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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. This is meeting number 83 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, on Tuesday, April 30, 2013. We are continuing our study on the economics of policing in Canada.

On our first panel today, we welcome Deputy Commissioner Doug Lang, from the RCMP's contract and aboriginal policing division, and Inspector Tyler Bates, the RCMP's director of national aboriginal policing and crime prevention services.

Our committee wants to thank all of you, and indeed all of the RCMP. It seems every time we've put out the call for you to come, you have complied. We appreciate that.

I would invite you to make your opening statements. If you would field questions after that, we would be very appreciative.

Deputy Commissioner Doug Lang (Deputy Commissioner, Contract and Aboriginal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Good morning, Mr. Chairperson and honourable members of the committee.

As noted, my name is Doug Lang. I am the RCMP's deputy commissioner of contract and aboriginal policing. That's the uniform branch, I say, of the RCMP.

With me today is Inspector Tyler Bates. He is actually a superintendent now, but promotions take a little while to catch up to us. He's in charge of our national aboriginal policing and crime prevention program.

Sitting in the back is Assistant Commissioner Janice Armstrong. Janice came down to watch the proceedings today, and I hope you don't mind. Unfortunately—or fortunately, for me—I'm retiring at the end of May. Janice is coming in behind me as the assistant commissioner of contract and aboriginal policing. This gives her a great opportunity to come and watch committee action in progress.

The Chair: She's welcome to take a chair at the table too, if she wishes.

D/Commr Doug Lang: Thank you for inviting me today to discuss the RCMP's contributions to contract and aboriginal policing, and policing in the north. I would like to take this opportunity to provide the members of the committee with some context of the challenges of policing rural and northern parts of the country.

As you know, the RCMP's contract and policing services has jurisdiction for over 70% of Canada, including eight provinces, three territories, approximately 150 municipalities, and four international airports. In many remote locations the RCMP are often the only government representatives in a particular area and take on the role of social worker, mental health professional, substance abuse counsellor, and a host of other roles, including our traditional role of law enforcement.

The RCMP also represents the only formal presence that oversees an ever-expanding international interest in the Arctic, and often has sometimes sole responsibility for Canada's sovereignty in the north. This is particularly evident nowadays where international tourism is expanding into Canada's north, for example, cruise ships and the associated impact this has on policing in the far north.

The RCMP is unique in that we provide policing services in diverse locations, from municipal detachments with hundreds of officers to small, rural, or isolated detachments with as few as two members.

In many rural locations government housing is provided and the cost of housing is astronomical. For example, recent expenditures for government accommodation in Rankin Inlet for a modular home was $600,000. A duplex recently built in Cross Lake, Manitoba was just under $1 million.

Members must remain available to respond to emergencies 24 hours a day. When we have members away on mandatory training or annual leave from a particular RCMP unit, the RCMP must maintain a minimum complement of two members in the community to respond to calls for service. A two-person detachment must then draw on relief from within the division, from a neighbouring division, or through the RCMP reservist program, which I will touch on later.

There are many isolated detachments hours away from additional backup and they're accessible only by air. Without an on-site police presence, they're policed via fly-in patrols.

As I mentioned earlier, an additional challenge facing the north is ensuring our members remain qualified in the various training and intervention options that we are required to employ. Most of our tools and skills require annual recertification. These include our incident management and intervention model, which is our use of force model; annual firearms qualifications; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear response training; and in the near future, patrol carbine training as we roll out a new weapon in our firearms arsenal.

Other challenges include the necessity to bring members from the north to the south, where there are training centres to receive the training. This creates both financial and human resource pressures on those divisions. We have additional challenges in online training as there's a very slow bandwidth in the north. Rolling out online training created a significant drain on members' time. We have explored other options to mitigate these challenges. We have recently placed training material on CDs for our members in northern detachments that we had provided online in the south. Where possible, we look for efficiencies by partnering with other law enforcement agencies for similar training.

The RCMP employs a number of methods to alleviate the pressures of policing across the country. We have a reservist program that allows us to hire back our members, or members from other police departments, to address vacancies and human resource pressures where gaps exist. These gaps can exist due to retirements, long-term sick leave, maternity and paternity leaves, during special events, seasonally, or in emergencies when we do need extra help. Reservists may be former RCMP officers or peace officers within other provincial or municipal police agencies. They have the powers, duties, and responsibilities of regular members when they're called upon for duty.

In addition to the 29,000 RCMP employees, our service delivery capability is enhanced through the assistance of thousands of volunteers, the largest number of volunteers in the Canadian federal government. The use of volunteers enhances police efficiencies, responsiveness, and service delivery through their cultural awareness and community knowledge. These skills increase community engagement and maximize service delivery. Some of the activities that our volunteers perform include but are not limited to victims services, translations, foot and bike patrols, neighbourhood business and ski watch, home and business security checks, and some block parent programs.

In terms of aboriginal policing, the RCMP has maintained a rich and evolving relationship with Canada's aboriginal people over the course of history, going back to the early days of the North West Mounted Police in the 1870s. The RCMP first established a dedicated aboriginal policing directorate in the 1990s, which has evolved today into our National Aboriginal Policing Services.

More recently the RCMP has identified aboriginal communities as a strategic priority since 2003. To meet its objectives of safer and healthier aboriginal communities, the RCMP builds trusting relationships by partnering and consulting with the aboriginal communities we serve, in addition to other government organizations such as Public Safety Canada's aboriginal policing directorate and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, as well as with non-government organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations, and the Native Women's Association of Canada.

● (0850)

We have aboriginal policing service units in every division across Canada. These units are responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and delivering services under the RCMP's aboriginal police program and first nations policing policy within aboriginal communities.

Each division's commanding officer retains aboriginal advisers to provide advice on cultural perspectives on matters pertaining to the delivery of aboriginal policing services. These advisers also report to the commissioner, in the form of a committee, to provide guidance and recommendations relative to national concerns and enhance the RCMP's ability to contribute to safer and healthier aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal policing service units lead and bring proactive, culturally competent policing to aboriginal people and the communities in which they serve. They seek to improve relations between aboriginal people, the RCMP, and the criminal justice system through strong and effective aboriginal policing initiatives. These include recruiting, crime reduction and crime prevention strategies, program development and delivery, and community tripartite agreement negotiations.

Recognizing that enforcement alone does not address crime victimization, some of the enhanced service delivery options that the RCMP employs are our community program officer and the aboriginal community constable programs. The community program officer is a bridge between the community and the RCMP. They are an unarmed non-peace officer function focused exclusively on community-specific crime prevention, engagement, mobilization, and crime reduction. Our aboriginal community constable is an armed and uniformed peace officer at the rank of special constable.

The community constable allows the RCMP to attract, develop, and retain people with specific linguistic, cultural, and community skills, so we can tailor our policing services to the identified need from a specific community. These community constables provide valuable links to the aboriginal community through their knowledge of their home community, local language, and local culture. They are a role model for the youth. They provide the RCMP with an enhanced culturally and linguistically competent police service for aboriginal communities, allowing for a stronger relationship built on trust to be developed between aboriginal communities and the RCMP.

Aboriginal community constables use their unique skills and experience as members of the community to focus more on proactive and preventative policing measures. Aboriginal community constables have the training and capacity to provide tactical enforcement and investigative support to RCMP constables, if required. This option is being explored for enhanced service delivery within other diverse cultural communities as well.

These programs that I mentioned do not replace RCMP officers. They are an enhancement and a complement to our regular members, permitting those members to focus on core policing functions.

Economics of policing is a complex issue that has cost drivers from areas that aren't necessarily immediately evident, thus making it a difficult issue to summarize in just a few minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have.

Thank you very much.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Ms. Bergen, please, for seven minutes.

Ms. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Congratulations, Inspector Bates, soon to be...what will your new title be?

Inspector Tyler Bates (Director, National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Superintendent.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Congratulations on that, and congratulations, Deputy Commissioner Lang, on your soon to be retirement. I'm sure you'll have lots to keep you busy.

It was a very good presentation. Thank you for that.

I think all of us could take a few minutes to go over it again because there was a lot of information packed into the presentation.

Twenty-three years ago, I lived in Grand Rapids, Manitoba. I lived on the hydro side, but it was a first nations community and I saw first-hand what you talked about. The RCMP members played such an intricate role in the community. In the case at Grand Rapids, it so happened that one of the individuals lived close by and it was a natural fit after he got his training to come back to live in the community.

We hear many times that it is a real struggle for members when they are posted in remote and northern communities. First of all, there aren't many amenities. When I lived there, there wasn't a doctor, or just the general basics we're used to when we live in the southern parts of our provinces.

We've been talking a lot about the economics of policing, and I want to get to that as far as efficiencies are concerned. I think it's good for us to hear the challenges that members face when they have to leave the comfort of the city or being close to their family, to being posted in a very remote area where, again, they don't have amenities. Let's face it: sometimes there are some pretty tough situations that they're dealing with, and there's not really a reprieve from it.

Could you talk about that?

D/Commr Doug Lang: I'd be happy to.

One of the key points I wanted to get out today and to share with you is the awareness of the different cost drivers there are for rural policing and policing in Canada's north. When you have your greater discussion about economics of policing, I don't think it's a cookie-cutter approach that can be taken to find the one-size-fits-all solution to the economics of policing. It's very important to understand those special things that you talked about on the rural side, on the far north side, that if someone says that you can come up with a 20% or a 30% cut, how you apply that there.

You're right on. The issues we have are not so much with staffing the north; it's recruiting and finding members willing to go there. As many of you may or may not know, we have limited duration posts all throughout the north—in northern Manitoba, northern Saskatchewan, and in the far north—because we can only keep members there for a certain amount of time for exactly the reasons you mentioned.

In some communities, there are no amenities at all, other than us and a nursing station. We fly members into these communities and fly them out again, when it's time for them to be relieved. The costs associated with getting them there are.... They have northern allowances that are federal government policy, isolated post allowances, and they're entitled to vacation trips out, all these kind of things. The housing and building costs for our infrastructure and detachments in these places are phenomenal. In most of Nunavut, we are barging in members' supplies to everyone. They have no road system there at all, so everything has to be barged up and shipped up to the different communities. You just compound those costs.

I have the numbers here. The average cost for a member in southern Canada is—

Insp Tyler Bates: We had a difference of about $121,000 versus $217,000.

D/Commr Doug Lang: When you average out the cost, it's about $121,000 to keep a member booted in a seat in southern Canada and then almost double, about $220,000, to do it in the north, with all those different things tacked on that you have to add for that member.

We have quite a bit of interest now for members going north into the far north, into the three territories for rotations. We find that a lot of younger members are going up there, members just starting families, and single members. They are willing to go and spend the time. When they go into these communities, they're on call 24-7, 365 days a year, if they're there that long. There is no rest.

