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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio





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• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

Good afternoon, everyone. I'm going to get this meeting started. We have lots of business to get to.

Welcome to meeting number 103 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

Today, our witnesses are online.

I'm sure the clerk has already shared with you that you can choose your language of choice, whether that be French or English. We ask that you mute and unmute your microphone, depending on whether you're speaking or not.

I'll remind everybody in the room to make sure that the earpieces stay away from the microphones, as there will be a negative impact for our translators.

I'll remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair. If we have a speaking list, I'll be sure to get your names.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, November 27, 2023, the committee is resuming its study of the implementation of the red dress alert.

Online today, we have two excellent witnesses coming to us from the Greater Sudbury Police Service. We have Clee Lieverse, detective constable and missing person investigator, and Darrell Rivers, constable.

We've provided five minutes for both of you together, since you are both from the Sudbury police force, but we will have until 4:30 to ask our questions.

I'm going to pass the floor over to both of you. Decide which one of you is going to take the floor. You have five minutes. When you see my arms start flailing, wind it down.

You have the floor.

**Detective Clee Lieverse (Detective Constable, Missing Person Investigator, Greater Sudbury Police Service):** Good afternoon, Madam Chair and committee members.

First of all, I appreciate the invitation to speak on the important topic of the red dress alert today. I acknowledge that we're the only police service speaking here, or at least, we're the only one that I've been made aware of.

For those who aren't aware, the city of Greater Sudbury covers a land mass of approximately five times the city of Toronto, while it's home to only about 160,000 people.

The Greater Sudbury Police Service acknowledges the historical role the police have played in Canadian history. I also understand why some don't want my police service, or any police service, involved in this important endeavour. However, we all need to be partners in this red dress alert in order to make it more effective.

I encourage family members, community members and community partners to conduct welfare checks on their loved ones when it's appropriate. However, if community-based efforts fail to locate a person, the police should be involved at the earliest possible stage.

Members of police services have investigative resources that members of the general public simply do not. Ontario and several other provinces have an act of legislation, such as the Missing Persons Act, that can be utilized by police officers to obtain the information that wouldn't otherwise be available. We're able to utilize this investigative tool to access information such as cellphone records and financial records, and medical records when appropriate, as well as Internet records. These investigative tools are available only to members of the police service, and are used solely to locate missing persons and ensure their safety. We also have records from other police services from across the country and, when necessary, we can reach outside of Canadian borders.

Early access to these investigative resources brings a higher likelihood of the best possible outcomes when searching for a missing person.

When—not if—this red dress alert system becomes available, I see it as being a valuable resource to assist in locating your loved ones. In order to be effective, I believe the system needs to be tiered. It needs to be scalable from a local to a provincial and then a national alert when the situation calls for it. It needs to be flexible to address the needs of both the local community and the nation as a whole. It needs to balance the privacy of a missing person with the need for assistance from the public. The system needs to use clearly defined risk factors, indicating when an alert is utilized and what the level and scope of that alert would be.

We need to grab the attention of the public with these alerts when they're sent out. We also have to take into consideration alert fatigue. We need the community to engage and provide whatever information or tips they have to move the investigation toward the best possible outcome.

Now I'll hand it over to our indigenous liaison officer, Darrell Rivers, to speak further on community engagement.

• (1535)

**Constable Darrell Rivers (Greater Sudbury Police Service):** *Aanii*, Madam Chair, and committee members. My name is Constable Darrell Rivers. I am the indigenous liaison officer for the Greater Sudbury Police Service.

The city of Sudbury has one of the largest growing indigenous populations in Canada and the fastest growing in Ontario. According to StatsCan the city of Sudbury will have the largest urban indigenous population by 2036. There are approximately 22 first nation communities within a two-hour drive of the city, which makes us a hub to access various services in northern Ontario.

In order for the Greater Sudbury Police to best serve the community we live and work in community engagement has been a priority. All police services need to be involved from the onset of every missing persons investigation. The Greater Sudbury Police Service has a long-standing relationship with our indigenous community and agencies since the late nineties when the need for an indigenous liaison officer was identified and also a body of indigenous representatives from various indigenous organizations within the city.

