Abstract

This article explores the surveillance work of municipal corporate security (MCS) units in Canadian cities. Drawing on analysis of freedom of information requests, we document the introduction of new and modified surveillance technologies through MCS. These units engage in surveillance of City employees and citizens on municipal lands and in municipal buildings. Although some technologies deployed by MCS (such as electronic access cards and badges) appear mundane, we demonstrate how MCS units are repurposing, enhancing, and recombining these technologies with existing forms in ways that have been described as the intensification of surveillance. While recent attention in the surveillance studies and urban studies literatures has been rightfully placed on private auspices and provision of externally directed urban surveillance, our analysis of MCS activities suggests that scholars should continue to focus on public auspices and provision of security and internally directed surveillance too. What defines the intensification of urban surveillance therefore may be less a privatized and technologically advanced character and more a resolute comfort with a constantly mutating amalgam of public/private, human/technological, and external/internal forms and foci.

Keywords: surveillance; security; public space; municipalities; urban studies.

Introduction

Municipal corporate security (MCS) units are fast emerging as key features of Canadian municipal governments. Since 2001, at least fifteen cities have introduced these units. MCS units engage in a range of security practices, which include watching for ‘nuisance’ conduct (e.g., littering, alcohol consumption, and panhandling) on and in relation to City lands and buildings, as well as surveillance of City employees who work in and move through these spaces. Although MCS surveillance practices are expanding in Canadian cities, no studies have investigated the range and character of this emergent form of urban surveillance.

Drawing on analysis of freedom of information requests, in this article we document the introduction of new and the modification of existing surveillance technologies and examine how MCS engages in surveillance of both City employees and citizens in municipal buildings and on urban lands. Some technologies deployed by MCS appear mundane or are well-examined in previous research, but we...
demonstrate how MCS is repurposing, enhancing, and recombining these surveillance technologies with existing forms in ways that have been described as the intensification of surveillance (see Ball and Webster 2003). We discuss the MCS concern with what might otherwise be deemed of limited consequence: employee identification badges. These badges are becoming a mobile means of activating human and technological surveillance of City employees. We also document the use of new camera surveillance systems on municipal lands called Proactive Audio Video (PAVs) which rely not merely on camera technology that promises to identify citizens through video images, but which also – like badges – activates humans to commence live monitoring. The system is equipped with audio/loudspeakers, which allows human monitors sitting in a remote location to immediately order persons out of City-owned parks and to deploy officers to the scene. We also explore the introduction of a form of surveillance championed by MCS that contrasts with trends toward responsibility for security-related surveillance shifting to private authorities in the capital city (Edmonton) of the Canadian province perhaps best known for privatization of public services during the past two decades.

With the ascendency of neo-liberal forms of urban governance and security provision, there has been increasing emphasis in the overlapping surveillance and urban studies literatures on the role of private agents in surveillance of persons and conduct external to organizations that include private security firms, business improvement organizations (Fyfe and Bannister 1996; Huey et al. 2005; Lippert 2007; Sleiman and Lippert 2010), as well as gated communities (Low 2003). Urban neo-liberalism is said to involve a shift of responsibility for governing urban life from direct public and state control to private and quasi-public authorities, fiscal austerity, market relations, and a corresponding privatization or ‘commodification’ of public services and spaces. Though the literature on urban neo-liberalism has done much to expose the nuances of introduction of these new private modes (see Blomley 2004; McCann and Ward 2010) and it is vital these become better understood, the effect may be to neglect what is happening in the public sphere, how urban surveillance is ‘steered’, and who is doing the ‘steering’ and the ‘rowing’ (see Loader 2000; Crawford 2006). Based on this analysis, MCS activities show that the focus of scholars should continue to be on nominally public auspices and provision and on persons and conduct internal to organizations engaged in urban surveillance. For these reasons, we argue that the surveillance practices of new, public MCS units in Canadian cities are significant for contemporary debates about the intensification of urban surveillance.