I know there are a couple of former police officers at the table who know that when you're on call, you just don't sleep like you normally sleep. You're always listening for something to happen. Members get tired. They can only do that for so long until they want to get out and do something else.

I'm not sure if you're aware but in Manitoba we have a rotation policy called toques before ties. You have to spend some time in a posting in the north, two or three years, before you can come south and get a detective job. That's why we say it's with a tie, so you can do some major crime work or something else. It's an incentive to get people to go north and do that constant rotation.

We don't need just our young and junior members in the north; we need people with the investigational skills and some experience to go up and mentor these people. We are always trying to strike that balance of finding members who can go up there, who perhaps don't have children, because schooling in some of these communities is not what we would expect, or there's no high school. So there are times in a member's service when he can actually go and spend some time in the north.

I just came back from a week's trip to Yukon. I got out to Dawson City and Faro, and met with a number of the members out there. In some places, we have members who catch the northern fever and they stay there forever, and others who go and do a rotation out. I talked to a number of members up there who just love it. They love the lifestyle. Others go up and do two or three years and then come out. They do it as a stepping stone to work their way back to somewhere else in Canada. Boy, when you talk to the guys who are up there and just love it, the smiles on their faces are amazing. They're loving what they do every day. They're really committed to the community. However, it is expensive.

● (0900)

Ms. Candice Bergen: Just so I understand that, you mentioned the Manitoba program, toques before ties. Are you saying that even though we were talking about the RCMP, the federal and aboriginal policing directorate, there are actually provinces that are tailoring how they use the RCMP in their provinces? Can you explain how the provinces are having their own programs in terms of, for example, toques before ties?

D/Commr Doug Lang: I'll explain that a little further.

The commanding officer for Manitoba "D" Division, for example, is required to figure out his resourcing strategy, how he's going to move people around and fill the different vacancies. Everybody has their two- and three-year limited duration postings that they have to move members in and out of, the Shamattawas and the God's Lake Narrows of the world, where we keep members for three years max and we get them out.

The members have volunteered to go into these places, sometimes with a plan, "Okay, I'll go there, but when I come out, I want to go to Dauphin," or "I'll go there and when I come out, I want to go to Portage," so they can get into the housing market again, do those kind of things. The commanding officer is doing all that at one time, but he's allowed to move within the various programs.

Some people have asked us, "We used to have special constables and aboriginal community constables years ago, and why are you doing it again?" Because when they got in, they saw the other guys got to move so why don't they get to move? They'll only stay in these communities for so long as well in providing the expertise that we need. It's truly a commanding officer's ability to move all of them around from aboriginal policing to federal policing, to keep members interested and challenged.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to Mr. Rafferty, please.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thanks to all three of you for being here today.

I have some experience living in communities with RCMP in the far north, in Yellowknife and Rankin Inlet years ago. There certainly was a lineup at that time for people to make that rotation.

Over the years, say the last decade or so, have you kept officers in isolated communities longer to help save money? Is that one of the strategies you've used to not have so much movement?

D/Commr Doug Lang: Yes. In a number of areas we are down on our number of two-year limited duration posts. Most of them are up to three years. I can think of only some that have very few amenities in them that we keep members in for two years or less. We've tried to go to three.

We don't have very many two-member detachments left, so at a three-member detachment, if one person goes every year, you manage to keep some continuity, and it's continuity costs, the whole nine yards.

Mr. John Rafferty: You police in a number of provinces where you're side by side with first nations police services.

How would you describe the RCMP's relationship in general with first nations police services?

D/Commr Doug Lang: In general it's very good. I can't think of an example that jumps to the top of my head. We have the same infrastructure and training issues. If we're putting on our annual qualification shoots for firearms and stuff, we'll invite whoever's around the area to come and do that. In fact, I can't think in the recent past of battles we've had between organizations.

● (0905)

Mr. John Rafferty: I wasn't thinking of battles in particular. What I was getting at was using precious RCMP resources to help complement the work first nations police services are doing. In other words, I know in northern Ontario, for example, the OPP gets called on a lot to pick up deficiencies, if that's the right word, in the first nations police services.

Do you find the same thing in your work?

D/Commr Doug Lang: Yes. We do go in and handle the sensitive files. If we get called in to handle a murder investigation, we'll go on the ground for a request to do that.

I think where there is a rub sometimes is when we have a stand-alone aboriginal police service providing service in a certain area, and then it somehow folds or diminishes to a point where they're unable to provide the level of service. We have no flexibility because we've lost our infrastructure, the housing and whatever, to go in and do that backup.

Mr. John Rafferty: Are you suggesting that if first nations police services were resourced to the extent they need to be resourced—and we'll be hearing in the second hour from a first nations police service that is very under-resourced—it would, in fact, save you money and the use of your resources and officers?

D/Commr Doug Lang: Yes, it would save us money not having to go in to back them up on short notice. We have to pull people from somewhere else to do that, and that becomes a problem.

Mr. John Rafferty: I was interested in your increasing cost of infrastructure. How do you decide on the priorities on infrastructure and spending within the RCMP? You're probably always looking for efficiencies somewhere, but that must be a cost that's certainly in the back of managers' minds all the time when it comes to covering the entire country, in effect.

D/Commr Doug Lang: I can speak to that a little bit, but it probably would be better to have someone from contract policing services directorate and public safety speak to the new contract.

Our new policing services contract that was signed last year has a whole new section on replacement of the infrastructure. Where the old model was kind of pay as you go, and Canada owns all the buildings except for municipal ones, the new contract has the provinces and territories sitting down and developing a replacement plan right up front, and deciding how much they are going to put into the replacement.

I think our average detachment right now is 30 years old, so we are on the replacement end of a number of these things, and houses.

Mr. John Rafferty: So far is that working?

D/Commr Doug Lang: No. There's a big investment that has to go into that now. Each province and territory is a little bit different. I think there are three or four different models on the accommodation program, how they're going to do it. Some are paying more up front now; some are stretching it out over the 20 years of the contract, but with an idea of replacing a detachment every five years on average, so we lower that number.

Mr. John Rafferty: I was curious about your comments about broadband. We've heard that before, certainly in isolated areas. I live 30 minutes from Thunder Bay and I don't have any Internet. It's not just far north isolated areas we're talking about.

What needs to be done in relation to that kind of technology to make the RCMP's job easier and safer, and to do the crime work and police work you need to do? Would you be saving money if broadband were there, if we're just going to talk about money, for example?

D/Commr Doug Lang: I believe so, but it's a much bigger picture than that for us. We have radio systems that need replacing in a number of the provinces and territories across Canada. That's another line on the budget sheet that somebody has to address one day. The Internet and the broadband issues in a detachment affect the way we roll things out. We've come up with the solution that people shouldn't just develop these things thinking everybody has high-speed Internet. Now that we have our training people thinking that way, they're developing a second option, a CD option, for us. Our problem in most of these communities is that we have satellite communication that not only runs the Internet in our office, but also our Internet for the CPIC system, our file management system, and all those kinds of things. If you have a member sitting in the detachment using the computer for an online course, the guy next to him can't do a query to see if somebody has a criminal record.

Mr. John Rafferty: My time is limited so I want to move over to volunteers and auxiliary, which you mentioned briefly in your opening remarks.

Is there a line that you won't cross in terms of using that kind of staff allotment in replacing officers? Is there a cut-and-dried point where you won't use them? There might be pressure to use auxiliary or volunteers for something, but in some cases you would say that you need an officer.

● (0910)

The Chair: A very quick response, please.

D/Commr Doug Lang: We will not put a volunteer in the line of danger. We will use auxiliaries and volunteers for some kinds of traffic control and scene control, but we would never put them in a position where they would be brought near some kind of threat.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Hawn.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to the deputy commissioner, and almost superintendent Tyler Bates for being here.

I have spent a little bit of time in the north in places like Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Iqaluit, and have interacted with some of your folks. It is a challenging environment and I really admire the work that you guys do.

It's not their role to be involved in policing, but do you have any coordination with the Canadian Rangers in any of your work? They have some training that might be of assistance from time to time.

D/Commr Doug Lang: Yes, we call on them for backup response, search and rescue activities, and other things of that kind in the north. They like to volunteer their services. As you know, sometimes that's not a good thing. It's supposed to come the other way around. They're a great asset to us.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: There are a lot of unique challenges in the north, but the front end is relatively simple. When you get somebody you need to process through the system, what special challenges do you have in the north with respect to the justice system, judges, courts, and so on? How do you deal with those?

D/Commr Doug Lang: There are two of which I'm acutely aware.

One is our ability to keep up with feeding the criminal record system in Ottawa. We've changed from a system of paper-based fingerprint submissions on a criminal record, where if you went to court and were convicted of something we'd have to type out at the bottom of your fingerprints what you're convicted of, put that in the mail, send it to Ottawa, and it would work its way through the system. Now we're going to digital-based Livescan machines, where it's done electronically and fed into the system electronically. Unfortunately these machines cost about $50,000 a piece, and we can't afford to put one in a three-person detachment that's going to have five or six fingerprint submissions over the course of a year to send in. We've coordinated that centrally in Whitehorse, Yellowknife, and Iqaluit. The outlying detachment sends those things into the centre and then they're sent electronically to Ottawa. That causes a little bit of a delay. I've had some discussions with public prosecutions in the last month or so on how we can speed that up. It seems that the regular repeat offenders are getting into the system again before their criminal records catch up with them. We're working on that one and we believe we have a solution.

The other one is the court requirements. I think you heard about it from Chief Knecht from Edmonton when he was here. We have court requirements for our members to attend. They show up in court only to have the accused not show up. We have video facilities in the north for video appearances, video bail hearings, etc., but when it's not used or when it's used improperly, or not taken advantage of, or there are games played with it, problems are caused for the whole system. We can have no members in court waiting on such and such a hearing, but if the defence counsel says he wants to wait and see the whites of all the witnesses' eyes before he decides to plead guilty or not, it's a problem. But it's part of the system.

I don't know what more can be done to push or facilitate that. The system is in place. We try to use it. We used it successfully in Manitoba when I was there, and it saved a lot on bail hearings and show cause hearings.

If witnesses come down to the south for whatever reason and we have to haul them back north, the cost to Canada is huge, especially if we're hauling witnesses around for trials that never materialize.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

What's the difference, *grosso modo*, in the level of training for your aboriginal community constable relative to a regular force member?

Insp Tyler Bates: It's a 21-week program. It's only a few weeks shy of the full training for an RM.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Is this done in Regina?

Insp Tyler Bates: It is done in Regina, yes.

It's a specialty really. It's a focus on community engagement and crime prevention.

