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Chair: The Honourable Jim Carr



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• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Jim Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)): Good morning, everybody. Welcome to meeting number five of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. So you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking, rather than the entirety of the committee.

Given the ongoing pandemic situation and in light of the recommendations from health authorities, as well as the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on October 19, 2021, to remain healthy and safe, all those attending the meeting in person are to maintain physical distancing and the appropriate mask wearing that you all know so well.

If it's okay with you, I'll dispense with other instructions. Is that okay? Thank you.

For members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Keep in mind the Board of Internal Economy's guidelines for mask use and health protocols.

When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. I remind you that all comments by members should be addressed through the chair. With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk will advise the chair on whose hands are up, to the best of his ability, and we will do the best we can to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

Pursuant to the order adopted by the House of Commons on Tuesday, December 7, 2021 and the motion adopted on Tuesday, December 14, 2021, the committee is resuming its study of gun control, illegal arms trafficking and the increase in gun crimes committed by members of street gangs.

With us today by video conference, representing the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service, we have Shawn Dulude, chief of police. From the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, we have Abram Benedict, grand chief; and April Adams-Phillips, chief. Representing the Winnipeg Police Association, we have Maurice Sabourin, president; and Philip Neyron, detective.

Up to five minutes will be given for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions.

Welcome, everybody.

I now invite Chief Dulude to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

It's over to you, Chief.

Mr. Shawn Dulude (Chief of Police, Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service): Good morning, everyone. Thank you for inviting me here to this panel on this subject matter.

I would like to take this time, at this point, to say that I hope the answers I will provide to your questioning will enlighten everyone on our situation here, which is very similar across the whole country in first nations policing. I hope that at the end of this period today, and the subsequent testimony, it will help first nations policing progress as a whole in the country, and not only for the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Is that the extent of your opening remarks, Chief?

Mr. Shawn Dulude: Yes, it is.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Grand Chief Benedict, I now invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes. Please, the floor is yours.

Grand Chief Abram Benedict (Grand Chief, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne): I'll say good morning and *she:kon* to honourable members and you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to address you today. We bring greetings on behalf of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the community of Akwesasne.

Today, we will present to the committee information about our unique community, the reality of the situation and our efforts to keep Akwesasne safe.

I am joined by Chief April Adams-Phillips, a member of our council, and our chief of police, Shawn Dulude.

I'm going to ask Chief Phillips to begin our presentation.

Ms. April Adams-Phillips (Chief, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne): Good morning. *She:kon*, everyone.

Akwesasne is in a unique geographical setting. Today Akwesasne is the land of borders. The international border between Canada and the United States runs directly through our land. Half the community resides in Canada, in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, and half the community resides in the United States, within the state of New York.

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne is the governing body for the Canadian territory of Akwesasne. We represent a membership of about 13,100 people. Our members live on both sides of the international border, in the various districts of Akwesasne in Ontario, Quebec and New York. If a member wants to travel from one district to another by land, we must cross the international border. The only road from Kawehno:ke, Cornwall Island, in Ontario to Kana:takon, Saint-Régis in Quebec, crosses the international bridge that connects Canada and the United States.

Mohawks who are going to work or school, attending church, shopping, or travelling for recreational, social and cultural purposes must cross the international border and present themselves at the Canadian and American customs. It is not uncommon for members attending funerals to cross the international boundary several times. A funeral procession might leave the deceased's home on Cornwall Island, travel over the international bridge and through U.S. customs to reach the primary community church, which is located in the village on the southern shores of the St. Lawrence. After mass, they may travel back through the United States to Cornwall Island for the burial. After the burial, they may travel to the New York side of Akwesasne for a family meal before returning home in one of these three Canadian districts.