From that our indigenous advisory committee was created. Over the years this committee meets quarterly with our chief of police to discuss issues and challenges from the community and work collaboratively to identify opportunities for solutions. From this co-led body a grant was received and a committee was created to raise awareness within the city through community initiatives and police officer training. One of these initiatives from this collaboration was the creation of the "Indigenous Women and Girls Missing Persons Toolkit and Resource Guide".

At the conclusion of this project a monument was created. An approximately 15-foot aluminum red dress with the words "no more stolen sisters" in the centre of it was placed on the side of the building of one of our community partners. I am the third indigenous liaison officer to sit in this role and benefit greatly from those who came before me. It is imperative that all police services across the country build, and/or rebuild, trust with the community so that when the red dress alert system becomes active it can be a more effective resource to assist police in locating loved ones.

*Meegwetch* for your time and opportunity for this presentation.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for coming here with your testimony today. We will be starting with our six-minute round. Each party will get six minutes to ask questions.

I will start off with Michelle Ferreri from the Conservatives.

Michelle, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Thank you so much, Chair, and thank you so much to our witnesses for this important study.

The first question I would ask is what your current biggest obstacles are in Sudbury. You're both with the Greater Sudbury Police Service. When we have these missing indigenous women or girls, what would be the biggest—

**Det Cleo Lieveise:** I'm not hearing anything.

**The Chair:** One second please.

I will pass it over to the clerk.

One moment please.

We are going to suspend to ensure that everything is working.

• (1535)

(Pause)

• (1540)

**The Chair:** We are back to our meeting. Thank you very much. Our issues have been fixed. We will start this round over again. I'm going to pass the floor to Michelle Ferreri.

Michelle.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you, Chair.

Let's try this one more time.

Thank you for being here and for being part of this really important study. As police officers, you're going to be a very important piece of this discussion.

Currently with the Greater Sudbury Police Service, in terms of ensuring that they are brought home safely, what would you say are your biggest obstacles, without this red dress alert, when that critical time happens when you have a missing indigenous woman or girl?

**Det Cleo Lieveise:** I would say our biggest obstacle when we need that immediate action is the delays associated with putting out our release and having it picked up by the media and then forwarded on to the general public, unless we're dealing with an Amber alert, which obviously goes through a different system. That's where the delay is. While it only might be minutes in the middle of the day when mainstream media is at work, if we put out a release at 2 a.m., it may not get picked up until 8 a.m.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** That is interesting. With regard to the delay, if I understand correctly, you're at the mercy of the media to release whatever you have. You have social media now, which I know a lot of the police in my region rely on heavily, but when you're in rural communities, or you don't have great Wi-Fi, that isn't always reliable.

Is that what I'm hearing?

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** We put it out on our social media. We use Twitter—or X—and Facebook as our two main platforms, but if you're not following us as a police service, you're not going to see it. We encourage family members and other community members to forward our posts or take screenshots, but you're still relying on someone paying attention to someone else's social media. It's not going out to the whole public in general.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Do you find there is a lag in reaching out to the police to report a missing person, indigenous women or girls in particular?

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** I think we've had great success here, and we have good relations with our community. I do know it is an issue. I have had community members here whose loved ones are in a different service area, and either they are hesitant to go to that police service or there are some other barriers in place. It is not a universal barrier, but it is a barrier that does exist.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** It sounds like you have worked very hard to establish important relationships and trust, as I think you said in your opening statement, and that is also critical to this discussion.

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** I'm going to give all that credit, or most of it, to Constable Rivers and his predecessors, but it is something we work on every day. I work particularly closely with our child welfare agencies. We have three indigenous agencies here in the city, and I work with them and our kids every day.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you for that.

I think one of the biggest issues we have had with this study—and I liked how you said it's not a matter of if but when—is the logistics, which is what we really want to carve out in the status of women committee. How do we roll this out? How do we effectively ensure the right person, people or organization is in charge of the red dress alert? Which person or organization should be responsible?

You're here today from the Greater Sudbury Police Service, and you pointed out some concerns about ensuring it is rolled out effectively. In comparison with the Amber alert, what do you think would be the most effective way this alert system could be rolled out?

• (1545)

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** We have spoken about using a tiered system of alerts. Starting at the lowest level, there would be a sort of closed system, which we use right now within our community service agencies, our shelters and our friendship centre and other organizations like that. When somebody goes missing, we literally send an email to those places so they are aware of the person, and then they can reach out to us. These are generally people whom we deal with on a more regular basis.