As was mentioned, they do have the tactical capacity to support our membership. They receive all the same firearms training, and all the same police operations training, as far as motor vehicles are concerned. They're highly trained and highly skilled, but they have a cultural competence that we need in service in our aboriginal communities.

● (0915)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Do they have full authority just like any other member?

Insp Tyler Bates: That's correct. The portion of the training that they don't complete has to do with the paper aspect of the job, core package completion, search warrant completion, and the like.

The intent is that they're visible in the community, that they're not sitting at a terminal with a slow line speed trying to get all the data entered into our records management system. They're on the road and they're visible. They're engaging with youth, participating in cadet corps and activities such as those.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Do you have a pure number or percentage of how many of these community constables there are in the north, as a percentage of the total force?

Insp Tyler Bates: We're in the infancy of this program right now. It's a pilot project, and at this juncture we actually only have six aboriginal community constables. We're now in the process of recruitment for our second phase of this pilot. Being that the pilot group is as small as it is, we still have to undertake an assessment of that program, subsequent to the second troop.

We're looking at a fall troop in October, and we're in the process of recruitment for that. We're anticipating that this troop will be significantly larger than the first. Subsequent to that, we'll hopefully be able to undertake an assessment of its value.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Are they trained as a separate troop in Regina? Is some of the training integrated with other troops, or is it all troop by troop?

Insp Tyler Bates: They are a separate troop; they're a distinct troop, but certainly a number of their training components have no variance from what a regular member goes through.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: It's probably too early to say because of the infancy of the program, but is there any estimate of the cost of one of those community constables versus the cost of a regular force officer?

D/Commr Doug Lang: That's a great question, because in terms of the savings that we saw from this from the start there's about a $12,000 difference in salary between an aboriginal community constable and regular constable, so there was a savings there. We hired directly from the community. We looked to pull Laurie out of community X, and then put him back into community X where he already had a house, where he already some....

We don't have extra infrastructure in these communities. That's why it takes us so long to move ahead. We can't build a house on spec.

It was great for us. We got seven—I think we started with seven—people back into communities where we needed linguistic capability and cultural sensitivity in there, where they already had their own infrastructure.

The things we're learning as we move forward is that now they're saying, "Where's my house?" They get all the other benefits that come with being an RCMP member, but they're already starting to ask some of those questions, and they're asking how long they have to do this before they get a chance to become a regular Mountie guy.

We're changing the program a little bit in the next little while to change it from an aboriginal community constable focus to just a community constable focus. We have some other communities in Canada, in the Lower Mainland for example, where they want to get their culturally competent person with linguistic capability back in to stay there for a while.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We're out of time here.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, please. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): I would like to get an overview, because there are many different concepts that have been discussed, such as the first nations police force, and the volunteer and auxiliary members.

Does every community have at least one RCMP officer? Or would every division in the north, which could comprise more than one community, have a regular RCMP officer in place? In some cases do they instead have a first nations police constable or some other type of constable? Is that how it works?

Could you just give me an idea, a broad-brush structural view of how all of this works?

D/Commr Doug Lang: When we think about economics of policing and whether we can make any drastic change, we have to look at the model. The model for policing in rural Canada right now is that we have a detachment that services an area. We may have a detachment in a community of 300 people with three members there, but we may not have a detachment in another community of 300 people or 400 people. We may police that on a fly-in basis, as required. It is not always the same.

In the late seventies and early eighties, we went through a reconfiguring of our detachments in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan, in a number of different areas. There's not all these little detachments anymore. They're bigger detachments, hubbed more together, kind of like the OPP. You have more members at one place who provide service farther apart.

What that does, though, is that it causes expanded response times. If you were to call the city police in Ottawa to say there's someone at your door trying to break in, and they said they'd be there in an hour —

An hon. member: It would be like coming from Cornwall.

D/Commr Doug Lang: Yes. You're not going to accept that, but that is a reality for people living in rural Canada.

In a number of detachments where I was, an hour to an hour and a half to get to a call at one end of your detachment area or the other was the way it worked.

We do have only two places, I think, in northern Manitoba right now, where we do a regular rotational fly-in. We fly two members in and pick the other two up and haul them away. That's because of the level of violence or the problems that exist in those communities. But for most of them we have detachments, and if we don't have a detachment base we have a regular patrol. Sometimes we just have a patrol cabin.

● (0920)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Where would auxiliary members come in? Where would first nations police forces come in?

D/Commr Doug Lang: We have first nations police forces that have their own jurisdictions on first nations reserves.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So the RCMP is out of there.

D/Commr Doug Lang: Yes, we're out. We're the neighbouring detachment. We help them out.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You help them out, but there's no real —

D/Commr Doug Lang: We have auxiliaries come in to help us when we need help. We have auxiliaries in the far north who are culturally competent. They want to take our members out, show them who the elders are. They're in addition to what we do.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: In a community where you would be an hour and a half away, would you have an auxiliary? Basically there would be no coverage, really, for the hour and a half or two hours it would take to get someone there.

D/Commr Doug Lang: In some communities, there's a band constables program. They have band constables who are kind of like a night watchman. They're called peacekeepers in Saskatchewan. They augment the ability of that particular first nation, but it is more to watch what's going on, to guard their facilities.

In some cases they've been making arrests, which is not popular.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do they have the power to make arrests?

D/Commr Doug Lang: No.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I guess that's why it's not popular.

D/Commr Doug Lang: They have the same powers that you have to make a citizen's arrest, so they do have powers to make an arrest.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes.

How does it work in Quebec? A community like Chisasibi would have its own force, I guess, or would it be QPP? That is probably not a fair question.

You have nothing to say about that.

D/Commr Doug Lang: No.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

Is there an RCMP presence in every community that would have a nursing station? Do the two work together at all?

D/Commr Doug Lang: I couldn't say 100%, but there are some nursing stations in communities that we police and they only go there when we go there.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Right. I understand.

Is it easy or difficult to recruit members of aboriginal communities to become RCMP officers who would then go back to those communities to serve?

Insp Tyler Bates: It's a rich cultural experience working in aboriginal communities. As was alluded to earlier, for the people who love it, they love it. I spent over 10 years doing isolated police posts, from manning a dogsled to going on the land to caribou hunt and going on a trapline. These were wonderful experiences. For most members who have bounced around and done a lot of northern stints, it's the most memorable part of their career. There is a certain segment of the organization for which recruitment isn't difficult to do that. Whether it's aboriginal members or non-aboriginal members, people share the desire to have that experience in a lot of respects.

It is challenging and you are taxed, and that's the other side of it. In some of the smaller detachments, you don't often go for a walk without carrying a radio because the other member in the community may need you for something. There isn't the downtime that you might have in a large detachment.

That's why—in fairness to the aboriginal members who are working, as well as the non-aboriginal members—there needs to be that ability to work in specialized units when they've experienced that level of investment and they've been on the ball, so to speak, 24-7. To do that for an extended period of time, beyond the two or three years that is expected, one often needs a break and a different transition.

The Chair: There are 30 seconds for the question and answer.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do you have any suggestions? We're looking at the costs of policing. How can we make this more cost-effective without sacrificing police coverage? Maybe the answer is to spend more money, get more police coverage, and just say that we'll have to get the money from somewhere else. We need more coverage, and we're just going to have to spend more because of the higher cost of living or what have you.

It sounds to me like there aren't too many efficiencies to be gained because you've thought of everything. You have the video conferencing, and so on.

Are there efficiencies to be gained without sacrificing coverage and quality?

● (0925)

The Chair: Very quickly. We're 15 seconds over already.

D/Commr Doug Lang: No.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses for being here today.

When we look at the title of the divisions, they talk about national aboriginal policing. Your focus this morning seems to be primarily on rural and northern policing, whereas a lot of the contact between the RCMP and aboriginal people would be in urban situations and off-reserve situations.

Is that part of your mandate in the divisions that you deal with, or is yours really more dealing with remote locations and on reserve?

D/Commr Doug Lang: No, it's both. Again, if you look at Manitoba, for example, Winnipeg City Police has the city of Winnipeg, and Brandon has the city of Brandon. We end up with all the rest. Our interaction and where we have first nations policing units and aboriginal policing unit program positions are on our reserves and the first nations that we police.

While our aboriginal policing directorate people would be in Winnipeg managing the program and interacting with elders, chiefs, and councils that exist in Winnipeg, our focus in the service that we do is on where we have jurisdiction. I know we have a lot of work that's being done in Prince George, in Vancouver, and different areas from where people are and where the headquarters of the different first nations are that we have interaction with, but our service delivery is more focused on where we're policing.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I want to go back to the question that was touched on briefly just a minute ago, on recruitment. In terms of the overall RCMP police force, how successful has the RCMP been in the recruitment and retention of aboriginal regular members?

D/Commr Doug Lang: We have right now 1,166 aboriginal men who have self-identified and 313 aboriginal women. That's about 7.9% of our workforce. The labour market availability says that we should be at about 4%, so we're doing very well there. The retention we have for aboriginal members is fantastic. We've increased our target to 10% for aboriginal members.

As Superintendent Bates said, it's very interesting inside of our organization. We recruit aboriginal people for their specific cultural and linguistic capabilities in some cases. Then they get in and see the doors that open to them inside our organization. In my 35 years with the RCMP, I've had 14 different careers now in the different things that I've done, one of them doing aboriginal policing in Kamsack, Saskatchewan and Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan. That was a riot. I loved that stuff.

To open the door to get to an officer level position and to be a commanding officer or a criminal operations officer, you have to get out and get into the admin world. You have to try these different things. For the first time in our organization, we have an aboriginal commanding officer in the province of Saskatchewan, Russ Mirasty. We have an aboriginal criminal operations officer in the province of Saskatchewan, Brenda Butterworth-Carr, who I think has been here before. We have a Métis commanding officer in the province of Manitoba, Kevin Brosseau. We're watching them now rise up through the ranks of the organization and into positions, but it has been from them following a career path to get what they have to get, come into headquarters, get a look at the real world down here in Ottawa.

Mr. Randall Garrison: You anticipated the next question. In terms of senior ranks in the RCMP, what kind of presence is there of aboriginal Canadians? Are there none beyond the commanding officer?

D/Commr Doug Lang: The commanding officer is assistant commissioner. We have one of our deputy commissioners, Deputy Commissioner Dan Dubeau, who is in charge of human relations and is of Métis ancestry from Bonnyville, Alberta. It's hard to tell, nowadays. In fact, if Tyler hadn't said anything, I imagine most people at the table wouldn't have known that Tyler is first nation.

Insp Tyler Bates: I'm Métis from Manitoba.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you.

I want to go back to the question of costs and talk about the question of demand for service. You've been talking about the rural and remote locations, the high costs of providing that service, and the very large amount of demand on the officers in place. You mentioned it in about the third paragraph of your introduction. You talked about being the only government representative sometimes.

