



Thinking Outside the Box

City of Ottawa Leads the Way in Creative Applications of Video Surveillance Technology

When the City of Ottawa was created from the former Regional Municipality and 11 neighbouring municipalities in 2001, Corporate Security Manager Bob Gauvreau inherited what he refers to as a “kaleidoscope of security equipment.”

The new and expanded municipality, covering 2,760 square kilometres, includes 950 facilities and 850 parks. The sheer number and variety of video recorders – both analog and digital – installed in many of these locations severely compromised the

corporate security department’s ability to efficiently monitor and manage the system.

“My mandate,” said Gauvreau, “was to try to bring some uniformity to what we were going to do. Based on our experience with the systems we were familiar with, one of the first decisions we made was to standardize on March Networks technology for all of our major facilities.”

Several years into the department’s standardization initiative, the City now has March Networks® systems in police buildings, water and sewage treatment plants, transit stations, fire department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) headquarters and dispatch centres.

Four security officers at the City’s security operations centre monitor more than 450 buildings 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Gauvreau, who retired in September 2008 following many years at the municipality, attributes the decision to standardize on March Networks to the reliability of its technology, its ease of use and the excellent relationship he has with the company’s sales and technical support teams.

“Whenever we have challenges, March Networks is always there to help,” he said. “Our motto is ‘Think outside the box,’ so we do a lot of things completely differently and we like to work with our integrator, Sunotech

Canada, and March Networks to help us come up with innovative solutions.”

One example is the security system Gauvreau’s team dreamed up for the storage of controlled substances for Ottawa’s Emergency Medical Services department.

“The paramedics administer these controlled substances as part of their duties. We found out several years ago that the honour system doesn’t work, so we installed apartment building mailboxes that the paramedics open by swiping their access control card, and we integrated it with March Networks recorders, so as soon as a card is swiped, a CCTV camera attached to the recorder is activated, capturing video of the transaction.

“We’ve been contacted by people from all over Canada and the U.S. to find out how the system works. It’s great because it gives us video evidence every time these controlled substances are dispensed and eliminates any opportunity for abuse.”

The City also came up with a solution to curtail incidents of rowdy behaviour and vandalism they were experiencing in some parks.

“Some of the parks are immediately adjacent to residential neighbourhoods, so we used to get phone calls from people complaining about the noise and activity,” said Gauvreau. “The police can’t go out there

every five minutes, so they came to us and asked us what we could do.”

Working with Sunotech Canada and March Networks, the City installed recording systems and cameras with motion alarms and two-way audio at strategic park locations. When the motion alarm is activated, video from the site pops up on a monitor in the security operations centre, allowing security staff to both see and converse with intruders.

“We’ll ask them to leave and, if they think it’s just an audio recording, we’ll talk to them and say, ‘Yes, you in the green jacket...’ We cut down the vandalism to zero,” said Gauvreau.

The City also used the same solution at outdoor swimming pools.

“Believe it or not, the year before we installed our equipment, we had between \$700,000 and \$900,000 of vandalism at our pools. We found everything in them, even picnic tables. People would also heave beer bottles over the fence. They’d shatter and contaminate the pool. We would have to drain it, make sure we got every little piece of broken glass, then refill it. And all that time, people wouldn’t have the use of their pool.”

Having worked with so many video surveillance systems, Gauvreau has definite opinions about vendors and their products.

“They often don’t perform as the spec sheet says or as the salesperson tells you, and the support isn’t always there, but that’s not the case with March Networks.”

If the customer is dealing with an integrator and the integrator is dealing with a distributor, there is no relationship with the vendor, he complains.

“I encourage manufacturers to talk to end users and I encourage end users to talk to manufacturers because we’re the ones who know what we need.”

The relationship with March Networks has also facilitated several trials of new technologies, including IP cameras and video analytics.

“Having an opportunity to test emerging technologies is important for us because it helps us recommend solutions that improve the safety and security of our citizens and municipal assets,” said Gauvreau. “I’ve had the opportunity to develop a leading edge operation, and the opportunity to go across Canada, the U.S., and Europe to speak about how to do it. Remaining leading edge means thinking outside the box, and having partners like March Networks, who help bring that thinking into reality.” ✨



“Our motto is ‘Think outside the box,’ so we do a lot of things completely differently and we like to work with our integrator, Sunotech Canada, and March Networks to help us come up with innovate solutions.”

— Bob Gauvreau
Corporate Security Manager, City of Ottawa

City of Ottawa

The City of Ottawa (www.ottawa.ca) is the capital of Canada and the country’s fourth largest city with a population of 1,190,982. In 2001, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton amalgamated with 11 neighbouring jurisdictions. The city now encompasses 2,760 square kilometres, spanning more than 110 kilometres from east to west.

Apartment-style mailboxes integrated with access control and video surveillance systems are used by Ottawa Emergency Medical Services to dispense controlled substances for use by paramedics.