**Conceptualizing MCS Surveillance**

We use the idea of the ‘intensification of surveillance’ to conceptualize the emergence and activities of MCS units in Canadian cities. Ball and Webster (2003) argue that the intensification of surveillance has two components. The first component is the networked scope of surveillance. Surveillance today draws numerous agencies into data sharing and transfer. Certain agencies act as hubs or fusion points. The intensification stems from the sheer number of agencies (many that have no formal policing, security, or intelligence mandate) feeding information into the network. The second component is the pervasiveness of monitoring practices. Being monitored is a requisite of participation in many forms of social life today, whether it be using public space or purchasing essential services or going to work at City Hall. MCS is part of this intensification of surveillance, insofar as it advances the networked scope of surveillance and the pervasiveness of monitoring practices, especially on municipal lands. To extend this idea of the intensification of surveillance, below we fuse together surveillance studies and urban studies but also risk and insurance studies to conceptualize MCS practices. We spend less effort defining surveillance studies, as this literature doubtlessly will be more familiar to readers than the others. Combining insights from these sometimes overlapping literatures is necessary to make sense of MCS, since it defies placement in any single conceptual literature.

The aspirations of MCS include securitizing public urban space with new locks, barricades, and surveillance technologies, a trend that critical urban studies scholars argue has dramatically accelerated
This trend entails an intensification of surveillance. It remains for surveillance studies and urban studies scholars to work more closely together to understand such changes. Urban studies scholars have focused on socio-spatial regulation and surveillance of ‘nuisance’ conduct in city centres (see Von Mahs 2005; Eick 2006) and public parks (see Mitchell 1995; Blomley 2004; Mitchell and Staeheli 2006; Beckett and Herbert 2010; Walby and Lippert 2012). There also has been much discussion of the role of private business improvement districts in calling for and financing camera surveillance systems to monitor ‘open-streets’, or in dispatching their own ‘eyes and ears’ human surveillance of these districts, in particular, ‘ambassador’ patrols (see Huey et al. 2005; Sleiman and Lippert 2010; Lippert and Sleiman 2012). Yet, the significant role of MCS in these practices, whether on the streets, in buildings, or in city parks, has been neglected. If there is increased surveillance of ‘nuisance’ conduct in Canadian cities, it may stem as much from MCS units and other public agencies as from private organizations. We thus seek to extend critical urban studies by focusing on the role of MCS in regulating city spaces.

It is one thing to point to an intensification of urban surveillance. It is quite another to account for reasons behind this intensification. In lieu of evidence suggesting a link between ‘War on Terror’ policies and the rise of MCS units in Canada, we suggest that a pervasive concern for risk, liability, litigation is a significant driver that is often overlooked in the kinds of studies cited above. As Halifax’s Security Management Program document states, “HRM assets continue to be exposed to undo risks. From a risk management perspective, security of HRM’s assets needs to be addressed. Although the risks cannot be completely eliminated, the establishment of a Integrated Security Management Program will go a long way in managing and ultimately reducing the risk that HRM people, property and information currently face”. This concern for risk and liability cuts across MCS units in Canadian cities. Literature about risk management and insurance as governance in the corporate sector is especially relevant. This literature focuses on the emergence of liability exposure as a prevalent rationality of governing workers and organizations (Ericson and Doyle 2004; Baker 2010). Prevention of risk requires knowledge of risk, which leads to auditing, monitoring, and assessments (Ericson, Doyle and Barry 2003). The concern for liability promotes the calculation of costs and damages with the aim of asset protection, manifesting not only in a risk management style of governing but a precautionary form of control setting new rules for employee conduct and use of municipal property. Risk management involves shaping municipal spaces and buildings to prevent the possibility of disaster (such as catastrophic terrorist attacks or earthquakes) and hazard (such as ‘slips and falls’), with an aim of preventing lawsuits against the municipality. This also includes asset protection: protecting all employees, places and things that the municipality defines as significant. Private insurance is a key driver of this intensification of surveillance, insofar as insurance companies increasingly demand that their customers (which include municipalities) install particular alarm and monitoring equipment of a particular grade (Ericson 2007) to reduce risk, which is one reason MCS units have become security consumers and organizations like American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS International), Canadian Security Association (CSA), Canadian Society for Industrial Security (CSIS) and myriad private security firms have become interested in municipalities (see Brown 2007). MCS thus represents a corporate-style of managing municipal assets, workers, and properties.