Prior to COVID, Cornwall was Canada's tenth-busiest port of entry in Ontario, with approximately two million vehicles crossing annually. About 70% of these crossings are Mohawks travelling from one district of Akwesasne to another. That equates to 1.4 million trips through Canada customs by Mohawks travelling in Akwesasne, or more than 100 trips per member each year. I am sure you can appreciate that the laws of Canada and the imposition of the international and provincial borders have serious consequences for individual Mohawks and our community as a whole.

I'll hand it over to Grand Chief Benedict.

• (1115)

Grand Chief Abram Benedict: *Nia:wen*, April.

I want to make it clear that public safety is a priority for Akwesasne, but it is a shared responsibility. As a large, advanced indigenous community, we are in a very unique geographical location. However, we experience many challenges created by the international border. Our Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service, AMPS, is part of a joint investigative team with the RCMP, OPP, SQ and CB-SA, but we need to be part of the joint forums on border activities, policy and law development. The Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service needs to be at the table where decisions are made and intelligence is shared. Our collective efforts must be made while respecting Akwesasne's jurisdiction and rights. Respect and understanding of Akwesasne's authority are a crucial element in our collective success.

A key component of trafficking and cross-border crimes is awareness and prevention. The community safety fund is a start, but a whole-of-government approach is needed to combat crime and gun violence. It is no secret to anyone that our community is exploited by organized crime, but what we do know is that many individuals involved in cross-border trafficking do it because of the money.

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne is one of the largest community employers, followed by many small businesses. The government needs to come to the table to promote economic development, partner and create more jobs. The Government of Canada legalized cannabis. Health Canada issued a licence to the first on-reserve cannabis producer right here in Akwesasne, but still, every dollar of excise levied from our community, from this licensed facility, goes right to Canada. Canada needs to enter into shared revenue agreements with Akwesasne so that revenue can be reinvested into community prosperity.

You already know that gun trafficking is tied to drug trafficking, but what we know is that fast money in trafficking, in too many cases, supports drug addiction. As many communities face an opiate crisis, especially during COVID, we share these issues as well. With the cycle of loss, crime and addictions continue, organized crime and money being the fuel for exploiting our community.

Continued government investment and willingness to work outside the box are needed. We need investments in the Akwesasne Mohawk Police. One of Public Safety Canada's evaluations of the Akwesasne organized crime initiative's, JIT, report in 2019 recommends the continued support of the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service "in building their capacity to ensure their full participation on the Joint Investigative Team and contribution to the disruption of organized crime in and around Akwesasne."

Canada must continue to invest in AMPS. We need to enhance our capacity, enhance our ability to conduct lengthy investigations and purchase new and advanced technology to have the ability to patrol the 25 kilometres of waterway within our reservation. The budget for AMPS has not seen a significant increase in the last several years, except with respect to Ontario, which has provided specific funding for five years to create a snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle and vessel enforcement unit known as SAVE.

No other funding partner has invested in AMPS to increase the ability to combat crime. No other police force in Canada is funded like Akwesasne. This funding agreement causes issues like the chicken-and-egg theory: No government will increase supports without the other agreeing to increase, because of the cost-sharing formula.

In closing, I'm here to tell you that public safety is one of our top priorities. We are always open to partnership. We want to keep our community safe. Akwesasne Mohawk Police needs the designation of an essential service, as many other first nations police services do. We need to be at the table where decisions are made and intelligence is shared, and we need the resources to continue to protect and patrol our community.

That is it for my formal presentation.

Nia:wen to the committee for the opportunity to present. We are open to questions.

• (1120)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Grand Chief.

I'm sure there will be many questions.

First, I would like to invite Mr. Sabourin to take the floor for up to five minutes.

Mr. Sabourin, the floor is yours.

Mr. Maurice Sabourin (President, Winnipeg Police Association): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the rest of the committee for the invite to speak at this committee level.

My name is Maurice Sabourin. I am the president of the Winnipeg Police Association. I have been so for the past eight years. I have been a proud police officer with the Winnipeg Police Service for the last 32 years, with experience in our property crimes division as a detective, our major crimes unit, stolen auto unit and our homicide unit. I have served with our association for the past 14 years and, as I previously mentioned, as president for the last eight.