I love the idea the witness from Nova Scotia, I believe it was, talked about with regard to the Amber alert-like system there, in which more local alerts go out to those who are subscribed to it as a second tier of alert. The general public has the option to know a lot more as there is a lower threshold for sending that alert out. The highest level of alert is reserved for when there is some concern for serious bodily harm, death or, in police lingo, foul play. That is sent out much like an Amber alert to everyone over multiple streams, in-

cluding TV, radio and cellphones and is reserved for capturing everybody's attention when it's actually used.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** I'm curious what your stats are, if you have them, for murdered or missing indigenous women in the Sudbury region.

**The Chair:** Our time is up, so I would ask both gentlemen to send in some of that data, if they have it. That would be fantastic.

I'm now going to turn the floor over to Marc.

Marc, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses of the Greater Sudbury Police Service for the work that you do in my hometown.

Thank you for explaining to the committee what the Greater Sudbury Police Service has done since the 1990s about trying to gain trust with an advisory committee, a dedicated constable and training an officer.

Just quickly, for my first question, what is the composition of your advisory committee that meets with the chief on a regular basis?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** Our indigenous advisory committee comprises members from various indigenous-run organizations within the city. We also invite the three indigenous child welfare agencies and school boards. Each school board has indigenous support workers. We utilize them a lot.

They meet directly with the chief or senior leadership quarterly. We provide updates on the programs and initiatives that we're planning. We get their input. They bring concerns from the community to the table and relay that information directly to the chief.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you.

As you indicated, there are 22 first nations within about two hours. Northern Ontario has 110 first nations, so there is a lot of work to be done with the communities.

I want to follow up on my colleague Michelle Ferreri's questioning about the Amber alert. I want you to give the committee some context.

In northern Ontario, like many other regions in the country, there is the Anishinabek Police Services based out of Sault Ste. Marie; in North Bay, there's that police force; there's also the OPP in other areas outside Greater Sudbury, and then you have the city police.

How do you interact with the three when you're looking at human trafficking and missing indigenous women? How does that fit into that tiered system for alerts that you talked about?

• (1550)

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** I like to say that we have a really good working relationship with the services around us, especially when it comes to missing indigenous people and females in particular.

The closest relationship would be the OPP, which surrounds us. We also have the UCCM police on Manitoulin Island, as well as the Wikwemikong Tribal Police.

If we have information that a missing female is headed that way, might be that going way, has family in that place or simply has been there in the past, we generally have no issues obtaining assistance from that service, even if we don't need them to do anything in particular.

Right now, we use what we call zone alerts, which are targeted messages to police services. If I think someone is headed to Sault Ste. Marie, I can send a zone alert along the highway hitting every detachment and police service between Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie. If I think they are heading to Toronto, I can go from here to Toronto, so that everybody is on the lookout for that female, vehicle or whatever we're looking for.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** We had Pelmorex at the committee.

Do you know about the SOREM committee, which is the committee of public safety services for all the provinces? Are you aware of that group nationally or in Ontario?

**Det Cleo Lieveise:** I am because of what the witness from Pelmorex said.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Okay, thank you.

When you're looking at the Anishinabek police force, the OPP and the municipal police, can you explain your recommendations?

When you talk about the three tiers, I'm assuming you're talking about those zone alerts. There's tier one. We talked about tier two, which is maybe what Sandra from Nova Scotia talked about. Then there's tier three for national alerts.

Can you explain a bit more about your recommendations along that line so the federal government could work?

My next question after that is about the role of the province in all of this.

**Det Cleo Lieveise:** Yes, I think you had it basically correct. They're using the zone alerts or the community alerts at the lowest level and using Pelmorex, the subscription-based model that could be enacted in.... I'm sorry. It's not Pelmorex. It's the Everbridge subscription-based model that communities could have set up. For example, Sudbury does use the Everbridge system for our greater Sudbury alerts. There are mines all around here. If you want to know about a mine disaster, you sign up for that Sudbury alert.

When we get to the level where there is that threat of serious bodily harm, death or foul play for the indigenous female, by using a Weather Network-style or Amber alert-style blast out we could target that, like they do with the piloted grey alerts in Quebec, to localities or larger regions, whether it be northeastern Ontario, northern Ontario in general or the province, and then expanding out from there.