The remainder of this article is in three sections. In the first, we provide some background on MCS units in Canadian cities, in particular their emergence and current range of practices. In the second section, we explore new or modified surveillance technologies of City employees and surveillance of municipal buildings and lands. These are ideal types and therefore not watertight; there is inevitably leakage between them. Thus, employees may be caught up in external surveillance of ‘nuisance’ on municipal lands both as targets (because they are engaging in ‘nuisance’ behaviour such as smoking in a non-designated area on their lunch break) and as watchers in surveilling citizens and denizens or, indeed, other employees. In the third section, we discuss MCS as a public provider rather than as mere coordinator of surveillance and how it championed introduction of new public surveillance agents in one city, directly against the trend
toward privatization. We conclude by discussing the implications of this analysis for studying and understanding the intensification of urban surveillance.

**Method and Research Procedures**

We use freedom of information (FOI) requests as a methodological tool for producing data about MCS. In Canada, scholars have increasingly used the *Freedom of Information Act* and related acts as an aid to conduct research on policing and related security practices (see Walby 2009; Piché and Walby 2010; Walby and Monaghan 2010; Walby and Monaghan 2011; Walby and Lippert 2012; Walby and Larsen 2012). There are barriers, such as redactions and delays. Yet disclosures can be combined with other textual material to provide a comprehensive account.

We submitted freedom of information requests to obtain information about MCS units in sixteen Canadian cities: Victoria and Vancouver (British Columbia), Edmonton and Calgary (Alberta), Saskatoon and Regina (Saskatchewan), Winnipeg (Manitoba), Ottawa, Oshawa, Brampton, Mississauga, Hamilton, Kitchener, Toronto (Ontario), Montreal (Quebec), and Halifax (Nova Scotia). Initial requests were for the “official job description and governing protocol for City X corporate security. All reports/plans concerning current projects of City X corporate security. All annual reports for the previous four years or City X corporate security. Annual budget and itemized expenditure list for City X corporate security for previous four years”. We asked for the official job description, governing protocol and current project reports to assemble an account of how MCS surveillance is organized, its rationales and targets. In analyzing the FOI material, special attention was paid to rationales for expansion of MCS in Canadian cities. Our FOI requests account for 16 (80%) of Canada’s twenty largest municipalities by population, allowing for an extensive examination of MCS surveillance.

**The Emergence of MCS Units in Canadian Cities**

Since 2001, at least fifteen Canadian cities have introduced MCS units; debates about establishing such units in other cities are ongoing. Beyond monitoring municipal employees, MCS units are involved in surveillance for major public events, designing and arranging physical security for municipal buildings and other property, dealing with ‘broken windows’ and other forms of nuisance (e.g. liquor consumption, sleeping homeless people) on municipal property, asset protection, accounting and inventory, critical infrastructure protection, legal liability reduction, as well as enforcement of criminal law and by-laws. While these duties were previously the domain of disparate municipal branches, MCS consolidates these tasks in one unit that has stronger ties to municipal police services and other security agencies such as the private security firms that MCS contracts for various tasks. This movement toward consolidation of surveillance in Canadian municipalities began in the early 2000s, with many units starting in 2005-2006. Halifax and Edmonton appear to have singular Corporate Security departments, whereas in Oshawa and Kitchener MCS is housed in Corporate Services. Ottawa’s MCS are in Emergency & Protective Services. Brampton’s MCS is in Management & Administrative Services. Mississauga’s MCS is in Facilities and Property Management. Toronto’s MCS is in Facilities Management, while Calgary’s MCS is in Legal. Thus, it can be difficult to locate where MCS is situated in the municipality. It is also difficult to pinpoint exactly when the rise of MCS started in earnest. We have not found much evidence of MCS units existing in the year 2001, but we have found several 2004 references to MCS units in larger cities such as Vancouver, Edmonton and Toronto. However, the cities of Oshawa, Halifax, Brampton, and Kitchener all appear to have created MCS during or after 2006. One item that is a little less difficult to trace is the rising expenditures of MCS units in municipalities. Calgary, for instance, went from $720,000 in 2007 to $2,656,000 in 2009. Most of this increased cost went to insurance and surveillance measures. Brampton went from $2,373,000 in 2007 to $2,656,000 in 2009. Halifax went from $144,000 in 2008 to $353,000 in 2010. There are a few MCS units that faced cutbacks in 2009 with the economic recession and the neo-liberal quest for cost effective security. Vancouver, for instance, went from $1,179,000 in 2008 to
Oshawa went from $339,000 in 2006 to $422,000 in 2008, and then to $379,000 in 2009. Despite these cutbacks, most projected figures for 2011 and 2012 budgets show increases. For instance, Mississauga spent $150,000 in 2009 but projects MCS expenses of $299,000 in 2011 and $314,000 in 2012.