Joining me today is Detective Phil Neyron, who is also a director with the Winnipeg Police Association. I felt that it was necessary to draw upon his experience. He is a detective within our guns and gangs unit, which is appropriate for the topic today. He is a police officer of 20 years.

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on the topic today, Bill C-5, which I believe is very well intentioned, when you take into account public safety, gangs and the smuggling of guns. I do have some concerns about Bill C-5, as it possibly does not take into account the possibilities that could flow from this bill.

Public safety for us, in particular, is paramount. I think we are arguably one of the most violent jurisdictions in the country, and I would say probably the busiest per capita per police officer, even though we are at the top of the heap in terms of the number of police officers per 100,000 citizens. Gun violence is a daily occurrence in Winnipeg. Anything we can do to weigh in on helping solve this problem is much appreciated.

With the introduction of Bill C-5 and the proposal to remove minimum sentencing, I fear that's going to have a negative effect on public safety here in Winnipeg. As a member of our property crimes unit and our stolen auto unit, I saw the benefits of intensive supervision as well as incarceration and members of the criminal element being placed in incarceration and in remand.

The other negative effect that we have already seen is the potential for the purchase back of illegal firearms. What we are seeing on

the street nowadays is as a result of that proposal. The cost of illegal firearms has doubled, which creates more of an opportunity for gun smugglers. When the possibility of a 300% profit over a 100% profit is an opportunity, people are willing to take more risk in smuggling firearms.

In addition, the firearms registry, obviously, has its pros and cons. The pro would be that there should be a better tracking of firearms when it comes to purchase and resale. That is beneficial. Unfortunately, the legislation could use some bolstering in that area. I think for the majority of the offences that are being committed on the street, it's not the legal gun owners who are committing these offences, and the majority of the firearms that are being seized are not legally registered. Winnipeg, in particular, is seizing pretty much the same number of firearms that are being seized in Toronto.

I'm more than happy to expand on any of the statements I have made, but that brings my opening statement to a close.

• (1125)

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

We appreciate those opening remarks, and you are right on time.

I will now open the floor for questions. At the beginning of the first round, for a six-minute slot, I will call on Ms. Dancho to begin this round of questioning.

The floor is yours, Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here today. We have a really interesting diversity of witnesses. We have our keystone province police in Winnipeg on the ground with 40 years of experience, and then we have this very unique situation on the border.

I didn't realize that Akwesasne borders Ontario, Quebec and the United States. I knew it bordered the U.S. and Canada, but I didn't realize there was an interprovincial border there as well. I can't imagine all the red tape and bureaucracy you have to go through just to make your community safer. I look forward to asking you some questions.

I am going to start off with the Winnipeg Police Association.

President Sabourin, thank you very much for being here. I appreciate your opening remarks. Recently we spoke and talked about this committee and gun violence, gang violence, and I also brought to your attention Bill C-5, which was brought forward. I'd appreciate your thoughts on Bill C-5 as well. When we last spoke, you mentioned that in Winnipeg—which we know is one of the most dangerous violent crime capitals in Canada, unfortunately—calls for service increased 45% in the last 10 years, and violent and property crimes are up. In fact, you mentioned to me that the crime severity index for Statistics Canada had to increase their scale for Manitoba. I believe we went above 150, and 161 was our crime scale. We know very much what it's like on the ground in Winnipeg, and our hearts go out to those in Montreal who are experiencing a lot of that same violent crime.

You mentioned that meth and drugs are part of that. You also mentioned that you believe it may be the result of having the lowest incarceration rates in 20 years, because so many factors play into this. Can you explain to the committee your perspective on that and how you believe incarceration and violent crime are connected?

Mr. Maurice Sabourin: Yes, absolutely. What I have found, in my experience, is that when offenders are kept off the streets, that's when we see crime rates starting to diminish.

