

*Canadian health agency spied on  
millions during COVID  
lockdowns*

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**Canada's health agency spied on millions during Covid lockdowns. (Photo: Reuters / Mike Blake)**

Ottawa, December 29 (RHC)-- Canada's Public Health Agency has admitted to secretly tracking location data from at least 33 million mobile devices to analyze people's movements during COVID-19 lockdowns.

The agency earlier this year collected data, including geolocation information from cell-towers, "due to the urgency of the pandemic," a PHAC spokesperson told the National Post, essentially confirming a report by Blacklock's Reporter. The tracking data was allegedly only used to evaluate the effectiveness of lockdown measures and identify possible links between the movement of people and the spread of

COVID-19.

PHAC obtained the information, which was “de-identified and aggregated,” through an outside contractor, Canadian telecommunications giant Telus. The contract ran from last March to October, and PHAC said it no longer had access to the data after the deal expired.

However, the agency plans to similarly track the movements of citizens over the next five years toward such ends as preventing the spread of other infectious diseases and improving mental health. PHAC last week posted a notice to prospective contractors seeking anonymous mobile data dating as far back as January 2019 and running through at least May 2023.

Critics argued that government tracking of citizens is likely more extensive than has been revealed and may become more troublesome in the years ahead. “I think that the Canadian public will find out about many other such unauthorized surveillance initiatives before the pandemic is over—and afterwards,” privacy advocate David Lyon told the Post. He noted, too, that “de-identified” data can easily be “re-identified.”

Author Julius Reuchel said the tracking initiative smacks of a surveillance state spying on citizens “for your safety.” Another author, Paul Alves, said that with its new contract, PHAC will have direct access to all mobile location data, and expressed fear that “contact tracing will no longer require permission or a warrant.”

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