Can you talk a little bit about what the demand drivers are in those communities for RCMP services?

● (0930)

D/Commr Doug Lang: This answers the other question that I never got to answer about whether there are any savings. Fortunately and unfortunately, the Canada Labour Code and our requirements for officer safety in the past 10 or 12 years have driven us from the model that a lot of us in the room would have seen when we were young: one- or two-man RCMP detachments in certain places and both the guys were six feet five inches tall, weighed 260 pounds, and were capable of looking after themselves. That's not there anymore.

We have come to a model of a three-person detachment. If we were to open a new detachment, we wouldn't open anything less than a three-person one, because that allows us to always have two people on the ground for backup. We can't have one person anymore. We fought that battle occupationally, of not having that kind of backup. We had members in communities who had been shot up in the past number of years, people pointing rifles at detachments and houses and those kinds of things. We can't go back there anymore.

This new reality of having to have a three-person versus a two-person detachment has changed the way we've responded. We have people sitting in places who don't have very much to do. People in the far north get involved in the community doing all kinds of things. You can imagine in the wintertime there's not a heck of a lot of files going on. They're not vaccinating dogs anymore. There's no traffic work for them to do. Their criminal caseload of files to handle is not there.

We've gone through the migration in the prairie provinces. For example, when I was in Manitoba we moved people from the quieter places in the south into the busy places in the north to try to equalize the Criminal Code caseload that a member carries. That's a continual thing. Part of it is getting ahead of getting housing in there for extra members in the communities where the growth is happening and those kinds of things. It takes a while to catch up.

The Chair: You may want to add some of this to another question later.

Mr. Leef.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to both of you.

Deputy Commissioner Lang, you mentioned that you were just in the Yukon, which is the riding I represent. I was wondering if you would have had an opportunity to see some of the work that's being done in response to the “Sharing Common Ground” report, the review of Yukon's police force which Mr. Scarpaleggia talked a little about, throwing financial resources toward policing. We are talking about the cost of policing, but one of the costs of policing is intrinsically tied to the cost of crime. I think of the Yukon as a great model right now, albeit the review of the police force wasn't done as an economics of policing exercise. It was done out of some high profile cases that came about. When I look at what they're accomplishing, I can't help but think that some of the things they're doing right now are going to achieve some substantial savings on the cost of crime end.

The Northern Institute of Social Justice is doing a career orientation program to recruit women and first nations into policing. There's the establishment of the Yukon Police Council. The arrest processing unit now is being taken over by the Yukon government, so a different level of care is being provided to offenders. The RCMP aren't having to deal with cell block services in the community of Whitehorse. They've come up with a specialized unit for a coordinated response for domestic violence and sexual assault.

Communities are now involved in the selection of commanding officers who are coming to the communities. I think four of the communities in the Yukon have undertaken that already. They have community priorities now being established in their annual performance plans because some communities were doing well with that and others weren't, but they are now finding some success in identifying community priorities. They have a communications director to develop communications strategies to enhance citizen engagement, which will ultimately help reduce crime in the communities. They have a commanding officer's first nation advisory committee, which is working well with different groups, women's organizations and first nations organizations.

I was wondering if you had an opportunity to see that in the works. Maybe you could comment on how you see that working in the Yukon and how you see that potentially being rolled out in the rest of Canada, if it's a positive model.

D/Commr Doug Lang: In fact, my visit to the Yukon was eye-opening. I was supposed to go up there for the northern symposium in the fall and I couldn't make it. I had a ticket I had to use so I got to go up there and see the things I didn't get to see last year.

I was quite impressed. The changes they've been able to make and move forward on there, especially on community engagement, are something else and a model for other people to follow.

My comment on that, though, is that it was really done with not much of an increase in funding. There were a couple of bodies that had to be added to the mix, but it was done with the resource level they had. If you go in there and ask that commanding officer to make all those changes and live with a 20% budget cut, he ain't doing any of them, because there's simply no fat left there to cut any more.

We've talked about the salary dollars that are the big cost user of our fees. That little piece you have left to do any of those initiative-type things is pretty small, and it takes the whole division getting together with the aboriginal communities and everybody else to move these issues forward. But you have to be there, you have to be at those tables, and you have to be dedicated to doing that.

They have a good group of people up there doing that now and watching that move forward.

I got to meet with all the auxiliaries. They happened to have an auxiliary meeting one night when I was there. I got to meet with a group of five or six auxiliaries and they're all government people, guys who have boring government jobs with the Government of Yukon who want to get out on Friday night and drive around with the boys. They go out and they take charge of the check points during bicycle runs and dogsled races and those kinds of things. They're so happy to be involved with the people.

The interaction in the community up there.... If you had told me about the stuff that went on before the changes, I would not have believed it. The community up there is so supportive of their law enforcement. I had to shake hands with half the people in Dawson Creek when I was there. They were telling me about the great work these guys are doing.

We've pulled some great people out of there, like Brenda Butterworth-Carr from Dawson Creek. I tried to go and see her mom, to say hello and be adopted, but that wasn't going to happen. It's fantastic stuff.

What do you do up there in a community like Faro, which is kind of shrinking? You have a detachment there but everybody from the government on down who I talked to said, “No, this is community safety, a community pride thing. Don't touch our RCMP detachment.” When we talk about there being room to shrink that perhaps because the caseload is down, people say, “No, not our detachment. We want you there. You're part of our community.” If you take away the three Mounties in the community of Faro, you take away the power-skating teacher, the hockey coach, and so on. There is some fantastic stuff going on up there.

● (0935)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Monsieur Rousseau.

[*Translation*]

You have five minutes.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you very much for being here.

I'll ask you to use your earpiece because I'll be asking the question in French.

[*Translation*]

I am always impressed when I hear stories about officers who work in the north, where they have to be more autonomous and versatile when performing their tasks. My riding, Compton—Stanstead, is on the border and has different divisions. I have spoken with officers from my riding who have served in the north. They told me that the problems up there were like the ones we had here, but there were 10 times as many of them and they were 10 times worse.

An officer has to be a social worker, a mental health professional and a substance abuse professional. How do you manage to do all that with the resources you have, especially when it comes to training? We are told that online services are not very adapted and technology is not really an option. How do you ensure that the officers receive the training and updates they need to be able to deal with all the social issues they face in the north?

D/Commr Doug Lang: It's a bit difficult to answer that question. We are actually unable to meet all the needs in the north. That's the problem. Our basic training focuses on the responses police officers must provide as part of their normal duties, such as investigations and basic interactions with people with mental health issues. However, it's not the officers' job to resolve those issues or provide advice on how to get better. Health care professionals have that responsibility. The problem in almost all northern communities is that we are the only government representatives present.

People can ask me what could be implemented to improve community life, but it's not up to police officers to do that. That responsibility belongs to health care professionals—whether we are talking about psychiatric nurses or people who can care for all the community members struggling with alcohol or drug addiction. That's not our role. If all that could be moved from our plate to someone else's plate, the problem would improve in all northern communities. However, that's expensive.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: You said that an attempt was being made to reduce divisions. However, your officers provide community services at the same time. They may be coaching hockey or participating in the community in other ways. The existence of those divisions is extremely important, since the officers are literally part of the cultural life of the community. So it's key for the divisions to remain as they are.

There's something else I would like to discuss. You talked about material resources. Some of your outdated equipment and radios used for communications need to be replaced. Is there any equipment that is absolutely necessary in emergency situations that should really be invested in?

I have an example. My riding is close to lakes Memphremagog and Champlain. I was told that RCMP officers have been unable to use their motorboat for two years because they don't have the money to maintain it. I assume you have similar problems in the north.

● (0940)

D/Commr Doug Lang: Yes, we have the same problems in the north. Today, in compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Code, police forces' needs in terms of material resources and equipment have increased. That probably began 10 years ago and has been emphasized in certain circumstances. For instance, since the Mayerthorpe tragedy, in Alberta, when four RCMP officers were killed, all our officers have had to wear hard body armour, which is different from the soft body armour we used before. Another new piece of equipment is the patrol carbine—which I already talked about—a firearm that's somewhere between a .308 calibre rifle and a shotgun. That's a SWAT carbine our officers will be able to use in school raids where students may have been taken hostage.

When police forces see that other police forces already have that equipment for their SWAT team or their officers, they want it too. We have the same problem. In special circumstances—for instance, when shots are fired at their house—officers serving in the north may ask to be provided with an armoured home or other equipment. We know that sad cases like that happen, so we can't be asked to deny our officers their request.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lang.

We'll move back to the government side now for the last four minutes.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

In the last few minutes, I want to follow up on a few things that my colleague, Mr. Rousseau, was asking about.

We've had some really good testimony from, for example, Prince Albert, where they run something called the HUB and COR program. We've also heard from Calgary. Again, it's a very large urban centre, but a number of agencies have come together and are working on the preventative side of crime. We've even heard from rural areas, such as Manitoba's Selkirk, Stonewall, and Dauphin, where they run something called START. It's initiated out of the community, but the RCMP plays a role.

I guess here's what I'm asking. I think it's a tough issue and it's not one that's going to be solved very quickly, but there's a huge difference between a first nations reserve in northern Manitoba and a tiny town in southern Manitoba. The population might be the same, but we know a very, very different way of living. I know that when I lived on a reserve getting parents to come to parent-teacher interviews was virtually impossible. There was a disengagement for many, many reasons. We know that there are a lot of reasons for some of the disengagement.

I'm wondering, though, because it has been a while since I lived on a reserve—and Superintendent Bates, I think you mentioned that you were policing up north, and you really enjoyed it and saw great value in it—is there an opportunity? Are there first nations reserves.... I'm thinking especially of northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and even Ontario, because we know there are some very difficult...they're the Shamattawas, and certainly in Quebec.... How do we use a model like START or HUB and COR, some of these programs where we are not just involving government agencies, but where the community comes together and says that it wants to participate in helping to prevent crime, where the community says, “We want to take responsibility for our neighbours' kids and for our kids and do this together”?

Are we seeing some movement in that area? Is this more an issue of just how tough life is on a reserve and how many times people are.... Let's face it: again, in a small community in southern Manitoba, if you want to move to another community, you just move. If there aren't jobs or opportunities, you move, whereas if you've lived on a reserve your entire life, there are certainly some constraints, not just physically but even emotionally: how do you leave this place and do you want to leave it?

We've heard such great things about these preventative programs. Do you see any opportunity or a place for them to happen on a reserve like Shamattawa?

● (0945)

D/Commr Doug Lang: I'll turn this over to Tyler in a second. It's not that we're not involved with those programs. It used to be Chief McFee, when I knew him at SACP, and now he's with the Saskatchewan government. We used to call that, even in Winnipeg, stepping on a sausage. If the Winnipeg Police Service or the Prince Albert Police Service step hard on a crime problem in their area, we know exactly where it goes, right? The meat goes into the sausage and they come back into RCMP jurisdiction, because we police the outside. We're involved in these.