I did mention that we're experiencing the lowest rate of incarceration in nearly 20 years, but we also see issues with the bail system here in Manitoba. You will quite often hear the term “revolving door”, where offenders are not kept in remand or kept in incarceration until court dates. Typically that results in further crimes being committed by those same individuals. I can't remember the statistic on rehabilitation, but I believe the statistic on that is that, unless an individual is sentenced to more than five years, rehabilitation is not likely.

I've been involved with many units, one being the stolen auto unit, which included intense supervision. We basically took the issue out of the hands of the courts' intensive supervision because, at one time, Winnipeg was number one in auto thefts in the country, unfortunately, and we're not proud of that. We were experiencing close to 35 stolen vehicles per day, and the courts weren't helping at the time, so the Winnipeg auto theft suppression strategy was implemented, which involved expedited warrant systems, a partnership with probations and a partnership with Crown prosecutors where, if a breach of probation occurred, that person was put into incarceration within a day.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: When we met previously, you mentioned that the reason auto theft is so linked to violent crime and gun violence is that it's often very young people—you mentioned as young as eight years old—being recruited into gangs. They sort of start them off with “Go steal that car.” Then they go down a rabbit hole of crime from there. I know that police believe in prevention and helping young people, stopping them by providing other resources to stop them from going into gangs. When they steal their first car, that's when you have to get them and divert them to a better path.

We just have about a minute and a half left. I want to ask you a little bit about police morale. You mentioned a massive increase of calls in the last 10 years, and yet there are not many more police resources. In fact, you said there are fewer police officers on the street now.

Just very quickly, the federal government is bringing in a firearm buyback program. Do police have time to go and institute the federal government orders for this buyback, or should their time be better placed fighting violent criminals and gun violence?

• (1130)

Mr. Maurice Sabourin: I would completely agree with that. We do not have the resources. You're right.

Our complement in the last six years has decreased by over 100 police officers, and we have become a completely reactive service. There is no patrolling of back lanes anymore to curb gang or gun violence. The unfortunate thing is that we could use more resources on the street and also more resources for social programming, because if we can get to those kids early, that prevents them from entering a gang or continuing to be involved in a gang.

I believe that funding for that buyback program should be diverted to those social programs. We have a member whose position—I can't remember the exact term—is for gang intervention, I believe. That one member is dedicated to trying to get kids to get out of the gang life and to do something positive with their life. That's one person for over 700,000 citizens in Winnipeg, so definitely funding is required, and it would be very much appreciated in order to curb some of those gang initiatives.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Sabourin. I appreciate the answers very much.

Now I would like to turn the floor over to Mr. Chiang, who will have six minutes to ask his questions.

Mr. Chiang, the floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everybody.

My question is directed to the Winnipeg Police Service. I'm a retired police officer myself, and I have concerns about the gangs and guns crimes across our country.

The Winnipeg police have a specific unit related to guns and gangs. According to the Winnipeg police, almost half the gang members are under the age of 18. Could you speak about the work this guns and gangs unit does and about the steps that are being taken to address the alarming number of young people involved in these gangs?

Mr. Maurice Sabourin: Yes, sir. I don't have specific statistical information in relation to that. Unfortunately, I think a lot more work could be done in addressing the young age of gang members. Like I said, we have one dedicated person who is working with youth to try to get them out of the gang life. I think it's a very difficult task for that member. We obviously could use more resources in that area. There are particular social agencies that this member works with on a regular basis. I don't have the details on that, but I do know that they are working to curb that gang activity.

The unfortunate reality of the guns and gangs unit is that they are dealing with a large majority of drug trafficking issues and illegal gun smuggling, as I mentioned before. For a service of our size and with the population of Winnipeg, we are seizing as many illegal firearms as Toronto. We have a definite issue here.