Also, keep that in mind even within Ontario, if you're in Ottawa, that's not far away. If you're in Kenora.... I know that Kenora and Winnipeg have a lot of interactions when it comes to missing parties, human trafficking and travel of indigenous women for sure—

**Mr. Marc Serré:** My time is up.

If you are dealing with men and boys as part of your advisory, can you send that over to the committee as far as any recommendations are concerned? We had our spirit brother colleague here, Mitch Bourbonniere, who talked about how to involve men and boys. If there's anything the Sudbury regional police are doing with the community on that for men and boys, please share it with the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. It's a great request.

Andréanne, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to both witnesses for being here today.

First, I will turn to you, Mr. Lieveise. In your opening remarks, you talked about the risk of alert fatigue. You stressed the importance of issuing these alerts, but I would like you to tell us a little more about what could be done to avoid the risk of alert fatigue among the public.

[*English*]

**Det Cleo Lieveise:** There are a couple of things we can do in order to prevent what we've coined "alert fatigue".

The first is having thresholds. For example, we have in Sudbury in the neighbourhood of 600 missing indigenous persons reported every year. Most of those investigations are concluded swiftly, with no media releases and with no need to publicize that person's information—photo, name, that kind of thing. We need to have a threshold. Until that investigation reaches a threshold, we don't put out the alert. As I said, if we're going to blast something out, whether we're looking at something where foul play, human trafficking, severe bodily harm or death is involved, we're not going to blast everything out to the public—everybody of the public, I should say.

The other one is being targeted. If there's no reason to send to or there's no nexus to another city, then we're keeping it local, so that Thunder Bay isn't getting the notifications from Ottawa unless there is some sort of a nexus between the two.

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** That's similar to what you said in your opening remarks about risk factors. You can follow up on that afterwards if you wish.

We understand the importance of working on a continuum. The alert is not a magic wand that will solve everything. We are really hearing about a continuum of services that goes from education to ways of detecting when someone is a victim, for example. The alert would be at that level.

Then we hear about having the legislative tools to intervene, that is, ensuring that the laws improve and that the justice system can deal with the criminals responsible for these alerts. In other cases, the follow-up is support. Some cases do not fall within the purview of the legal system and instead require that we support people in a kind of rehabilitation. In short, it is important to consider these alerts in the context of a continuum of services.

In your opening remarks, you talked about the importance of following up on the alert, of having tools for that purpose.

I wonder if you could elaborate on the continuum and what tools you would need.

[English]

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** A full range of services would obviously begin before we would have the need for this red dress alert. That comes from strengthening our child welfare laws in relation to protecting the at-risk youth from predators, as well as providing additional funding to the child welfare agencies. I don't think I have to say that there is an overrepresentation of children in out-of-home care in these situations of human trafficking, or when they have gone missing. It's having additional resources available for those services to ensure the kids are getting the proper treatments from whatever trauma they've suffered—the substance abuse issues, lack of housing, etc. There is such a wide spectrum of issues that needs to be addressed to prevent these young girls from going missing.

On after care, when it's a criminal matter, when there are charges laid, I found that while we have a great system in place, obviously additional funding and resources are needed throughout whatever local victims' services are available. For example, here in Sudbury we have Sudbury victim services. They do a fantastic job, but funding is always an issue.

For example, I was in court all week with a young girl, and we were able to lay charges against someone who was luring her and grooming her into trafficking. That matter went on for two years, and she had \$38 of funding left. The standards aren't quite where they need to be as far as that goes. The services have to be available locally.

We're lucky here in Sudbury. We have great services here, but in Pikangikum, they might not. That needs to be available at home.

Did I answer your question?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Yes, absolutely, Mr. Lieverse.

As you say, it is also important to be able to build relationships. You talked about models that exist elsewhere, such as the one in Nova Scotia, which you studied. There may be other models in the United States, where some states have similar alerts, such as California, I believe. It's important to keep abreast of what is happening elsewhere and to learn from it.

• (1600)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'm now going to pass it over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Thank you so much, Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today.

I want to be very clear that my questions are in no way indicative of your intent, or you, personally. However, in terms of the legacy of policing with indigenous peoples in Canada, with a history of either over-policing or under-policing, I would say it is under-policing in the cases of some murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. The National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls calls for justice 9.1 to 9.11 made specific calls for justice.

I'm wondering which calls for justice your police agency has completed to date.

I have limited time.

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** Darrell, I'll leave that one to you.