MCS units have become responsible for a vast array of properties, buildings, and spaces. Beyond City Hall, MCS units often oversee City-owned or operated pools, rinks, parks, and public libraries. In larger municipalities such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Edmonton, the number of properties, buildings, and spaces MCS keeps track of can number more than 300. Often camera surveillance will be operated at entrances and exits of such properties, buildings, and spaces and are set up with alarm systems. All cameras and alarms must be checked to ensure they are in working order. Each property, building, and space undergoes an audit and threat assessment on a routine basis. The information is often produced using a threat assessment tool from the American Society for Industrial Security. These audits and assessments are not only time consuming, but lead to knowledge of ‘cracks’ in the security façade, leading to further intensification of surveillance. This cycle of security provision and further intensification of surveillance not only applies to buildings that house expensive assets and important persons, such as City Hall, but also buildings such as public libraries. We received several dozen pages of threat assessments that the Vancouver MCS unit generated through surveillance of, in, and adjacent to the public library in downtown Vancouver. Ottawa MCS also conducted a consultation with library staff entitled “See It, Say It: Security Orientation for the Workplace”. MCS argues that “successful security initiatives are all dependent upon staff buy-in. No plan will work without your active participation and understanding”. Employees are encouraged to use the Trespass to Property Act “to help create a safe environment. This is one tool we can use to remove people from the library”. MCS are thus involved in the intensification of surveillance in spaces not often associated with security, encouraging City employees to think about City spaces and their inhabitants through a security lens that requires constant vigilance.

To explore these themes further, below we discuss three examples of MCS surveillance: employee surveillance; surveillance of municipal lands through the latest generation of camera surveillance (PAVs); and surveillance of ‘nuisance’ behaviour through human patrols in a downtown core. We argue that MCS units are accelerating the intensification of surveillance (Ball and Webster 2003) by increasing the networked scope of surveillance as well as centralizing monitoring practices in municipal government.

**MCS-Deployed Surveillance**

**Employee Surveillance: Employee Identification Badges**

The first form of surveillance that we discuss is MCS surveillance of municipal employees. MCS units engage in the surveillance of municipal employees based on complaints from other government workers regarding fraud, Code of Conduct violations, or criminal activities. Surveillance takes the form of MCS contracting private security to monitor building access and egress and screening through employee electronic pass cards. Investigations can also include covert monitoring of communications.

An overlooked technology is the ‘employee identification badge’, introduced by Victoria’s MCS in 2009. While the ‘badge’ has been discussed as a symbol of authority for police and security officers (Stenning and Mopas 2001; White 2010), it differs from the passport (Lippert 1999; Torpey 2000) or national ID documents (Lyon 2009) since it is to be prominently worn on the body at all times precisely for others to surveill rather than kept hidden until requested by surveillance agents at checkpoints. At first glance mundane, upon closer inspection the ‘badge’ is a sophisticated visibility device that is specially designed to activate human surveillance. It is light and compact enough to be mobile, and thus permits City employees to move through City property, lands and work situations unencumbered, but it is large enough to render employees visible to human eyes. To be sure, this device can command authority in some situations but this depends on who is viewing it; there is nothing inherently authoritative about an
identification badge. It also displays a considerable volume of information including first and last name, employee signature, employee number, City logo, digitized visual likeness, and date of issue. In most municipalities that we have studied, some spaces are designated “Must-Wear Facilities” insofar as people are not allowed to enter without wearing an identification badge.

The otherwise mundane badge is linked to sophisticated databases by name, number, date of issue, and digital archive of employee images - employees are tracked through dataveillance as well. The badge is flexible such that for employees working in ‘high risk situations’, the name and employee number will be rendered less visible by placing it on the reverse side in small print. In this way, only some employees will be immediately identifiable and easily subjected to City or MCS-controlled dataveillance. This also means that unlike badges of public police that include numbers to which citizens can refer, the badges in these situations reduce the accountability of MCS employees if they were to engage in misconduct while performing security or surveillance work.

