

Toronto police want more closed-circuit cameras

Tuesday, November 16, 2010

[CBC News](#)



Toronto police Chief Bill Blair, shown speaking to reporters following the G20 in June, said this week he wants to purchase 52 of the 77 cameras police rented during the summit. (Canadian Press)

Toronto police Chief Bill Blair says he wants about 50 more closed-circuit television cameras purchased for use by the force.

At Monday's monthly meeting of the Police Services Board, Blair said he wants 52 of the 77 cameras police rented during the G20 summit in June.

There are now 24 cameras in use, most of them in the downtown entertainment district.

Blair says the existing cameras have been useful and adding the new cameras could help deal with crime downtown, as well as in other neighbourhoods.

"What we're seeing is an expansion of our entertainment district. [The cameras have] been used very effectively in the entertainment district, but they're starting to move a little bit west, so there's so additional places that we would like to deploy cameras," he said.

Privacy, Blair said, shouldn't be an issue.

"The assurance that I want to provide to people is that the policies that we developed for the deployment of those [existing] cameras will be followed for the deployment of these new cameras, if their acquisition is approved," said Blair.

But lawyer Julian Falconer isn't convinced. He said the G20 set a precedent in the city.

"There's a real credibility problem for this chief using G20 as a pretext to literally triple surveillance on Torontonians. This isn't the society we're accustomed to," said Falconer.

People who run businesses say the existing entertainment district cameras haven't led to a noticeable change in human behaviour.

"People are [still] smashing windows and having fights," said restaurant manager Nathalie Dedrick.

Blair is looking at getting the cameras for half-price. A decision will be made by the board in January.