

Video surveillance and privacy

On Oct. 4, Privacy Commissioner of Canada George Radwanski released a letter of finding in respect of an investigation of video surveillance activities conducted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Kelowna, B.C. Specifically, the investigation concerned the lawfulness, under the federal Privacy Act, of the installation of surveillance cameras by the police in Kelowna's downtown core.

The RCMP had installed one camera in Kelowna on Feb. 22, 2001, following consultation with city officials and downtown business representatives. At least five other locations were also selected for installation of surveillance cameras as soon as funds become available, as part of a plan to eventu-

of the Privacy Act, but in his view is not sufficiently respectful of the spirit of the law.

However, Radwanski did acknowledge that there may be specific circumstances where, even in his view, it is appropriate for police forces to use surveillance cameras in public places to maintain safety and order.



Bits and Bytes

By Alan Gahtan

The finding must of course be put into perspective. It does not apply to other municipalities in Canada where policing is conducted using municipal or provincial police personnel.

Also, the reasoning in the decision appears to be very

focused on video surveillance of public places by agents of the state. The privacy commissioner quotes the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *RZ*: "there is an important difference between