In Victoria the badges can be “attached to an employee in a variety of ways suitable for an employee’s clothing, uniform or type of work”. Thus, employees fasten it to their pocket, belt, or around their neck. Note that since humans are normally not expected to stare at others’ lower body parts (at least not in work situations when they can be seen doing so), the badge is useful only if affixed to the upper body. This arrangement permits human eyes to move only a short, comfortable distance between face to badge and back to face. The new innovation is to have badges printed on existing access ‘swipe’ cards, permitting employees access through electronic doors. The proximity reader receives information through this “access control device” and records when and by whom an area has been accessed when human eyes may be unavailable or looking elsewhere. These data may be “used to conduct an investigation into misconduct if required”. Such a strategy depends on human vision and advanced technology, which are uniquely combined in this visibility device.

MCS units put out a tender to procure the most technologically advanced systems at the lowest costs. In Victoria a tender was put out for an Employee Identification System. As one promotional document put it “The CACS requires proximity cards and these are easily convertible for doing double duty as employee identification cards”. The problem defined by MCS was that

> [c]ity staff are not identifiable in any way, and with 1000 full time, part time and auxiliary staff potentially visiting the Hall and the Pandora Annex, it is difficult for City staff to identify non-City individuals entering non-public space. The lack of employee identification throughout City Hall is a concern to many employees, as strangers pass through their working space by simply saying they are a City employee. **Staff are therefore conditioned to disregard strangers in their workplace, thereby creating safety and security issues**” (italics added).

This conceivably was seamlessly introduced since a consultant had determined there was a “good atmosphere within City Hall for the implementation of an employee photo ID badge system”. Interestingly, the move to implement this technology predates a policy requiring it. Thus, it is suggested: “These issues can be addressed through a corporate policy on Staff Safety and Security” which is followed by display of sample policies borrowed from other (not only municipal but – significantly – higher government level) jurisdictions. Since these are apparently not necessary, “a comprehensive communications plan” for Council, employees and the public extolling the benefits is recommended. The badge is designed not only to make certain staff visible but also to “re-condition” and normalize workers’ desire to surveill.
Beyond surveillance of employees, MCS units are engaged in surveillance of municipal lands. For some MCS units, such work involves monitoring cameras positioned in public parks and near municipal buildings. The target of surveillance tends to be ‘nuisance’ conduct (e.g., alcohol consumption, panhandling, public sex). MCS Ottawa operates PAV systems, which combine surveillance cameras, motion detection, and loudspeakers. The system watches municipal lands in several areas of the city, such as parking lots and parks along the bank of the Ottawa River and those along the Rideau Canal. When the motion detector is tripped during certain hours (such as after 11pm), the Security Operations Centre is alerted and live monitoring begins. The PAV system alerts are actively responded to, which means personnel either command the person to leave the area using the loudspeaker or call the Ottawa police or MCS directed security patrols to intervene. This is active monitoring on municipal land to deter what is deemed to be ‘nuisance’ conduct. As the policy document for the PAVs states, “the aim of the PAV systems is to assist in addressing situations where individual’s behavior [sic] is denying the enjoyment of a park or facility to the rest of us”. The PAV cameras also use ‘privacy by design’ features that white out areas in the camera’s view but that are not (on) municipal property.

MCS Ottawa uses the cameras in conjunction with other programs that aim to regulate public space, such as anti-graffiti programs and the Downtown Rideau Business Improvement Area Street Ambassadors. PAV cameras were first used in 2003 at outdoor pools. As of 2010, 19 PAVs were being used in various sites. MCS Ottawa reports a reduction in vandalism, graffiti, and lost programming due to the cameras, which they estimate saved the city upwards of $900,000. MCS Ottawa has also invested in readily deployable mobile, battery-operated PAV units on trailers that can be installed in a park one day and moved to another the next. This surveillance is ‘automated’ insofar as the live monitoring is supposed to begin when the motion sensor is tripped. These PAVs are a new generation of camera surveillance that combine multiple technological features and depend on a network of human agents for enforcement (also see Graham 1998; Graham and Wood 2003).