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** I haven't read all of them, personally, but I will say that since the late 1990s, Sudbury police has played an active role in training our officers with the help of community so that we don't run into those situations here, within the city of Greater Sudbury.

All of our new recruits come with me. They spend three days with me and continue ongoing cultural awareness training and trauma-informed training for their entire career, within the—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you very much. I have limited time.

I find that deeply troubling, because the national inquiry came out over four years ago. You can see my little pamphlet book here. It's probably less than a one-minute read. I think that's indicative of why the relationship continues to be tarnished. It's that and the direct police violence against indigenous women. I'm going to give you two examples.

In northern Manitoba—it was certainly not your police department—police took an indigenous woman home with the permission of the sergeant in charge who said, “You arrested her; you can do whatever the F you want to do” with her. That's one very extreme example.

In Winnipeg, we had the head of the police board come out saying that they were unable to search the landfill. This was announced by the current chief of police. Then we found out that they can. The federal government just provided \$20 million for it.

These calls for justice are very specific. Because you haven't read them, call for justice 9.1 says:

We call on all police services and justice system actors to acknowledge that the historical and current relationship between Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people and the justice system has been largely defined by colonialism, racism, bias, discrimination...

One thing they call for is community oversight, particularly by indigenous peoples, including indigenous women. Do you currently have oversight of your police services by and for indigenous people, which includes indigenous women, in response to this violence?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** We actively utilize our indigenous advisory committee. They are members of the family information liaison unit. A lot of indigenous women sit and have sat on this advisory council since its inception.

We are a larger service than others in northern Ontario. As for missing persons investigations, we have a dedicated detective. I focus on training, youth programs and building relationships within the community.

• (1605)

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Call for justice 9.7 calls upon “police services to partner with front-line organizations that work in service delivery, safety, and harm reduction for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people to expand and strengthen police services delivery.”

What organizations are you currently partnered with?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** We partner with the N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre and the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre.

We have acronyms, and I'm trying to remember the full name of the program. There's the Métis Nation, Compass child and family services and all of the indigenous child welfare agencies. There are numerous outreach programs—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I'm sorry. I'm talking about organizations that work specifically with indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+. I am asking on that specifically, because often the voices of families and people who are directly impacted are excluded from these tables. It's really critical to differentiate between the two. Perhaps you could give us a list of the ones that are directly related to that.

The other—

**The Chair:** Your six minutes are over. We'll get back to you, though.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We're now going into our second round. It will be minutes of five, five, two and a half and two and a half. We'll be able to finish up that round with four minutes and four minutes.

I'm going to start off the first five minutes with Anna.

Anna, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to both of the witnesses for being here.

I'm going to direct my first question to police officer Darrell Rivers.

You stated that you work with the chiefs of 110 first nations in northern Ontario. As the indigenous liaison officer, it seems that

you have good relationships with the first nations chiefs and the community. It sounds like you're doing a great job training all of the other police officers.

From your experience, how can your best practices work with other areas in the province and maybe across the country to ensure that as a nation we're working together to protect all indigenous women?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** Just to clarify, there are 22 first nations within a two-hour drive of Sudbury. We work directly with two first nations communities within our jurisdiction, Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and Wahnapiatae First Nation. We have a great working relationship directly with the chiefs.

As for working with counterparts in my position across the province, we are organizing our inaugural conference for indigenous liaison officers this coming May. We would like to share our experiences on how we have built relationships within the indigenous community, within Sudbury. We would like to share our programs and challenges and to come up with solutions so that we can assist other services across the province and help further their goals for building and rebuilding relationships.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Can you explain to the group here what one of your best practices is when you are forming these relationships? What is something that you do to reach out?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** One of our youth programs.... Again, my focus is youth. I do a lot of programming for that. One of the longest running programs we have is the MKWA ride-along program where we engage indigenous high school students. They learn about policing and do a couple of ride-alongs, and then we bring in the elders.

Another program that we recently started—we'll be in our fourth year—is a moose harvest program. We bring in youth from the welfare agencies for seven sessions throughout the summer, and there we provide cultural knowledge. We partner with the schools. They get high school credit. This year, we're incorporating a restorative justice component.

The big goal for the officers who volunteer for these programs is to have the youth see the officers out of their uniforms and learn that we are people too, that we are not officers all the time.

Those are just two of the several programs that we have here.