The budget issue is one thing, in terms of not having enough resources to adequately deal with all the social and economic problems we face; I think we're fairly unique in Winnipeg as well. Unfortunately, more needs to be done, and unfortunately it comes down to having the resources. On average, in the past year, I believe our numbers were at 600,000 calls for service. That's almost one call per citizen per year.

• (1135)

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you very much for your answer.

You mentioned earlier that the cost of illegal guns is tripling in Winnipeg. Have you heard locally if there's any talk about the gang members renting the guns instead of buying them? Is that a reality that's happening there in Winnipeg?

Mr. Maurice Sabourin: Again, I'm unaware of that statistic, but I could turn the microphone over to my colleague, Detective Phil Neyron, who would have a better idea if that is something that is occurring here in Winnipeg.

Mr. Philip Neyron (Detective, Winnipeg Police Association): Good morning.

As for renting firearms, it's more of a... We're seeing a trend where guns are being used in different parts of the country. Through tracing, we figure out that they have been used in crimes in B.C. and they come to Winnipeg. They're almost cleaning their guns and cleaning things that have been used in a crime. A gun is a commodity; instead of throwing it in the river or hiding it, they are selling it, making a profit. Illegal gun prices have at least doubled, especially handguns with ammunition. They ship them to different parts of the country where they make a profit.

They technically clean the gun. Then they have money for a new gun. That's kind of what we're seeing.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you very much for your answer on that.

I understand that the Winnipeg Police Service is involved in the Manitoba turnabout program for children under 12 who have come in contact with the police over the law. Could you provide more information about this program and the partnership in place between the provincial agency, community groups and local police services? Has this program been helpful for the Winnipeg Police Service itself?

Mr. Maurice Sabourin: Sir, unfortunately I don't have any statistics on that.

I do know that we have a diversion program that was headed by the guns and gangs unit. That gang intervention individual was also tasked with the diversion. That also included consultation with the provincial agency. Unfortunately, I don't have any statistics on the success of that program at this point.

Mr. Paul Chiang: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Mr. Chiang, you have eight seconds. What can you do with them?

Mr. Paul Chiang: I will thank my former colleagues, the Winnipeg Police Service, for their time and their information sharing with us.

Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now call upon Ms. Michaud.

Ms. Michaud, you have six minutes to pose your questions. The floor is yours, please. Take it away.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for accepting our invitation and joining us today. We are very grateful to them.

My questions go to Grand Chief Benedict and Chief Adams-Philips. I invite them to give us as much information as possible.

Grand Chief Benedict and Chief Adams-Philips, you say that your territory is unique because of its geographic location. According to a number of reports in some media, it is a well-known arms route and traffickers can use it to their advantage.

Are you concerned by the illegal firearms trafficking on your territory? Are you worried about the safety of your community?

Do you feel that you have the resources you need to combat this trafficking?

• (1140)

Mr. Shawn Dulude: Did you say that your questions were for Grand Chief Benedict and Chief Adams-Philips?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: You can certainly feel free to add any comments, Mr. Dulude.

Mr. Shawn Dulude: Okay.

I believe that I am in a better position than they are to answer those questions.

Clearly, our geographic location makes it more profitable for the people involved in those kinds of activities. Are we adequately equipped to combat it? No, we are not. We do not have the personnel we need to conduct round-the-clock surveillance of our waterways and all the land leading to the St. Lawrence River.

As the Grand Chief explained right at the start, our territory is divided into three districts. One is in Quebec, one is in Ontario, and one is in the United States. This makes our work very difficult. In Canada, the Criminal Code is in force. The same laws apply in Ontario or in Quebec. Our work becomes more difficult when we have to cross the border into the United States during the day to respond to calls for service and for our daily patrols. It happens all the time. The criminals crossing our territory and looking to profit from their crimes know it as well.

