Security games

Mega-events like the Olympics leave behind much more than fond memories

by Peigi McGillivray

In a post-9/11 world, security budgets for the Olympics have ballooned—from just over $180 million Cdn at the 2000 summer games in Sydney, Australia, to about $900 million Cdn at the Vancouver winter games in 2010. Security costs at this summer’s Olympics in London are set at a staggering $2.4 billion Cdn.

At the Vancouver Olympics, the RCMP set up about 900 closed-circuit cameras at and around event venues, and the Vancouver Police (VPD) installed another 70. After the Olympics, the RCMP cameras were mothballed, but the VPD cameras remain, along with an emergency operations centre for monitoring them.

Surveillance is not just about cameras. It refers to all new technologies and their use by modern institutions to capture personal data. Mega-events such as the Olympics generate unprecedented cooperation among the military, law enforcement and the privacy sector.

For more information on Bennett’s book, Security Games: Surveillance and Control at Mega-Events or news and information on surveillance issues in general, visit www.security-games.com.

Bennett's research informs his teaching of undergraduate and graduate students. He teaches undergraduate courses on US and comparative politics, and a specialized course on the “politics of information.”

His graduate students investigate a broad range of security- and privacy-related issues, including identity cards, surveillance of personal data on the Internet, BC’s enhanced drivers license, ID scanning in bars, Aboriginal health databases, online advertising and surveillance, and human resources databases.

Bennett’s goal is to stir people to think more critically about security and privacy issues and the effects of “creeping surveillance” on society.

“We all need to be aware of our rights, know when and how they might be at risk, and speak up when we need to,” says Bennett, “The growing obsession with security is potentially damaging to our personal freedoms and human rights, and to the structure and nature of our cities. It’s something everyone should be concerned about.”