That was one of the best things about Dale McFee's HUB concept in Prince Albert. Once they got it going, and got all the agencies going in Prince Albert, they involved the RCMP in the rural area. There was no more putting pressure on the little kid from Buffalo Narrows, in Prince Albert, and making him go home. That used to be great crime prevention—isn't that right—send him back home. The whole loop was there. Even if you sent him back to Buffalo Narrows, we have people in Buffalo Narrows ready to monitor his behaviour, to involve the school, so we interacted in those things.

Those tentacles are slowly reaching out. We have a number of those different HUBs going on in Saskatchewan, in Prince Albert, in Yorkton, in Saskatoon. The problem is magnified by the city, but we are involved in a number of those and taking an active part in them.

I'll let Tyler speak to it.

The Chair: We're pretty well right out of time. What I would like to do, though, is make an offer to you. If you have questions that you didn't feel you answered to the extent you'd like to, perhaps you would send the comments in to our clerk. He'll circulate them and we'll all be able to hear the rest of the answer.

Unfortunately, we have another panel waiting for us, and one of them is video conferencing, so we can't go over. I know we'd like to expand this. Aboriginal policing is of great interest, and certainly we appreciate the RCMP bringing you here to instruct us a little bit about what happens there, and the challenges. Thank you for doing that.

We're going to suspend momentarily and we will prepare the teleconference, and our other guests are here as well.

● (0945)

(Pause)

● (0945)

The Chair: Good morning, again.

This is the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We're going to continue our study on the economics of policing in Canada.

With us here in Ottawa we have Chief Bob Herman, the chief of the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service. Our committee appreciates your joining us today, sir.

Also, appearing from the Government of Yukon by video conference from Whitehorse, we have Robert Riches, assistant deputy minister, community justice and public safety, Department of Justice.

We want to thank both of you for appearing. Perhaps you could each give an opening statement, and then we will go into rounds of questioning that we'll take from the government and the opposition.

We'll begin with Chief Herman, who is with us here. The floor is yours for about 10 minutes.

Chief Robert Herman (Chief of Police, Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service): Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members, and *watchay.*

First, I'll give you a little background. The Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service, or NAPS as it is known, is the largest self-administered first nation police service in Canada. We police an area basically above the 51st parallel, from the James Bay, Quebec border to Manitoba, up to Hudson Bay. We police 34 of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities. It's quite an extensive area and certainly has a lot of challenges.

I know my time is limited, so I'd like to touch on three issues that are imperative to first nation policing, especially self-administered first nation policing.

The first thing I'd like to say is that first nation policing in the province of Ontario is in a crisis state right now for a number of reasons. The last negotiated line-by-line budget for first nations policing was done in 2007-08. This resulted in an agreement for three years. That agreement was extended for one year and currently is in a second extension into 2014. That extension was essentially forced upon the Nishnawbe Aski Nation due to the fact that the government came out with their funding model about three weeks prior to the deadline of the extension expiring. Because of that timeline, there was no opportunity to actually do a negotiation with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. The Government of Ontario and Canada are stipulated in the tri-party agreement. We had to sign the agreement because as of April 1, if we didn't, there would be no cashflow. We would not be able to pay our bills, pay our officers, and continue policing.

There are a number of issues when it comes to sustainable funding. As I said, the last negotiated line-by-line agreement was done in 2008, but since then, partly because of the Kashechewan inquiry.... I must say that Canada and the Province of Ontario have been good in funding new capital projects for the Nishnawbe Aski Nation in getting new detachments. We've had 13 new detachments come on line and we have five more nearing completion, but at the end of the day, we still have seven detachments that don't meet the basic standards, such as having a fire suppression system or building codes within our communities.

Anybody who runs a business knows that when you outlay capital dollars to build infrastructure, there are yearly operational costs that are associated with that outlay. We have never received funding to actually cover those operational costs. For example, the cost of operations and maintenance of those detachments is about 72% higher than the rent we were paying in the old buildings we had before. As well, we had to move because our headquarters building wasn't meeting our needs. We had people all over the place in different buildings. In order to consolidate, we had to rent a bigger building at a 115% greater cost than we paid in the old one. Statutory increases to things like employee benefits as well as benefit costs have increased by 31%, almost $400,000. Yet again, we have not received any increase to our budget since 2008 in order to cover those costs.

Quite frankly, we've been robbing Peter to pay Paul, but Peter is not home anymore. We simply can't continue to do this. We are forecasting a $2 million deficit for the current fiscal year ending in 2014. Essentially, we're going to run out of money probably in December of this year in order to operate our police service.

If both levels of government are serious about first nations policing succeeding, then they actually have to step up to the plate and meet their fiduciary obligations and properly fund first nation policing.

I was listening to the statement made by the RCMP. There is a difference in Ontario. A lot of the agreements with the RCMP are community/tri-party agreements, where it's an enhancement. In Ontario it's self-administered police services. There are nine of us in the first nations policing program. The government does come out and say it's an enhancement, but the reality is it's a replacement. We have replaced the traditional policing. The RCMP left in the early 1970s; the OPP left in the 1990s; we've taken it over.

Second, I want to touch on staffing. As I said, there's been no full-time equivalent increases to first nations policing since 2007. You've probably heard about the police officer recruitment fund report, which was a one-time funding by the government. Everyone knew that going into it. It ended on March 31 of this year, but the way Ontario actually handled that money was to add 40 new first nations police officers in the province of Ontario. On March 31 of this year, those officers were laid off because the funding was not extended.

● (0950)

It has been the position of the first nations chiefs of police and the leadership in the first nations communities that those 40 positions should have been rolled into the FNPP to address the full-time complement that we need to address.

I can tell you that the crime severity index in first nations communities in Ontario, in the nine communities, is five times the provincial average. As a matter of fact, the top five in terms of the crime severity index in the province of Ontario are all in first nations communities, policed by first nations police officers.

Our officers work alone for extended periods of time. They are the only person in the community. Many times their backup is a member of the band council.

I was interested in listening to the RCMP say that they have a minimum of three officers in the community. I think I would die to have that luxury.

My officers respond to gun calls on a continual basis. As a matter of fact, around Christmastime we had a gun call where 114 rounds were fired. During that call we had two officers. The most senior officer there had six months on the job. That's normal.

Our incidents of post-traumatic stress disorder are much higher than those of normal police services because of the working conditions our officers have to work under. Five years ago, the Kashechewan coroner's inquest recommended that an operational review be done of first nations or Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service.

That was over five years ago. That operational review has yet to happen. Although there is a commitment by the federal government to actually fund it—that goes back a couple of years—we have received no funding in order to do that operational review. That would really go a long way to actually identify what the needs are.

The last area is infrastructure. It can best be illustrated by this example. We have no radio system, per se. Our radio system is basically an extension of the phone lines in our remote fly-in communities. Somebody phones in to the detachment and it's forwarded to their radio. But the range for those portable radios is about one kilometre. It's not monitored on a 24-7 basis. There is no lifeline. If the officers are alone and need backup, they actually have to dial in a keypad on their radio to get the OPP communications centre in either Thunder Bay or North Bay.

Quite frankly, that would not meet any health and safety standard, whether it be federal or provincial legislation, yet we do this on continual basis. I've been in communities where two officers on a portable radio couldn't talk to each other when they were a kilometre away. That's quite normal.

There is a fix for this problem. It's very minimal when you look at the global budget for the government. It's about $1.5 million. With the provincial and federal share, we could have the same system that the OPP have in their three remote fly-in communities. The system could be monitored by the Ontario Provincial Police.

In summary, I would like people to wrap their minds around the notion that the self-administered first nations policing program in Ontario is not an enhancement; it's a replacement. We are much more efficient. Public Safety Canada has done their own study that shows we've been able to reduce, for example, violent crime in our communities by 30%. Our clearance rates are much higher than most police services throughout Canada, and it's really a community-based policing program.

The first nations policing program has been a program for 17 years. It's time to change that. There is no legislative framework for first nations policing. I do know that a number of subcommittees are actually working on this right now, but it's time to move forward.

As I said, first nations policing in Ontario is in a state of crisis. That's not an emotional statement; that's a fact. We're going to run out of money by the end of this year. It will be very interesting to see what happens at that point.

I can tell you this: the community leadership in the first nations communities that we police want their own police service. They want to be policed by their own people. They want the same services that are afforded to every other citizen in this country. You live in communities where you get proper and quality police service. That's something we should be able to afford all the people in this country, regardless of their race or ancestry.

Meegwetch. Thank you.

● (0955)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chief Herman.

We were able to re-establish our connection with Whitehorse. We are very pleased to welcome Mr. Robert Riches, assistant deputy minister, community justice and public safety, Department of Justice.

Are we coming in loud and clear?

Mr. Ronald MacMillan (Deputy Minister, Department of Justice, Government of Yukon): Yes, you are, Mr. Chair.

My name is Ron MacMillan. Can you hear me okay?

The Chair: Yes, you're coming in fine. Thank you, Mr. MacMillan.

Do you have an opening statement?

Mr. Ronald MacMillan: I'm going to have Mr. Riches make the actual presentation, Mr. Chair. He will outline some of the initiatives we've undertaken through cooperation with the Department of Justice, RCMP, and other groups in relation to policing.

At the end of that, Robert—or Bob—will also refer to a policing symposium that we had here last September, which had great participation from across the country.

I'll call upon Mr. Riches, who is our assistant deputy minister responsible for policing, to make the presentation.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Riches.

Mr. Robert Riches (Assistant Deputy Minister, Community Justice and Public Safety, Department of Justice, Government of Yukon): Thank you for the invitation to speak.

In Yukon communities the continuous services delivered by government and non-government agencies, often in remote and isolated settings, include nursing, emergency services, social services, and front-line services. The environments demand the most from service providers and are in high-visibility, high-consequence environments.

Northern remote communities are also expensive to police. The cost to territorial government—70% of our dollars—is now upwards of $200,000 per member. Given the other funding pressures faced by contract policing jurisdictions, it becomes increasingly challenging to rationalize and justify new funding for policing initiatives at the expense of other government programs.

The themes I will touch on in my presentation, which were reflected in the review of our police force and at the police symposium last September, reflect the initiatives that improve front-line police service delivery and also improve public confidence. In certain cases, they serve to contain downstream policing costs.

In April 2010, Yukon launched a review of their police force. There were very public and negative high-profile incidents at that time that had caused public confidence in the RCMP to erode and their role in the public service to be called into question.