• (1610)

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** I appreciate that.

I want to get to another question.

We've heard a lot about the human trafficking. When we travelled last year and went to Sault Ste. Marie, the police force there was in tune with it and basically posted in the airports pictures of individuals who went missing. How do you deal with it?



**Cst Darrell Rivers:** We had a grant for human trafficking. We had two conferences. We focused on frontline workers, on providing them with information on how to identify key signs where young boys or girls were being trafficked. We also had a presentation series throughout the summer where we invited, again, frontline workers from the child welfare agencies and school boards to presentations by our detectives in human trafficking to help them identify signs and to come up with help and resources for them to address those issues.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Would you say that the community is helpful when it comes to identifying these situations? One of the things that we spoke about earlier in the health committee is that it's torture. It's not abuse; it's torture. Would you agree with that?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** Clee?

**The Chair:** Answer very quickly. Give more of a yes-or-no answer.

**Det Clee Lieverse:** Absolutely, it's long-sustained destruction of that person.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We're now going to move it over for the next five minutes to Emmanuella.

Emmanuella, you have the floor.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank both of our witnesses for being here to answer some questions today.

My first question is this: Do all police forces have an indigenous liaison officer?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** They do not.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Would you recommend that all police forces have an indigenous liaison officer?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** Yes, I would.

Here's another one of the goals of the conference that we have coming up. If certain services do not have a dedicated indigenous liaison officer, I ask for a community response officer who can fulfill that role. We provide them with the information that they can take back to their service. They can then review whether they have capacity to have an office like this in their service.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Thank you.

I also was a little bit disappointed to hear that you guys are not necessarily knowledgeable about the calls for justice. However, I do hear in your testimony that there have been actions taken in order to ensure a good relationship with the communities with which you're working. I commend you for that, if it is the truth. Of course, we're only listening to you, and we don't really have stats to back it, but I do hear you and I appreciate that.

Given your experience, Mr. Rivers, what protocols have been or should be implemented to ensure that the response of law enforcement is culturally appropriate? What are the specific things that you've done and that you would give as a recommendation to other

police forces who can do the same in order to better their response and to better their relationship with communities?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** I believe what we do here in Sudbury can be used all across the province with other services. Every single new recruit who comes through this office gets cultural awareness training, which is focused on knowledge that they can use in certain situations at calls for service.

We continue the training with our officers every year. We're in the creation of a knowledge bundle video series. We're creating a video of 45 minutes to an hour on one topic that all members can access. Each year it will be on a different topic. We're in the process of editing the first one in that series, which was on residential schools.

In terms of programs, we get a lot of officers volunteering their time to participate in the moose program, the MKWA program. We just finished a new lacrosse program. There is a version of lacrosse that's played in the Great Lakes region. We brought in culture and history knowledge-keepers for that.

I think there's a lot of opportunity—

• (1615)

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Call for justice 9.5 states:

We call upon all police services for the standardization of protocols for policies and practices that ensure that all cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people are thoroughly investigated.

I'm wondering who exactly would be responsible if this were to be standardized. Who would be responsible to make that happen? Who would that command come from?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** We do have a dedicated equity, diversity and inclusion sergeant. In partnership with this office, we identify any gaps and try to address them as best we can.

As far as missing persons protocols and policies are concerned, Detective Lieverse is our most knowledgeable person on that.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** I'm wondering whether it's the province who's responsible or the Government of Canada. Who exactly would be the one to give you the instruction if they were to standardize a certain protocol?

**Det Clee Lieverse:** As policing is covered by the province, that's where a standardized protocol would have to be based. If you wanted all the services in Ontario, it would have to be Ontario. I don't see how a federal mandate would work.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Thank you.

I think my time is up.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'll now pass it over to Andréanne.

Andréanne, you have two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to continue along the same lines as my fellow members. How do you see the red dress alert in terms of the spirit of reconciliation when you are not more aware of the calls to action? How do you see this connection, which absolutely must be made? We must aim for a nation-to-nation reconciliation and dialogue, but if you haven't read the calls to action, that seems a bit difficult.

[English]

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** To say that we don't know about the calls to justice...while I don't know the specific numbers—when she referenced 9.1 to 9.11, I can't cite those—we as a service, and I as an individual police officer, are deeply committed to building those relationships, and I have been throughout my history as a police officer.

