

Peel, York Regional Police launch facial recognition partnership

By Brock Weir

York and Peel Regions' police departments are joining forces to fight crime using facial-recognition technology.

The move, which was announced May 27, will forge a digital system for storing, searching, and comparing crime scene images to mugshots using the recognition tech.

The system, they said in a joint statement, has been developed "in consultation" with the Information and Privacy Commission of Ontario to determine best practices on how to use the tech in an "investigative capacity."

"As we're all too aware, criminals don't limit their activity to a single jurisdiction," said York Regional Police Chief Jim MacSween in a statement. "Partnering with Peel Regional Police is cost-effective and enables us to collaborate more extensively to make both communities safer."

The Police say this collaboration encourages information sharing while also saving money by going in together on purchasing, maintenance and operating costs.

"Facial recognition technology allows police to compare obtained images of people identified by investigators as suspects or persons of interest with mugshots in an existing police database pursuant to the Identification of Criminals Act," they say. "Images are not gathered or obtained by police from any live CCTV footage or any other live-streaming material including social media; they are collected during the course of an investigation, following a criminal incident. Law enforcement agencies and border checkpoints across Canada are already using facial recognition technology to help solve crimes in the communities they serve and keep Canadians safe."

"Individuals whose criminal booking image (mugshot) has been captured by York Regional Police under the authority of the Identification of Criminals Act, may be eligible to have their photograph and fingerprints destroyed provided certain criteria are met. All fees for photograph and fingerprint destruction requests have been waived by York Regional Police."

Criteria in this case for individuals 18 and over include having no criminal convictions with any police agency; no outstanding charges before the courts; and not being the subject of any police discharge.

Applications can't be made within one year of an absolute discharge, within three years of a conditional discharge, or within a year of a stay of proceedings (other than a judicial stay).

Eligibility can apply as well with no waiting period if charges were "withdrawn, dismissed, quashed, discharged, or if you were acquitted or given a judicial stay."