I'll speak briefly about the review. The purpose of the review was to engage the public, the service providers, and the RCMP in dialogue with the goal of rebuilding trust and addressing the concerns and arriving at recommendations in order to improve the quality of policing services in the territory.

The review was co-chaired by the Department of Justice, the RCMP “M” Division, and the Council of Yukon First Nations. The co-chairs received guidance from advisory committee members who represented women's groups, Yukon municipalities, the Government of Yukon, and RCMP “M” Division.

We held over 60 public and targeted meetings and received written submissions. Several service agencies were engaged to assist clients to participate. Submissions were brought forward by first nations leadership, citizens, women's organizations, and other members of the public.

Yukoners and RCMP members spoke about the unique role the RCMP have in the community and highlighted the importance of developing the relationships between police and communities. Citizens said they wanted the RCMP to understand the culture and values of the community and to have the knowledge, skills, and attributes required to police in the north and to work with vulnerable people in response to domestic violence and sexualized assault. Citizens said that communication needed improvement. They were concerned about accountability, the disciplinary process, and improvements that could be made to help the public better understand their rights in the complaints process.

We had eight months of dialogue with citizens and submitted a report to the Minister of Justice. We called the report “Sharing Common Ground”. It outlines the foundation for establishing a new relationship between Yukon citizens and the RCMP. It creates a blueprint for a quality of service that will benefit all Yukon citizens.

The report had 33 recommendations. I'll talk a little about the progress on some of the recommendations. Communication, collaboration, and inclusiveness are pillars of the implementation. Priorities for leadership were established collaboratively by the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Department of Justice, and the RCMP. We've been working together to ensure that progress is made, and we're working together towards implementation. We have various partners engaged in implementation, with a range of specific agencies and service providers and other methods of implementation related to the individual recommendations.

As a result of the collaboration and commitment to implementation, key changes have been made in our approach to policing. I'll review some of those changes. We now have the Yukon Police Council. The council was established in 2012 to provide an opportunity for citizens to participate and have a role in directing the police service they receive. The Yukon Police Council is a unique approach to the involvement of Yukon citizens in shaping a public service that is important to them when they are most vulnerable. A key piece of the council's work plan for the initial year and on an ongoing basis is to develop a process for engaging with and incorporating community voices into recommendations they make on Yukon's police service.

In the fall of 2012, the council sought public input into their recommendations on policing priorities. The council analyzed the information and recently provided recommendations to the Minister of Justice. These recommendations were carefully considered and form the basis of the minister's policing priorities for Yukon. Over the coming year the council will continue to engage first nations service providers.

A number of initiatives flowing from “Sharing Common Ground” are working towards providing more effective police service delivery and seeking to contain or avoid future costs. These include the arrest processing unit, which is a new model of supervision and facility for short-term detention of persons taken into RCMP custody, a joint initiative cost-shared between the Government of Yukon and the RCMP.

● (1000)

The unfortunate death of Raymond Silverfox in December 2008 highlighted the need for improving how we deal with vulnerable persons taken into RCMP custody. Through the review of the police force and in partnership with the RCMP, we examined ways that we could better provide safe and secure custody, and ensure that we uphold the duty of care for persons arrested by the RCMP.

The arrest processing unit ensures the highest tentative care and protection for persons taken into RCMP custody, including acutely intoxicated persons and other vulnerable clients. The arrest processing unit is an innovative model that provides on-site medical assessment and care for RCMP prisoners, as well as supervision by corrections officers who have specialized training. The arrest processing unit is joined with the existing Whitehorse Correctional Centre, which completed construction in 2011.

We're adding a piece to that correctional centre, and while it's being built we've moved the prisoners from the RCMP into the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. They're currently housed in the admissions discharge area. It's an interim approach, but it's already had positive results in freeing up front-line police members from supervising prisoners. Now they're back out patrolling the community.

The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team, ASIRT, is another initiative we've taken. We have an agreement with the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team, a civilian investigative agency, to conduct independent investigations of serious incidents involving RCMP members in Yukon. Independent oversight is key to increasing public confidence. ASIRT has been called in to carry out independent investigations of serious incidents, and to review RCMP internal investigations of less serious incidents. It's added a strong element of public accountability and confidence to these investigations overall.

We have a cost-sharing agreement with the RCMP, and we have an intergovernmental agreement between Yukon and Alberta for this service. It's a small jurisdiction. We couldn't afford to set up a regime on our own, but we heard loud and clear from citizens that the RCMP shouldn't be investigating the RCMP. So we moved forward on this. The Alberta government was very cooperative, and we appreciate their help.

We are also working to improve our response to domestic violence and sexual assault. There is a multi-sector community made up of representatives from women's organizations, the Yukon government, the RCMP, the CYFN, and the federal prosecution service. We have a committee and they work together. Their role is to develop a comprehensive framework for coordinating Yukon's response to domestic violence and sexualized assault.

The committee is working together to clarify RCMP policies relating to dual charging and current RCMP policy and practice regarding the use of primary aggressor assessment in cases of domestic violence. The committee has supported the RCMP in updating manuals on division policy and procedure. It's opened up lines of communication and coordinated service provision on specialized teams that are essential to service improvements.

To that end, we've created a specialized response unit. This came from another recommendation in “Sharing Common Ground”. We've established a new RCMP unit, a specialized response unit within “M” Division, to investigate domestic violence and sexualized assault.

The specialized response unit was established and has a mandate to provide guidance, assistance, and oversight to the detachment members who are conducting domestic violence and sexual assault investigations, and to act as lead investigators in instances of domestic violence and sexual assault where specialized service is required.

The specialized response unit also identifies training and divisional needs related to domestic violence and sexual assault. This training has started to take place in small detachments in the territory. In a small jurisdiction like ours it's unrealistic to expect that we could have personnel with specialized skills available at each detachment, but we recognize the importance of these specialized skills and additional resources.

This unit is available to detachments, and it provides mentorship and oversight to improve skills across the division. The unique element of this initiative is the partnership with the RCMP on working with an independent evaluator looking at the performance of the team over time. This is one way we can ensure that this unique policing response is getting the results that we intended.

We also have community participation on the selection of detachment commanders. Budgets are limited, but some of the things that we can do we've done at a minimal cost and demonstrated a significant shift towards meeting community service needs. For example, several communities participated in the selection of new detachment commanders. Working together in this way is helping to improve communication between citizens, leadership, and the RCMP. This process is now written into divisional policy and will occur each time a vacancy for a detachment commander arises. We've had really positive feedback from first nations and others who have been involved in this process.

● (1005)

As was mentioned, we acknowledge that our jurisdiction is not alone in the issues of policing in northern Canada. The dynamics of policing in this unique environment, the demands, the challenges, the success stories and innovations, were all explored at a symposium on policing in northern and remote Canada held in Whitehorse in September 2012.

The symposium brought together 120 presenters and participants with an interest in sharing information and raising questions about policing in northern and remote communities. Our officials attended this symposium and took part in dialogue about the future of policing in the north and remote Canada. Unfortunately, it was a symposium I was not able to attend, but people I work with every day talked about what they felt at the symposium and how well it worked. They talked about what attributes and skills we need to see in our force members, what supports need to be in place for police officers to carry out their work effectively. They spoke about our vision for collaborative policing, and it involving environment, and about innovation in measuring our efforts.

As public agencies, police services rely on evidence-based programs, policies, and procedures to guide their interventions and interactions with the communities they serve. Many of these programs, policies, and procedures have been developed through research focused on policing large urban centres in Canada and around the world. But for police agencies working in northern and remote communities, there's a need to examine policing in this unique environment, looking at what works and what does not, and to regularly look more closely at the effectiveness of various models of service delivery.

Informed decision-making will provide the groundwork for northern and remote police services to develop appropriate policies and procedures to guide police work, and to enhance partnerships with communities.

The symposium also enables us to keep the issue of policing in northern Canada on the national agenda.

● (1010)

The Chair: If I could interrupt you for a moment. I'm wondering if you are getting close to the end because there are members here who want to question you.

Mr. Robert Riches: Yes, certainly. I'm almost there.

With Public Safety Canada, we're now developing an advanced research agenda of effectiveness and efficiency in policing the north, service delivery models, community engagement measurement, and healthy communities.

We examined different models of service delivery, things like seasonal policing, relief units, community safety, community program officer pilots, and first nations community policing models. We're moving beyond the concept of integration, because we're hoping to move toward an integrated dispatch model for Yukon, involving the RCMP, EMS, and Wildland Fire Management.

I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Riches.

We'll move to another Yukoner, Mr. Leef, please, the member of Parliament for Yukon

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all our witnesses.

Thank you, Chief Herman.

I'll direct my questions to Mr. Riches.

First, I want to congratulate you on all the work you've done in the justice field, Mr. Riches. Of course, this year your being awarded with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal was well deserved for your work in Yukon and in B.C. Congratulations on the achievements that the government has managed to deal with on the "Sharing Common Ground" report. I've read the update report and I'm really impressed with how much has been accomplished in a short period of time, based on that review. We had the deputy commissioner of the RCMP here, who had been in Yukon a week or so ago. He had glowing comments about what he saw in the Yukon in terms of the work you've accomplished.

I want to ask you specifically about the arrest processing unit. You talked about the higher standard of care that's going on there, and the joint work with the RCMP on that. At this point—I know it hasn't been in place a long time—are you able to measure any of the recidivism rates? When you're sending people out with a higher quality of care, that in turn should help reduce that revolving door that the RCMP might have witnessed in terms of releasing prisoners out of the Whitehorse detachment itself. Have you been able to measure any of the recidivism rates from that higher standard of care that you're delivering to the people who are coming through that arrest processing unit, or is it too early to tell right now?

Mr. Robert Riches: As you said, we've been operating for a short period of time, so it would be early to talk about that. I think we've seen some success in some individual citizens who we've been dealing with for a long time. This is a small town, so you really notice when there's a change in folks who you usually see on the street all the time. A couple of our long-term residents who were frequent visitors to the RCMP station have progressed through the system. They've been dealt with by our community wellness court and with our integrated case management approach, and we're seeing some successes.

As far as actual research, though, I don't have results yet.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Do you have an aim to measure that as this is developing?

● (1015)

Mr. Robert Riches: Yes. What we're doing is tracking attendance. We're tracking who the police are bringing to us, how long they are away from us, and when they are back. Hopefully in a year or so we should have something to have a look at.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Can you touch on what work's being done at the Northern Institute of Social Justice particularly around the career orientation program and the recruitment of first nations and women? How do you see that playing out in the future?

Mr. Robert Riches: We've had the delivery of one program so far for persons interested in entering the field of justice with the Northern Institute of Social Justice. It's a short program for people who are interested in entering policing. We have targeted the program towards first nations and women. The first offering had about a dozen attendees, among whom a couple are pursuing work, and one has been hired actually in the Department of Justice and is working in my division.