I don't know if you want to expand on that, Darrell.

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** Again, when I said that, that was me personally and not we as a service. We do work very hard to address all concerns within the city of Greater Sudbury, and we strongly utilize our indigenous advisory committee. When issues or concerns from the community are raised, we address them as they come in.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** I want to come back to the question I asked during my last turn, one I did not get an answer to.

You explained the relationships you have with certain leaders of indigenous communities, but have you also looked at what happens, for example, in California or in other American states with these alerts in place, to try to take their experience into account?

There are also other civil society organizations working on the issue of human trafficking that could be helpful, such as the #NotInMyCity initiative.

[English]

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** I don't want to interrupt, but we're not getting any translation—or at least I'm not.

**The Chair:** Andr anne, can you speak in French to see whether we can get the English or French?

• (1620)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Yes, good afternoon. I am speaking in French.

Can I repeat my last question?

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes. Please go forward.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** I was repeating the question from my previous turn.

Have you looked at the American states that have implemented such alerts or similar ones, in order to take advantage of their experience

to launch the red dress alert system and define its criteria? We know that California and Colorado have alerts of this kind.

There are also organizations that are working on similar issues around human trafficking. For example, the #NotInMyCity initiative is aimed at identifying people in distress at various airports.

Have you broadened your research to that point?

[English]

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** I've looked primarily at two different alert systems—I guess it's the term to use—within Canada in relation to missing youth. One is run by... I'm blanking on the names of them, but they're both subscription-based alerts, and we can provide those to the committee later.

**The Chair:** Cleo, thank you so much. Our time is running short, so if you could do that, we would greatly appreciate it.

I will pass it over to Leah for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much, Chair.

On your indigenous committee, how many are indigenous women? What's the number, quickly, please?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** We have about 15 in total. I'd say that's about half.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Through the consultations and certainly things we've heard in committee, in fact, in every consultation coast to coast, people said they didn't trust police services across the country with making decisions about when alerts were issued.

Call to justice 9.6 calls on:

police services to establish an independent, special investigation unit for the investigation of incidents of failures to investigate, police misconduct, and all forms of discriminatory practices and mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples within their police service. This special investigation unit must be transparent in practice and report at least annually to Indigenous communities, leadership, and people in their jurisdiction.

I'm wondering, in the spirit of reconciliation and in knowing the violent history, particularly between police forces and indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQI+, whether you'd be open to having independent oversight on matters impacting MMIWG2S. If you do have oversight in place right now, do you have oversight specifically geared to ending, I would say, the epidemic of systemic racism within policing?

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** We have a professional tenders bureau that oversees all complaints made to the service from the general public.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** So no.

I have very little time so I want to move to the next question. It's about being open to independent oversight by independent women or people chosen by the indigenous community to make sure that your conduct is appropriate.

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** I think that would be a question for our senior leadership of the police service.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're going to finish off. We'll start with four minutes for Dominique and four minutes for Lisa.

Go ahead, Dominique.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you for being with us.

I'm going to get right to my question, since we don't have a lot of time.

You clearly agree with the principle of a red dress alert as an approach that could be taken.

Do you think it should be a nationwide alert?

[*English*]

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** I think we should be able to put one out nationally when it's called for. However, I think we need to focus the alerts in areas where the investigation is leading us, because if we were to put one out nationally for every missing indigenous woman, the alert would be less effective.

You don't receive a severe storm warning alert every single time it rains halfway across the country. It has to be focused so that those national level alerts really ring true, hold the weight and capture the attention.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Mr. Lieverse, if I remember correctly, you said that about 600 people were reported missing each year.

Did I understand correctly?

[*English*]

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** In Sudbury we have approximately 1,500 people reported missing every year. As I said, the vast majority are resolved very quickly and without the need for media releases, without the need for alerts. Of those 1,500, slightly over half are indigenous women, generally speaking.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** I would like you to explain something to us in more detail.

Melanie Omeniho, whom we met with this week, said that in some cases, it could be more problematic to publicize the search for a missing woman than to keep her disappearance quiet, because her safety could be at risk.

Have you had to deal with that kind of situation, where it was better not to issue an alert?

[*English*]

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** Absolutely, particularly in cases of human trafficking when we do have to be wary of what the individual

who's trafficking may do if it's posted publicly. It is a balancing act sometimes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Mr. Rivers, I would like to follow up on the comment made by my fellow member Ms. Gazan.

