



by Peigi McGillivray

When the world comes to town for a “mega event”—like the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver or the upcoming Olympics in London—the pressure for increased security is intense. Everyone wants to make sure that nothing goes wrong.

So, budgets for surveillance and security increase. The latest security gadgets are purchased. Closed circuit TV cameras are installed. Checkpoints and barriers are established. Backgrounds are checked. Email, web traffic, and phone calls are scrutinized. Laws restricting public behaviour are enacted, and police presence grows.

We all breathe a sigh of relief when a large event like this comes to a close without incident. But what about all those technologies and laws? Do things go back to the way they were?

“Unfortunately not,” says Dr. Colin Bennett, a University of Victoria political scientist and an expert in privacy and surveillance. “Once security is increased, people get used to the new level. It becomes the ‘new normal.’”

In addition to the technological and physical reminders of these events, says Bennett, data-

bases of personal information have become an enduring legacy, hidden from public scrutiny but shared with other venues and events.

For more than 20 years, Bennett has focused his research on the politics of privacy, and on the profound and varied impacts the “information society” has had on our lives. His 2011 book *Security Games: Surveillance and Control at Mega-Events*, co-edited with Kevin Haggerty, presents one of the first comprehensive assessments of the major security and surveillance implications of large sporting events around the world.

“An enormous amount of money is invested

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