

Facial Recognition Technology Policy Roundtable: What We Heard

Taylor Owen, Derek Ruths, Sonja Solomun, Charles Finlay, Karim Bardeesy, Sumit Bhatia, Sam Andrey, Yuan Stevens, Joe Masoodi, Fahmida Kamali, Braelyn Guppy, Raisa Chowdhury & Ellen Rowe

Executive Summary

In November 2020, the [Cybersecure Policy Exchange](#) at Ryerson University and the [Tech Informed Policy](#) initiative at McGill University’s Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy co-organized a roundtable on the governance of facial recognition technology (FRT). The event brought together 30 expert stakeholders and government officials under Chatham House Rules, to examine the implications of a temporary prohibition on the public sector’s use of FRT in Canada.

After significant developments in the last several years regarding the push for — and against — the use of FRT in Canada and the U.S., the Tech Informed Policy initiative released two policy briefings in August 2020. The [first briefing](#) describes the implications for a temporary prohibition or moratorium on the Canadian public sector’s use of FRT.

The second briefing explores conditions under which a moratorium could be lifted.² The first of these briefings served as the basis of discussion for the roundtable event.

This report summarizes what we heard at the event, organized by: how facial recognition software is being used by the public sector, including its potential benefits and risks; views on the push for a limited prohibition on its use; and options to mitigate risk before and during the use of FRT for consideration, as proposed by the event’s participants.