core.

Enhanced security measures help with the overall safety of the area for the town's business owners, plaza tenants, residents and visitors, said an Ajax statement.

The town has implemented community security initiatives including:

Ajax Partnership Fund (APF) Microgrant: This microgrant falls under this year's APF funding. The APF Microgrant is providing a \$500 grant to qualifying businesses to purchase small-scale security equipment/upgrades.

The grant total is \$10,000, and any remainder will be strategically used to support the vulnerable community. Applications for this microgrant closed on August 30.

CCTV Program: 360-degree cameras will be installed in central areas of the Ajax Plaza.

This program is a part of a provincial grant awarded to DRPS with \$47,000 allocated to Ajax. It is anticipated that the project completion date

will be mid to end of October. DRPS Bike Team Pilot Program: A team of officers on bikes monitor the downtown core daily from May – September.

Additionally, on August 28, town staff and DRPS held an Ajax Plaza Community Security Event with community engagement booths and information sharing. This was an opportunity for business owners and plaza tenants at the Ajax Plaza to connect town staff and DRPS to learn more about community safety initiatives for the area.

In 2021, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada found that RCMP violated privacy laws when they used the technology without the public's knowledge. That same year Toronto police admitted some of its officers used facial recognition software without informing their chief. In both cases the technology was supplied by American company Clearview AI, whose database was composed of billions of images scraped from the internet without the consent of those whose images were used.

York and Peel police in Ontario said they had begun implementing facial recognition technology provided by multinational French company Idemia. In an interview, York police Const. Kevin Nebrija said the tools "help speed up investigations and to identify suspects sooner," adding that in terms of privacy, "nothing has changed because security cameras are all around."

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Toronto police using Clearview AI between 2019 and 2020, Robertson said she is "still not aware of any police service in Canada that is obtaining prior approval from a judge to use facial recognition technology in their investigations."

According to Robertson, getting the go-ahead from the court, usually in the form of a warrant, represents the "gold standard of privacy protection in criminal investigations." This ensures a facial recognition tool, when used, is appropriately balanced against the right to free expression, freedom of assembly and other rights enshrined in the Charter.

While the federal government doesn't have jurisdiction over provincial and municipal police forces, it can amend the Criminal Code to incorporate legal requirements for facial recognition software in the same way it updated the law to address voice recording technologies that could be used for surveillance.

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The other major concern by some citizens is the ability of these cameras popping up everywhere to be used as a monitoring and control of people's traveling habits.

With the unknown dangers of the proposed, fifteen minute cities. In theory people will be encouraged to only travel 15 minutes to obtain any services needed.

Could this type of technology be used to restrict citizens' movements across municipalities?

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO APPROVES REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN

Whitby, ON – Last week, the Province of Ontario approved The Regional Municipality of Durham's new Regional Official Plan (ROP), in part, with modifications. The new ROP is the culmination of work completed through Envision Durham, the Municipal Comprehensive Review.

Durham Region is growing. Today, the region is home to more than 750,000 people. By the year 2051, our population is expected to grow to 1.3 million people, with more than

460,000 jobs in the region.

Adopted by Durham Regional Council on May 17, 2023, and now approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the new ROP provides policies and strategic directions that guide future growth, infrastructure and service delivery, land use planning and development-related matters to ensure an improved quality of life – to nurture a healthy, safe, convenient and active, present and future for Durham residents.

"The vision of the new Regional Official Plan is to create healthy, complete and sustainable communities within the region, shaping Durham into a great place to live, work, play, grow and invest. The Region is pleased to have the Province's support on enacting this vision through our area municipalities—although a decision has been withheld on the northeast Pickering urban expansion lands that overlap with the Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) which restricts most development.

While extensive consultation has been facilitated between Indigenous rights holders and key stakeholders throughout the process, more facilitation has been requested to secure a path forward. We look forward to continuing meaningful collaboration and partnership with Indigenous Peoples, the City of Pickering and local stakeholders, that began more than five years ago and continued throughout the entire project."

- John Henry, Regional Chair and CEO, Region of Durham

"With the projected growth forecasted in Durham Region over the next decade and beyond, it is more critical than ever to have a clear vision to guide future growth. It is the foundation on which other key components can build on, to create a community that is equipped for both its present challenges and the future demands of its population. Envision Durham provides the overarching framework for Durham's area municipalities as they proceed to update their own official plans, and we look forward to working with all right holders and stakeholders to implement this vision and build a successful future for all residents."

- Brian Bridgeman, Commissioner, Planning and Economic Development



Here is how to reach us

By mail: 136 Simcoe St North, Unit 4
Oshawa, Ontario. L1G 4S7

Tel: (905) 432-2657

Administration (General Inquiries)

Tel: (905) 432-2605 Circulation

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