Basically, two customs points allow access onto the territory: Dundee and Cornwall. There are no other customs points, apart from those. In our community, we have seven roads that are not controlled. If we are chasing a smuggler, for example, and we cross the international border, the pursuit ends. We know where our boundaries are and the criminals know it too. So, to answer your question, it does make our work very much harder.

The St. Lawrence River forms a border of our territory too. This also makes our work harder because it requires a specialized marine patrol unit. We are equipped to do that and we do it very well. We have made many seizures through the years. Last year, we increased the number of seizures. We are not just talking about firearms although, a few weeks ago, we made a major seizure of not only firearms but also of narcotics. That was headline news. We also deal with undocumented people trying to enter and leave the country.

As Grand Chief Benedict explained, we have a bilateral agreement with Ontario that gives us a marine patrol. But the funds that Ontario provides to us are not sufficient to have patrols around the clock, seven days a week. A week ago, I made a request to Quebec's Department of Public Security, asking them for a similar agreement, so that we can fill that gap.

Do not forget that the river can still be used by smugglers to bring in their contraband, even when it is frozen. They can use automobiles and snowmobiles, or motor boats, if some sections of water remain open.

So the geography of the territory makes our work very difficult and the fact that we are under the jurisdiction of different states makes it even more difficult. In effect, we are in the centre, with the St. Lawrence River to the north and the United States to the south. Our authority as peace officers and as police ends as soon as we cross the border with the United States.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: You say that not being able to go where your authority ends complicates your work. But do you consider that exchanging information or working with other police services, for example, is enough to continue the work where you yourselves have to stop?

Mr. Shawn Dulude: When I say that we have to stop, I am speaking literally. However, of course, we share all the information on criminal activities, in both directions. We are also part of various

groups, including the integrated border enforcement teams, or IBET. We are not responsible for law enforcement in that team, but we are responsible for all intelligence on criminal activities.

Recently, we have also requested to be part of the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, the CISO. This is because of the investigations we have to conduct and that we want to be part of in order to arrest individuals trafficking firearms or engaged in other criminal activities. They all start with gathering intelligence on criminal matters.

• (1145)

[English]

The Chair: Sir, we're out of time. If you could please wind down your answer in a few seconds, I'd appreciate that.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Shawn Dulude: For our operations to be successful and for this plague to be defeated, we first have to share the intelligence we have on criminal activities.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

For the last slot in the opening round, I will turn to Mr. MacGregor, who will have six minutes.

Mr. MacGregor, go ahead.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I get to my questions, I want to inform committee members that I want to read a notice of motion into the record.

The notice of motion is as follows:

That the Committee invite representatives from GoFundMe to appear as soon as possible to answer questions regarding security measures the company has in place to ensure the funds are not being used to promote extremism, white supremacy, anti-Semitism and other forms of hate, which have been expressed among prominent organizers for the truck convoy currently in Ottawa, including:

- a) how the company prevents the use of anonymity to funnel money to extremist groups;
- b) what measures are in place to prevent foreign funds from being used to support these views, and to the subgroups that have expressed an intent to put in place their own undemocratic government; and
- c) what measures and assurances are in place to ensure the \$1 million that has already been released is not going towards promoting any of the forms of the aforementioned unacceptable views and activities.

Mr. Chair, that's the notice of motion I've put on the record. I understand that it would require the unanimous consent of the committee for this motion to be moved today. Given the displays of anti-Semitism and harassment we have seen over the past week in the city of Ottawa and some of the extremist behaviour, I was wondering if my colleagues would give unanimous consent for me to move this motion today and to have a quick vote on it.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent in the committee to approve this motion? I'll ask any member who is opposed to the motion to raise their hand.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Chair, I just have a question. I'm not voting either way at this time. I'm just asking a question, if I may.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: I'm just not clear on the procedure. In prior committees, when motions have been brought forward, it was deemed out of order when it wasn't to do with the committee at hand.