The NISJ is working with us now and with first nations on developing cultural competency training for officers working in communities in Whitehorse. As you know, there are about 14 first nations in the Yukon with varied cultures and differences between each of them. This is work that's going on with the NISJ and first nations through a project that came directly out of "Sharing Common Ground" and that's funded by the Department of Justice, but they are working with the CYFN as the coordinators of that project.

Mr. Ryan Leef: In the Yukon we have the safer communities and neighbourhoods, SCAN, unit in the legislation. Of course, they don't have a policing mandate, but the work they do focusing on drug houses, prostitution, and bootlegging operations must defer some of the costs of policing. The great work they have been able to achieve over the years certainly must have resulted in seeing a reduction in some of the more prolific homes that are involved in drug trafficking.

Can you comment at all on the cost aspect of how important it is to have other legislation and other agencies that work in tandem with the police without necessarily having a policing mandate that can support crime reduction strategies in the territory?

Mr. Robert Riches: In Yukon we believe SCAN has formed a really important role in enforcement and the improving of neighbourhoods. The downtown of Whitehorse had historical problems with a house that was there for years which the citizens of downtown had problems with.

This legislation came into force. The officers assigned to that thing work well. That house no longer operates. It has been torn down as a matter of fact, and Habitat for Humanity has replaced it with another home.

We have seen improvement in neighbourhoods throughout the Yukon. Citizens are pleased with the results and feel that it's a place they can go to where they are anonymous. Because they are dealing with a problem in their own neighbourhood, often citizens are afraid to call the police. They are afraid of the results of that, but they will give SCAN a call and let them know about activity.

SCAN can then monitor it and take some action in moving those people out of that neighbourhood and disrupt the criminal activity. I think it's important to disrupt that activity. Then once the activity is disrupted, the police are aware of the action, and they can track it and watch it. There has been real successful cooperation between SCAN and the RCMP in Yukon. We continue to work together on investigations. It is a lower cost model for surveillance for sure to use Yukon government employees than it is to use RCMP members. It's probably almost one-third the cost.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you very much. I think my time is coming to a conclusion so I just want to once again congratulate you, Mr. Riches, on the excellent work you have done in Yukon with the Department of Justice and your accomplishments with the "Sharing Common Ground" report.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Leef.

We'll move to Mr. Rafferty, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you very much, Chair.

If we get interrupted by votes, I wonder if we could have all of our witnesses back at a later date if they get interrupted.

The Chair: Your time is running. We'll deal with that if we face it.

Mr. John Rafferty: One of the things that police services need is long-term funding so you can plan and make those positive changes to police services that you can.

Chief Herman, Minister Toews said, and I don't know if it was in the House, but he certainly announced there was a five-year funding agreement in place now with first nations police services, and yet in your opening remarks you talked about not having enough money to finish this fiscal year likely and funding ending in 2014. I don't get what the discrepancy is there.

● (1020)

Chief Robert Herman: I think that when the minister made the announcement he talked about sustainable funding. Sustainable funding I guess is in the eye of the beholder, so from a government standpoint, it certainly would meet sustainable for planning for their budget, but from an operational aspect, it's not sustainable funding.

The agreement that we are in right now is a one-year extension of the last negotiated agreement, which is from 2008. The government may have committed five years of money, although we have yet to see what that model looks like and if there are any enhancements. If there are, I suspect they won't really meet our needs. But at the end of the day, until they sit down and actually honour the tri-party agreement and have a negotiation with the first nations that are the third signatory to that agreement, there isn't sustainable funding.

Mr. John Rafferty: This reminds me that I asked the minister some weeks ago during question period, or maybe it was here in committee, if he would be willing to meet with aboriginal leaders who are part of these first nations police service areas. To your knowledge has that happened?

Chief Robert Herman: No. The grand chief for Nishnawbe Aski Nation wrote the minister asking for that meeting following his comments and has received a response from the minister stating that he doesn't have time in his calendar to actually meet with him.

Mr. John Rafferty: The funding for first nations police services in Ontario is partly provincial, at 48%, I think, and then 52% federal. How would you characterize the provincial cooperation, let's say, or the support that they give your police service?

Chief Robert Herman: The province has been good. The province actually enhances the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service through a number of programs. For example, there have been initiatives by the provincial government such as the community safety enhancement programs, and there has been funding through PAVIS, which is the provincial anti-violence intervention strategy. We have an additional six officers funded through those programs. They're fully funded by the province, as opposed to having the federal government—

Mr. John Rafferty: That's ongoing funding?

Chief Robert Herman: That's correct. It's in perpetuity and, of course, perpetuity means the life of the government, so....

Mr. John Rafferty: Yes.

Let me ask you about infrastructure, because I know that's one of the biggest concerns in the remote communities in particular.

How does infrastructure work for police in these communities? Is it the responsibility of the first nations to supply the housing? Who pays for upkeep and so on? How does that work?

Chief Robert Herman: As a police service, we're not allowed to own infrastructure. That's a government rule. Because of that, the first nation is supposed to supply housing for our officers, which they have a tough time doing because they can't even supply housing for their own people. Yet on the other side of the coin, Health Canada has nurses, and there are teachers and emergency medical staff up there who have housing supplied for them by the government. They actually live in very nice housing compared to some of the places that my officers have to stay in.

For detachments, the agreements are between the band and the two levels of government, but the operating costs actually fall upon the police service. It's supposed to be part of our overall funding model, but as I said, 13 new detachments have come online, with four more coming on in the next year, and we've never received any money to actually operate them.

Mr. John Rafferty: I was having a chat a little while ago with a member of Parliament who used to be a police officer, an OPP officer. He indicated that when the OPP transferred the service to NAPS, the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service, everything was fine and everything worked well. What's happened since then? Why the dilemma that you're in now?

Chief Robert Herman: I'm not quite sure about it working well. First of all, the RCMP left the province of Ontario in the early seventies and turned it over to the OPP. When the OPP did it, they basically had the band constable program, which was a tiered level. The OPP would fly in to the communities—the northwest and northeast patrols—to provide policing, but first nations communities didn't want that. They wanted policing. They wanted the same level of policing that was afforded to everybody else in the province. We've tried to provide that, but we just don't have enough resources to do it.

Mr. John Rafferty: Chief Herman, you have a lot of experience in policing. You've spent most of your career in Thunder Bay in the Thunder Bay Police Service, and you ended up as the chief of police in Thunder Bay. You retired and now have moved over to NAPS, so you know about urban first nations policing too. I wonder if you could make a comment on aboriginal policing in an urban setting and the challenges that you have as a police service in the isolated communities.

● (1025)

Chief Robert Herman: Well, first of all, I guess what was an eye-opener for me is when I actually started flying. I've been to 22 of the 24 fly-in communities and have met with the leadership and the officers. I can tell you that in terms of the standards that are in the northern policing communities, if I had tried to get away with that when I was the chief in Thunder Bay, I would have had the Ministry of Labour giving me orders to correct all those deficiencies.

The big question for first nations policing is about what legislation actually applies to it. Because that's iffy, it's hard to get people to come in and say, “No, you have to meet these standards.” I can tell you that the challenges are much greater in first nations policing. The experience that the officers get in one year is probably the equivalent of five years' experience in a municipal setting. They learn to be community officers. It's a different type of policing altogether.

I've spoken to the current chief in Thunder Bay. I've said to him, “For one month, give me the 10 officers who are causing you the most problems. I'll send them up north, and when you get them back, they'll be very happy to work for you.” That's the type of environment we work in. It's sad that I have to say that, but that's the reality.

Mr. John Rafferty: Could you, very briefly, talk about retention of officers? I know that's a problem.

Chief Robert Herman: In our service, we've lost about 50% of our officers in the last three years. About 52% of our officers are non-native and 48% are native. It's very difficult to recruit native officers from the communities.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Gill, please.

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also want to thank our witnesses.

My question is for Mr. Riches.

Can you tell us what, in your view, are currently the greatest inefficiencies within the criminal justice system as it affects remote areas, and what solutions are currently being proposed to the ongoing problems in these remote areas?

Mr. Robert Riches: In Yukon, which is what I can speak of, as other people have said, the RCMP or the police are often all things to all people, and they're an expensive option. For us, the ability to move other service providers into the communities is sometimes limited, so part of the issue is how we support the RCMP and other police in their work, but also support communities with appropriate responses.

We're a small jurisdiction; we have very little ability to achieve economy of scale. We have three-member detachments in which members need holidays or need to move out, so we need to backfill them. Often this is done by air. It's all very expensive.

I would have to agree with others who have spoken that there are issues for which we need to have different resources, and things such as SCAN are part of this. Social services responses are part of it. Providing social services is really the largest cost.

Mr. Parm Gill: What immediate changes do you feel can be made to facilitate and increase policing efficiencies using existing resources in remote areas?

Mr. Robert Riches: I think we need to talk about how we help police forces, how we help detachments, how we help one community serve another community, providing for better economy of scale in places that are close enough together to do that. Yukon is a big jurisdiction, and detachments are a long way apart. These are some of the things we need to do.

Among some of the things we have done, we have a correctional centre that's been built for holding prisoners. Actually, holding police prisoners there has created an immediate efficiency. Instead of valuable police time being spent on detention, it is now being spent out on the streets working which is what they should be doing.

This is something we can't accomplish in communities, but the numbers of arrests and the numbers of people we hold in communities is very small in Yukon.

Mr. Parm Gill: Is there any technology currently being used to track and share information among the parties involved in reducing crimes in these remote areas?

Mr. Robert Riches: I would say that the only mechanisms are informal mechanisms between people talking to each other. We have one police force in Yukon. We have the RCMP, and the RCMP communicates very well within its own organization. But as far as working with social service agencies and others is concerned, informal links are developed over time.

● (1030)

Mr. Parm Gill: Can you tell us whether resources in mental health and social services are having a direct impact on day-to-day policing operations in some of these areas?

Mr. Robert Riches: What I can tell you is that resources are thin, and as I said, the geography is large. We do our best here to get services to communities. Most mental health services, etc., are centred in Whitehorse at this time, and people are brought to Whitehorse for those services. Certainly the community nursing stations in Yukon do an excellent job of working with people in the communities as a first point of contact, but for long-term care, it's necessary to move people to Whitehorse.

Mr. Parm Gill: Would you be able to share with us whether you're aware of any other projects that you consider successful in increasing efficiency in policing efforts and that result in overall crime reduction?

Mr. Robert Riches: We're talking about crime reduction. One thing that is successful is the prolific offender management program, in which we have social service agencies, mental health staff, corrections staff, and police all working together on a caseload of about 20 or so people who are the most prolific offenders, whom we see the most. They provide wraparound services and structured case management, and those people tend to not be involved in as many criminal acts.