MCS Ottawa uses more conventional camera surveillance to monitor other municipal lands. One property that MCS Ottawa has begun monitoring is the underpass at the corner of Rideau and Sussex, one of the busiest in the city. MCS Ottawa argues that the underpass was originally built to “create a safe, visually appealing means of navigating a busy intersection”. Now, as the policy document for the camera project states, “the homeless use… the underpass as an improvised shelter, activities which then devolved into drinking, drug use, aggressive panhandling, and, eventually, assaults and murder”. MCS Ottawa responded by installing wrought iron fencing “to cordon off the space used previously for sleeping and an active graffiti removal program has been implemented in the space”. MCS Ottawa worked proactively with the Downtown Rideau BIA to deter “antisocial activities” in the area and other “threatening actions towards pedestrians attempting to use the underpass”. MCS Ottawa installed a camera on the North-East side of the underpass, and placed a loudspeaker in the area. As with the PAVs above, MCS Ottawa “will check the underpass for individuals engaged in antisocial behavior”. The monitoring of the underpass is active from 11pm to 5am each day. The camera is promoted as providing considerable savings to the City of Ottawa, since the “system will cost in the $8K-10K region (representing roughly 56 days of having a security guard posted to monitor the underpass for the same period)”. This rationale resonates with the neo-liberal strategy of trying to provide effective, efficient, and fiscally prudent surveillance.

MCS Ottawa is not alone in pursuing these sorts of camera surveillance projects. Each MCS unit we have studied across Canada operates camera surveillance at municipal building entrances and exits and on municipal lands. The purpose of using camera surveillance on municipal lands is generally to regulate perceived ‘nuisance’ (also see Hier 2010). With MCS use of cameras at all municipal building entrances and exits there is an added (and very specific) risk mitigation logic. For instance, MCS Vancouver recently audited and upgraded its cameras at the downtown public library. One planning document notes that “the technology in use is becoming a risk in itself as it becomes outdated, unsupported and more...
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prone to failure”. This audit led to enhancement and greater integration of the camera surveillance system with other detection measures such as alarms and access control. MCS Halifax surveillance cameras are also tied to intrusion alarms and the access control system. It is this coordination of surveillance and security work in multiple sites that defines MCS. There is a second, equally pertinent, rationale for camera surveillance in other MCS units. Camera surveillance forms part of MCS units’ overall approach to risk management and liability that includes generating visual information that can be used to counter the many legal claims made against the municipality, including those pertaining to ‘slips and falls’ at particular places and times. Part of the second rationale for building surveillance is asset protection, which is less about policing persons and more about protecting things (see Aradau 2010). As the MCS Halifax Security Management Program document puts it, there are “weaknesses in the armour which allows threats to be realized, such as insufficient property control…” and camera surveillance is one way of addressing these purported vulnerabilities.

Edmonton’s Peace Officers Watching ‘Nuisance’ in the Core
MCS units are developing a presence most especially in provincial capitals, which is an important trend to note. Capital cities tend to have more political officials to protect, and more of an image and aesthetic to promote (see Walby and Lippert 2012). Therefore, it is not surprising that part of the strategic plan of MCS in Edmonton is to help in “managing [the City’s] image and reputation as a globally recognized capital city”. During the 2000s, Edmonton MCS had a security Peace Officer program; the uniformed officers patrolled municipal property including City Hall, Sir Winston Churchill Square, and other downtown municipal properties. The MCS unit operated with what Edmonton MCS called a “hybrid model” that combined Peace Officers with contracted private security. The Peace Officers were taught the parameters of the Use of Force continuum common amongst policing agents. There were approximately 18 Peace Officers, 60 contact private security guards, and a team of 5 MCS managers and advisors. MCS paid approximately $80,000 per month for contract private security. This team of MCS personnel and Peace Officers engaged in surveillance of and “criminal and non-criminal investigations into the activities of Corporation employees”.

As indicated in the Edmonton MCS Risk Management and Corporate Security Manual, MCS is involved in many forms of regulation in the downtown core, including “security planning for construction projects, security liaison with outside agencies, and labour dispute security measures”. The MCS unit also engages in “responding to general complaints, such as disturbances, suspicious persons, youth behavior issues, providing crowd control as directed at special events” and “conducting routine foot patrols to ensure facilities are monitored and to promote public safety on City of Edmonton property”. MCS is thus a multipurpose agency with access to a range of resources and technologies for downtown surveillance. In addition to technological forms of surveillance and conventional foot patrols by Peace Officers, MCS also uses crime prevention through environmental design “to either block freedom of restricted areas or to steer traffic through the facility in a manner consistent with effective access control”. As one job description for the director of MCS puts it, the City of Edmonton “has over 300 buildings with over 600 cameras” so there is no shortage of City space regulated by MCS. Another practice of MCS is education and outreach as it concerns security. For instance, MCS officers promote security through the municipality and also advise “employees to challenge someone in the workplace whom they do not recognize. That not only assists in protecting corporate resources from a 'sneak thief' but it also provides good customer service if the individual has a legitimate reason to be where he or she is”. Thus, at times MCS patrols of municipal space overlap with surveillance of City employees.