I recognize this is a pressing and timely issue for the NDP and for all Canadians, but I also recognize that Ms. Michaud's study is on the table right now. There are committee witnesses and it's difficult to get their time if they are very busy.

I'm just wondering if the clerk can weigh in on the technical procedure side of this. Is it better left to the end of this meeting? When can we address this? From previous experience, I know these types of things have been ruled out of order. Can you just enlighten us in that regard, please?

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, would you please let us know whether this motion is in order?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Wassim Bouanani): Certainly, Mr. Chair.

It's a notice of motion, so it's not related to the topic of the day. Mr. MacGregor can read it into the record and he can give a notice of motion. The motion cannot be debated today unless there's unanimous consent. This can be done now or later, at the discretion of the committee.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent for the motion to be debated now? Let me ask if there are any members opposed to that by a show of hands.

Yes, Madame Michaud.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it's a shame that we are wasting time on this, given that the witnesses are willingly participating in the committee meeting today. Perhaps we could set aside a little time of the end of our meeting to discuss the motion.

• (1150)

[*English*]

The Chair: Clearly we don't have unanimous consent to deal with this motion now, so we will proceed. We have witnesses who are lined up to answer questions.

Mr. MacGregor, it is your slot, so I would turn the platform back to you and ask you to pose your questions, please.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want other committee members to know that I'm going to be respectful of their time. I've been keeping track of this intervention. I'm going to limit myself to one question to the Akwesasne.

I'm not sure which of you would like to take a crack at answering this. In the ministerial mandate letter for the Minister of Public Safety, there was a commitment for the minister to “[c]ontinue to work with First Nations partners to co-develop a legislative framework for First Nations policing, and continuing to engage with Inuit and Métis on policing matters. [The minister] will be supported by the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.”

Now, I know that your nation is quite far ahead of many first nations right across Canada, so perhaps you have some insight on what that legislative framework could look like, or what you would like to see as first steps in developing it, for nations right across our country.

Thank you.

Grand Chief Abram Benedict: We're obviously open to codevelopment in legislation, but more particularly, in our community, there has to be recognition of our jurisdiction and authority. What happens in our jurisdiction is that there are two provincial boundaries. In other legislation, it devolves the legislative authority to the provinces. What happens in our community is that, depending on what part of the community you are in, it may be under Ontario legislation or Quebec legislation. In police services, if it's devolved to the provinces, in one part of the community it will determine how you react as a police agency, and in the other part it will be completely different, because it's in Ontario and in Quebec.

So there has to be special consideration in any legislation, even outside of police services, that considers cross-provincial boundary communities like ours.

The Chair: Mr. MacGregor, you have about 10 seconds.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I'll leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

Thanks so much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now move into the next round of questions from members of the committee.

Mr. Lloyd, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): My first line of questioning is for the Akwesasne first nations police and the chief, of course. When the people in communities are economically stable, have high employment and prosperity, are socially stable, have strong families and strong community attachments, and have low substance abuse issues, would you say that these communities are less vulnerable to organized crime, such as intimidation or bribery and things like that?

Grand Chief Abram Benedict: Yes, absolutely. As I said in my opening remarks, many people take to cross-border crime because of the money that can be made. When there are fewer opportunities, that means they look for ways to support themselves that are outside of social supports. Absolutely.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Are you currently getting that economic development support from the federal government? You sort of talked about that in your testimony.

Grand Chief Abram Benedict: We need greater opportunities within our community. Believe me, we're challenged by the location of our community as well, on an economic front, because, again, in some industries you're regulated by external legislation. Depending on where you are, that can make a determination on what makes sense and what doesn't.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: We've seen that the current federal government has put forward a plan. It's estimated to cost possibly over a billion dollars for a gun buyback for legal gun owners. What could a billion dollars do for border communities, particularly indigenous border communities? What could a billion dollars do to be effective in disrupting organized crime in your communities?

Grand Chief Abram Benedict: Ultimately, we need more boots on the ground and technology and equipment to be able to continue to keep our community safe.

