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Technology is making urban areas smarter, safer and more sustainable. But as cities collect more and more data about their citizens, legal questions are beginning to emerge.

As urbanization gains momentum around the globe, cities are increasingly looking to technology to improve the lives of their citizens. And the tool they're turning to most often is the Internet of Things. This expanding network of internet-enabled devices collects data in order to optimize city infrastructure and services, be it sewer lines or street lights.

For cities, the benefits are undeniable: fewer redundancies, lower costs and streamlined deployment of staff are just a few. But for the technology companies that collect the data, and the governments and service providers that use it, there are risks that need to be considered.

Privacy

While smart city technology has the potential to solve many urban issues, its implementation has actually created one: The right to privacy in an era when almost everything we do can be turned into a data point.

In England, face-recognition technology and vast networks of CCTV cameras help law enforcement quickly identify suspects in crimes. But there is also growing public concern over how the government will use the billions of images it has collected. Can legislators reconcile privacy protection with the public good?

The monitoring of real-time data also presents new evidentiary and legal challenges – and may even open the door to new forms of criminal activity. The IoT technologies that optimize water and sewage systems could be vulnerable to cyberattacks designed to cause flooding or even contamination.

Of course, commercial interests have an obvious profit motive in collecting smart city data. If municipalities partner with IoT companies to adopt smart city tools, the government must ensure it has developed both the technical and legal capacity to face any legal challenges stemming from alleged improper data use.

> *How governments, technology companies and regulators come to grips with the challenge of personal privacy in a connected city is still unfolding.*

Litigation Could Provide a Path Forward

Increasingly, we get questions from both IoT companies and governments about the legal ramifications of smart city technologies. In the absence of a strong regulatory framework, it may well be litigation in Canadian courts that, to a degree, shapes the guidance and rules needed to protect individuals and businesses as cities become more connected.

This evolving legislative framework means two things for those behind smart city projects and services. First, this is a challenging and exciting time with ample opportunity to influence the city of the future. And second, careful legal guidance is an imperative.

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Services: Insurance Claim Defence