From what we've heard so far in our red dress alert study, it's all based on trust. However, there does not seem to be any trust in the police forces.

How do we square that circle? We want to do something to help indigenous women and girls. We want them to be involved in the decisions, but they don't trust the police, who must also be involved in the process. How do we do that?

I'd like a quick answer. I know it's a tough question and you may need more time.

[*English*]

**Cst Darrell Rivers:** I think one of the main components is that you need to get involved. You need to go out, identify all your resources, indigenous organizations within your city or municipality, wherever you're residing, and reach out, make connections and attend their meetings. Go to any initiatives that they have, support them and, in turn, invite them to sit on your advisory committee to and have open, honest dialogue.

**The Chair:** Awesome. Thank you so much.

For the final round, we're going to pass it over to Lisa.

Lisa, you have four minutes.

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

I'm going to go back again to this. I'd like to hear from you how you envision police being involved in a red dress alert. As you've heard from my colleagues today and as we've discussed, there is a lack of trust between indigenous communities and police forces across the country—for very good reasons.

What we've heard at this committee is that most indigenous people would prefer to have a committee particularly of indigenous women who oversee the red dress alert.

Detective Constable Lieverse, I think you were talking about the thresholds of when to send out a red dress alert. Typically, for an Amber alert it's the police who decide when to send out the alert. However, I think we're envisioning a different process for the red dress alert.

Could you describe exactly how you see police being involved? As you mentioned, you believe there should be collaboration with police forces across the country. How, specifically, do you see police should be involved?

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** If we're talking about the large-scale highest tier of alert that we're blasting out to the entire public, obviously we need to be involved in that so that at least we can backcheck the story behind the missing person.

To give an example, I once got a complaint from a male who was looking to locate his ex. Obviously, she did not want to be found by him. She was perfectly safe. We need to be able to at least vet who's getting posted out so that we're not endangering that person.

The logistics of how that goes out is obviously a much bigger decision, but I think we need to be involved in that conversation if it's going to be run by indigenous women. It's going to be difficult. You're going to have to have clusters within the country, province or however to make these decisions and decide on these cases, because unfortunately there are so many that could go out.

I don't want the public to look at an alert and say, I've seen that name before, and just forget it. I've seen it with our media releases, and it's distressing, because it stops people from looking.

• (1630)

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** Thank you for bringing up the point about how some women don't want to be found. In some cases it's women who are not missing. They're hiding and they don't want to be found because perhaps if they're found, they would be in more danger.

How do you deal with that now? How do you decide? How do you know?

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** That comes from doing the investigation. That example I brought up was actually very simple, because I found a number for her. She had moved to a different jurisdiction, but I had access to their records. I called her up, and she said, "No. I don't even want to tell you, let alone him, where I am. He has no right." I was able to shut that down and deal with that male and caution him for what he was doing.

You have to be able to put some investigation into it. It's a case-by-case basis on how you come to that conclusion.

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** Thank you.

You also mentioned that you didn't see how a federal mandate would work for a red dress alert. Can you clarify what you mean by that? If somebody is, say, a victim of trafficking in Nova Scotia, they could be transported to British Columbia. Therefore, in some sense it makes sense to have a national-level alert system.

**Det Cleo Lieverse:** It absolutely makes sense to have a national-level alert system when the case calls for it. I think what I meant by it would be difficult to do nationally is if you were going to have one body looking at which case gets to go out and which case gets posted then the volume might be daunting. I think that's what I meant. It's the time of day and things like that. Maybe I misspoke or misunderstood, but that's what I meant.

I think a national-level alert, when called for, is essential. It's just how we do it.

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** On behalf of the committee, I would very much like to thank the two of you for coming here and providing this testimony. It provides us with the other side of what we're talking about.

I'm going to remind the committee that we are going to suspend for a moment. We will be getting back—

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Can I just say something?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, quickly.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** I just want to congratulate Darrell. I understand that you were nominated for an award, which I forgot to mention in my questioning.

I know we don't have time to find out what that was, but—

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** He was rookie of the year.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Congratulations.

**The Chair:** Congratulations. That's wonderful.

Thanks very much.

We are going to suspend, and we'll be coming back to some committee business. I'm going to remind everybody that they can have one staff member and one member from each whip's office. We will be in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]







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