The MCS Peace Officers keep track of their interventions and arrests through a database called POSSE. The incident categories blend by-Law, criminal law, and other infractions. MCS divides its security provision into the following three forms. First, there is security in City buildings and on municipal lands at scheduled times. Second, there is special events security where a different City department requires guards or where it is deemed desirable to deploy guards. And third, there are mobile services provided by private
security but directed by MCS that target a “specific location” or an “identified threat”. In 2008, a policy brief suggests MCS in Edmonton should “investigate the idea of expanding the Peace Officer program to a larger area in the downtown core”. In other words, the domain of MCS would spill out of municipal lands into other urban spaces.

Instead of extending the scale of MCS operations, however, in 2010 the MCS Peace Officers and the Transit Peace Officers amalgamated to create a new force. As a memorandum that went out to all employees stated, MCS “will continue to conduct investigations, provide security advice, security awareness presentations, VIP event security, alarm monitoring, supervisor of City Hall monitoring and physical security planning”. But the Transit Peace Officers assumed responsibility for monitoring Churchill Square, the Milner Library and associated parking lots. Nevertheless, the MCS unit continues its operations in asset protection, accounting and inventory, legal liability issues, as well as enforcement of criminal law and by-laws. The fact that the MCS officers were transferred to another unit speaks to the ‘success’ of MCS in creating a squad that blends the public/private and human/technological elements of surveillance and security.

Conclusions

We have analyzed the surveillance practices of recently formed MCS units in Canadian cities. Our analysis of MCS activities has implications for understanding the intensification of urban surveillance. We have made a theoretical contribution by bridging surveillance studies and urban studies and discussing how the insurance industry creates a municipal government demand for security consumption, which leads to more pervasive surveillance by MCS. Ball and Webster (2003) argue the intensification of surveillance involves both a networked scope of surveillance as well as a pervasiveness of monitoring practices. MCS is part of this intensification of surveillance, insofar as it furthers the networked scope and naturalization of surveillance on municipal property.

Much recent attention has been placed on private auspices and provision of urban surveillance, including but not limited to business improvement organizations and gated communities. These are significant developments, the effects of which deserve continued study. However, due to the significant role of MCS in urban surveillance, there should continue to be study of nominally public auspices and provision too. The emphasis in previous work on camera surveillance and related technological forms downplays the extent to which technology continues to depend on human capacities, is becoming more mobile, and how it is combining in ever-changing ways to watch city spaces and conduct therein. Finally, there has also been much attention paid to external conduct, in particular, of homeless people. Yet, that which is internal to organizations is significant too since internal conduct of personnel, deemed risky to the corporation through civil liability, health and safety or other matrices used by MCS units, is subject to surveillance on a near continuous basis. We have argued that the intensification of urban surveillance may be defined less by a privatized and technologically-advanced character and more by a resolute comfort with always mutating public/private, human/technological, and external/internal forms and foci.

MCS units participate in urban surveillance networks in Canadian cities. The formation of MCS in these networks has a great deal to do with pressures put on municipalities by the insurance industry to intensify surveillance or else pay higher premiums or scale back services. In turn, MCS becomes a significant consumer of surveillance technology and strategies, procuring these commodities from the American Society for Industrial Security and similar organizations. As Manning (2006) notes, these new networks are organizational responses to uncertainty. While there is an assumed outside threat to assets, employees sometimes constitute an inside risk, which requires an intensification of surveillance and the multiple forms of monitoring discussed above. Beyond our substantive contribution regarding MCS units, and our theoretical contribution concerning surveillance studies and urban studies, we have made a methodological contribution by demonstrating that FOI requests can be used as a key part of research.
design and strategy. FOI requests are a neglected form of data production in the social sciences. Using FOI to locate texts like surveillance protocol or risk assessments can illuminate MCS practices that would otherwise remain opaque. The implications of FOI are significant: they can produce data that provide a unique perspective on public organizations. Without FOI requests, given the lack of publically accessible information on the practices and processes we describe above, MCS would be difficult to study. If, as Walby (2005) and Marx (2007) have noted, surveillance studies needs to innovate methodologically, using FOI requests may be a way of furthering this goal.

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