

Riverview aided by 'cop cams'

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■ Town already has two surveillance cameras in use

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Riverview has used closed-circuit security cameras for some time to watch over two town assets and the equipment has helped cut down on damage caused by vandals, according to Mayor Clarence Sweetland.

Town hall and Findlay Park have both been the targets of mischief in the past, and incidents like those are down noticeably now that cameras are watching over them, or more accurately, now that potential vandals know that cameras are watching over them, the mayor said yesterday.

"With all of our facilities, if we should have any reason to, then we would expand the use of them," Sweetland said.

The Codiac Regional Policing Authority, the civilian oversight body of the Codiac Regional RCMP which polices Moncton, Dieppe and Riverview, is discussing whether to approach the three Metro Moncton municipal councils with a suggestion to install the cameras in high-crime areas.

The notion doesn't sit well with those who argue that areas of high crime need a higher police presence and that so-called cop cams shouldn't be spying indiscriminately. Some also argue that many crimes aren't deterred by cameras because they are born of passion or committed by those under the influence of a substance or are spawned by mental illness.

The cameras' proponents say they are proven to deter some crimes and are a great asset at solving those crimes that do occur thanks to the images they capture, which are remarkably clear with today's technology, coupled with the fact that in the majority of cases, police recognize the culprits captured in the images because most crimes are committed by those who police have interacted with before.

Moncton Mayor George LeBlanc was out of town yesterday and couldn't be reached, however Dieppe Mayor Jean LeBlanc said the cameras would be considered if Codiac pitched the notion to his city council with a good case for buying and installing the devices.

"All policing tools should be considered," LeBlanc said.

"We'll certainly take a look at any recommendations that Codiac might make to our city."

The issue has sparked debate from Metro Moncton residents who are split on the issue.

Some point to riots last spring in Vancouver and last week in Britain in which widespread rampaging occurred directly within sight of the all-seeing cameras as proof that they don't stop crimes from happening.

Others argue that those cameras are exactly why British police have able to charge thousands of rampagers only days after the riots as proof that they solve crimes.

Sweetland sides with the latter. He's heard of very few incidents at either the park or town hall since the cameras were installed, clear evidence to him that they are effective at protecting taxpayers' investments. Riverview's cameras bear no signs publicizing their presence but it is well known in the town that they are there, and thus they are deterring those who have ill intent, he said.

The camera systems vary from one system to another, from one municipality to the next. Some have highly visible signs to let people know the cameras are there, the better to deter crimes. Some are almost invisible. Some are manned by police officers 24/7, some are watched by municipal staff or hired guards either full-time or part-time, and still others are not monitored at all.

The Town of Sussex recently invested about \$35,000 in several cameras in high-crime areas, although they are only manned after a situation arises. In countries like China, England and others, the cameras are always manned and can be trained on individuals. Some even have face-recognition software to identify specific individuals.

The policing authority has yet to decide if it will approach the three Metro Moncton councils but the idea has been endorsed by Codiac's officer in charge, Superintendent Marlene Snowman, who calls the cameras great tools for solving crimes and deterring others.