The one thing that does happen, though, is that there's an increase in breach charges. Administration of justice charges are increased over the short term, but over the long term they begin to decrease as the people are monitored for longer on the program. I think the prolific offender management program is a good model.

The community wellness court model is another one. It is also an integrated case management model, for people with substance abuse or mental health issues, who enter a different court stream. It's a case-managed court stream. We operate it out of a community wellness centre in the community. It's also an integrated approach. We work a lot with people with FASD and others.

These are things that aren't high cost to operate; they mostly use existing resources that are just rechannelled into more intensive case management and wraparound services, because we're managing the clients by risk.

Mr. Parm Gill: Here is another quick question for Chief Herman.

Chief Herman, policing costs are increasing across Canada at a time when governments are taking action to reduce deficits. What do you see as an additional effective measure that can be taken to streamline efforts, reduce costs, and maintain the high quality of policing and protection for all Canadians?

Chief Robert Herman: I'll be very frank about this. I think you need to fund self-administered first nations policing properly, which would mean increasing the budget. At the end of the day, if first nations policing fails and they walk away from this model, the cost to the government will be approximately three times what it is now to police those communities.

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

We will now go to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to pursue the issue of funding. The minister announced an extension to funding. For how many years would that be?

Chief Robert Herman: The minister announced sustainable funding for five years.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'm trying to remember now, was there an increase relative to the funding levels prior, or was it just a straight extension of existing funding?

Chief Robert Herman: The last negotiated funding was in 2008. There has been a cash injection into the budgets over two years, which represented about 8%, but that 8% does not meet the actual operational costs of the service. There really hasn't been any increase to the funding since 2010.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Except for that cash injection, which was for what?

Chief Robert Herman: It was to help cover some of the costs we had.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But these were not operational costs, did you say?

Chief Robert Herman: We have global budgets. We don't have capital or operational budgets. We just have global budgets.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is the level for the next five years on an annual basis the same as it has been in the past, except for that two-year injection of cash?

Chief Robert Herman: I can't answer that beyond this year, because this year I know that the funding level is based on the same formula. I don't know what it's going to be from a go-forward perspective.

● (1035)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But this year it is.

Is the money allotted to the different first nations police forces in a way that uses some kind of objective formula? Is it based on population that you serve, or something else? How do they decide which first nations police force gets how much money out of that global budget?

Chief Robert Herman: I can't speak to the CTAs. I can tell you about the first nations policing program in Ontario. It's based on a cost per officer, and it's much lower than what my friend from Whitehorse said. He said that somewhere around $200,000 is the cost per officer. It's around $130,000 or $140,000.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

Are you stuck in a situation whereby both governments, Ontario and Ottawa, say that first nations policing is very important and that it's your responsibility?

Chief Robert Herman: They tend to point fingers,

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: There's a lot of pointing of fingers, and in the meantime you don't get an upgraded radio system. Is that what happens?

Chief Robert Herman: It's interesting. I've heard plenty of times from the federal side of it that policing or justice is a provincial responsibility under the Constitution, but I suppose health care is as well, and other services.

At the end of the day, I think there's a fiduciary responsibility for the federal government to be part of the solution. If the finger-pointing goes on, these problems are not going to be fixed.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's right.

You said something, and Mr. Rafferty alluded to it before, that on December 31, 2013, certain funding will come to an end, or you'll have to lay off some people. Could you repeat that?

Chief Robert Herman: It was a police officer recruitment fund and it was a five-year program.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Oh, that, of course, yes.

Chief Robert Herman: I lost 80% of my service.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That was 80% of your service.

Chief Robert Herman: That's correct.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's not made up by the province?

Chief Robert Herman: No.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Could that be reflected later on in higher crimes rates, perhaps?

Chief Robert Herman: You'll see an impact across the board. There are communities now where we don't have police in the community for two or three weeks at a time because we don't have officers.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

Whatever time is left, Chair, I know my colleague has a question.

The Chair: Okay, we'll move to Mr. Rafferty, then.

Mr. John Rafferty: That's very cooperative. Thank you very much, Francis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's kind, not cooperative.

Mr. John Rafferty: It's very kind, in fact.

One of the things we've heard from a number of witnesses is the use of other professionals, in some cases in lieu of police officers, to provide a better service but also to reduce some costs. I'm thinking of the north.

Maybe both Mr. Riches and Chief Herman could answer this.

The recruitment of those professionals, of course, is very difficult. In northern Ontario there aren't enough doctors; there aren't enough of all sorts of professionals.

Let's start with you, Chief Herman. If you had the opportunity in the first nations you're responsible for, of having an officer working with a mental health professional, for example, would you see some merit in that, assuming that professional can be found, and also perhaps a cost reduction?

Chief Robert Herman: We do that now. We work with nurses, and we work with the professionals in the communities.

Interestingly enough, in some communities if no police are present, Health Canada will pull the nurses out of that community. We look at those efficiencies. Our officers are very involved in these communities.

You have to understand that these communities could have 250 people to 400 people, so it's a totally different style of policing. We look for those efficiencies, but as an example, it is difficult to find guards to guard prisoners. We have officers who will work a 20-hour shift because there is nobody to guard the prisoner.

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Riches, would you like to comment on that?

Mr. Robert Riches: I think there is a lot of value in other services linking with police to do business. Often when I travel in communities, I hear people describe what they need in their community and they describe what they see as a police officer, but when I listen carefully to what they describe, they're describing a social worker or a mental health worker. I think communities know what they need. We need to help them get what they need, but a police officer isn't always the answer to the problems. As a matter of fact, it's very seldom the real answer. I think police intervention should be restricted, but it's important that we get the right help to the right people.

An expensive police officer, at our cost of $200,000 a year and about $280,000 a year total cost, is not always the answer. I would have to agree that a mental health person or a social worker would be, in a lot of cases, a more appropriate response to the issues that people in small communities describe.

● (1040)

Mr. John Rafferty: Okay, thank you very much.

That leads me to my next question which is about auxiliary officers or volunteer people. I wonder, Chief Herman, if you could describe in your police service how that is used in the communities or if it's used. Also, I wonder if there is a line that can't be crossed; in other words, you need an officer for something and you can't use a volunteer. Would you like to comment on that?

Chief Robert Herman: We do have auxiliary officers. We have about 40 in different communities. They volunteer so many hours a month as part of their agreement to be an auxiliary police officer.

The reality is, as I said, the crime severity index is five times the provincial average. We go to gun calls on a daily basis in the communities, so there are calls where you have to have a police officer.

We look at alternative methods of getting people to help us. As I said, I can tell you that many times our backup is a member of the band council, so we're putting them at risk in responding to these calls.

Mr. John Rafferty: It's pretty clear that funding perhaps over the last decade has not been sufficient to build a strong enough first nations police service, and the money needs to be spent.

Do you see any savings anywhere? Do you see anywhere that your police service, for example, could save money if legislation were different, or something like that?

Chief Robert Herman: We look for efficiencies all the time in how we police. I think we do a pretty good job of it, of living within the budget we have, but the reality is that we just can't live within that budget anymore.

I can tell you that if you look at first nations policing from an efficiency standpoint and an effectiveness standpoint, we are much more effective and we are much more efficient. If it collapses, as I said earlier, the cost to the governments will be probably three times what it is now. I know that Ontario has actually looked at this to see what the cost is.

When you talk about efficiencies, I hear these numbers thrown around. I'd love to have $200,000 per year per officer. I could run an excellent police service on that. But that's not going to happen.

Mr. John Rafferty: Let me ask both of you, Mr. Riches and Chief Herman, about communications.

Communications came up in the first hour with our witnesses from the RCMP, in particular surrounding broadband but in general police services, how you deal with that in the Yukon and in first nations policing in northern Ontario.

I wonder if you could make some comments about communications in general, and then talk about broadband and so on. I'm just thinking that if this kind of infrastructure were there, surely it would make your service more efficient. From a safety perspective, of course, it would be enormous. You might actually even save money if that service were there.

Chief Robert Herman: I'll go first.

I believe governments are actually addressing that issue. They are putting fibre optic cable in most of the first nations communities in northern Ontario. That project is well under way. Bell Canada is actually up there doing it.

It will make us more efficient from a records keeping standpoint in that we can connect to our servers, but it will not address the issue of an actual communications system.

The reality is there are OPP detachments in northern Ontario that use what's called an MSAT radio system. Their calls can be monitored from a communications centre in Thunder Bay or North Bay. In some cases, those communities are 20 miles across the lake from the first nations communities. We don't have that capability.

Yes, there are improvements. You're going to see this whole issue of Internet really explode in the north. I can tell you right now that there are first nations communities that tell about a meeting by going on Facebook, so it is happening.

The Chair: Very quickly, Mr. Rafferty.

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Riches, would you like to make a comment about communications in the Yukon?

Mr. Robert Riches: Yes.

Actually, we have excellent radio infrastructure, communications infrastructure, in the Yukon. We replaced the system about three years ago on a cost share agreement with the RCMP. We have an integrated system that all Government of Yukon is on throughout the territory. It's an excellent system. The RCMP cost share with us on the operational costs of that system.

Internet broadband is expanding in the north, and it's the intention of governments to expand it further. In the Yukon we're lucky. We have roads everywhere, not like in the Northwest Territories or Nunavut, other than Old Crow. Our communications are fairly good, and our access to broadband is improving all the time.

● (1045)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Riches and Mr. Rafferty.

Mr. Norlock, it looks like you're going to have the last statement today.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses, through you, for appearing today.

I will just throw out a few numbers for the chief of police.

Chief Herman, when you were chief of the Thunder Bay police and you needed two officers, instead of going before a chief and council, you went before a mayor and council. They said either yes or no, because the people of Thunder Bay paid for it.

Let me go through some numbers for you.

The minister just signed an agreement for first nations policing for $612 million, which is a 30% increase over the last agreement.

The area covered by NAPS in Ontario got $15 million under the economic action plan for the construction of nine police offices, some of which I used to work at, including Fort Albany, Fort Severn, and a few others. So I guess from the standpoint of the average Canadian citizen who would be out there....

I do know what you mean when you say there was a different kind of policing. When I policed on the northeast patrol, we had things like peacekeepers. We had a first nations police force. The peacekeepers were.... I can remember lying in bed and talking a first nations police officer through a gun call. So I understand what you're saying.

Some of those numbers need to be out there, because there's a 30% increase.

I guess if you're saying that you want the same kind of policing in southern Ontario, the OPP has contracts in southern Ontario, and if a community wants more, they have to pay more.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Norlock. Unfortunately, our time is up.

I do want to thank the witnesses for being here today. We had a different presentation today from some of the remote and aboriginal policing. So we appreciate your being here today.

The meeting is adjourned.