



**The Coalition Against More Surveillance
and the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project
condemn the Ontario government's decision to fund CCTV systems**

2 December 2020 (Algonquin Territory/Ottawa) - The Coalition Against More Surveillance (CAMS) and the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project (CPEP) condemn the Ontario government's decision to fund the expansion of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) systems across the province via the Ontario CCTV Grant.

In a news release posted on 27 November, the Ontario government announced a \$6 million investment in CCTVs over three years. Claims that this investment will improve public safety are refuted by surveillance experts. At a time when people are calling for transformative systemic change, the Ontario CCTV Grant is a status quo approach that will fail to prevent harm.

Put simply, there is no conclusive evidence to demonstrate that CCTVs prevent violence - including homicides. Additionally, video surveillance contributes to the mass policing of Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities and creates a hostile environment in which to live. Finally, video surveillance reduces individual privacy and can chill the exercise of constitutionally protected rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of association.

Video surveillance systems like CCTV require expansive monitoring and storage systems, as well as safeguards to comply with privacy laws, which add to their cost. While this grant might seem like an offer of financial support from the province, it will likely place an unsustainable financial burden on municipalities for decades to come. Now, in the middle of a global pandemic, is not the time for municipalities to take on costs for initiatives that do not actually contribute to the health, safety, and well-being of residents.

In 2018, cities across Ontario were mandated under the *Safer Ontario Act* to develop 'Community Safety and Well-Being Plans'. These plans outline strategies and actions to improve safety and well-being by addressing priorities identified by residents through public consultation. In Ottawa, an interim report approved by City Council on October 28, 2020 outlines six priorities: (1) housing; (2) mental well-being; (3) discrimination, marginalization, and racism; (4) financial security and poverty reduction; (5) gender based violence and violence against women; and (6) integrated and simpler systems. We imagine that these same priorities are being identified across the province.

While the Ontario government has mandated the creation of these safety and well-being plans, there is no funding currently associated with supporting their implementation. **We therefore call on Premier Doug Ford and Solicitor General Sylvia Jones to redirect the \$6 million allocated to the Ontario CCTV Grant program to priorities like housing, mental well-being, dismantling systemic racism, preventing gender-based violence and supporting survivors, and reducing poverty.**

We also call on local leaders to urge the Ontario government to reverse this funding decision. We at CAMS and CPEP share concerns about ongoing violence, conflict, and harm in communities across the province, but we know that installing surveillance cameras is not an appropriate solution - especially given the evidence shared above.

Finally, we encourage residents of Ontario to contact their local and provincial representatives to let them know that CCTVs are not a worthwhile investment. Directing \$6 million instead to the priorities outlined above will improve the well-being of our communities and ensure that Ontario tax-payer dollars are spent towards safety and not surveillance.