What I can say is that with any of these commodities, whether it be guns, people or drugs, it's not grown. It's not manufactured. It's not coming from here. It's coming from somewhere else. It also means that, with a lot of enforcement agencies, it's going through their jurisdiction as well before it comes through our relatively small but large community.

We get a lot of bad press saying that it's coming through here, but at the same time, there are 8,800 kilometres of Canadian border. Not everything is coming through here; I can assure you of that.

• (1155)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Certainly.

That will help me transition to the Winnipeg police force.

I thought it was very interesting that, as you were saying, the profit margins for moving illegal guns, say handguns, have grown and we're looking at 300% profits. When these profits increase, with the laws of supply and demand, people will take riskier and more creative activities to get these firearms. Do you guys know what the top avenues are? How are these guns getting smuggled? We heard on Tuesday that trains are a big vulnerability, and marine ports of entry.

Where are you identifying these guns getting into Canada?

Mr. Shawn Dulude: For us here in Akwesasne, obviously there's no rail service, so we're looking at either land or water. Those would be the two main entries.

As I said earlier in French to the previous question I received, once the St. Lawrence freezes over, in the winter they will move commodities, whether it be weapons, drugs or humans, by snowmobile over the frozen waters.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Winnipeg Police Service, how are you identifying these guns getting across the border? Is it by train, personal vehicles, drones...?

Mr. Maurice Sabourin: My colleague advises me that it's mainly by land. As mentioned before, 8,800 kilometres of—

Mr. Dane Lloyd: We know it's either by land or by sea, but what are the means or the methods, more specifically, by which they get over the border?

Mr. Maurice Sabourin: I don't have the answer to that specifically, but I could probably turn it over to my colleague, Detective Neyron.

Mr. Philip Neyron: My understanding is that a lot of it comes through vehicles, smuggled through the border, either personal, truck—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Chair, Mr. Neyron's comments cannot be interpreted. I don't believe he's wearing a headset. The interpreters are signalling that they cannot interpret what he is saying.

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Sabourin, I'll switch back to you. You were saying there's an economic aspect. I feel as though if we get more creative at the border, we can really disrupt a lot of guns, but then we're going to be turning those profits from 300% to 500% to 1,000%.

What can we do to disrupt that supply-and-demand incentive to get guns over the border? What would be your recommendations?

The Chair: Mr. Lloyd, we're going to have to wait for that answer. Unfortunately, we're out of time. Thank you.

Colleagues, we have only two minutes left in this hour. Therefore, I'm going to ask Mr. Zuberi, who is next in line in this round, to keep his intervention to two minutes, and then we will move to the second tranche of witnesses.

Mr. Zuberi, with that limited time, the floor is yours.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thanks to all the witnesses for being here.

I'll start off by saying that I'm speaking to you from Montreal, from the historical territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation.

I have one question for Mr. Sabourin. You talked about gang intervention and being severely under-resourced. There's only one person who's actually working in that area, in that domain. Do you think there's a critical need to expand that aspect of work within the police service in Winnipeg?

Mr. Maurice Sabourin: Yes, sir. Absolutely there's a need to expand that unit, the number of individuals who are involved in the particular gang unit. We have school resources that deal in a very limited aspect with the gang members. Any gang members who approach our school resources would be referred to our gang intervention individual. However, as I said before, one individual is—

• (1200)

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: —too little.

Thank you. I want to ask a follow-up question.

Is there an awareness of the uniqueness of indigenous and non-indigenous activities that we're dealing with in this study? Are you guys locally implementing that awareness?

Mr. Maurice Sabourin: Yes. There is regular training that is done with the general patrol members in particular, as well as our guns and gangs unit. The unfortunate thing is that the training is fairly limited. It might be on a professional development day that our general patrol shifts would attend on a regular basis, but COVID has prevented us from doing those large gatherings.

Ultimately, we do need more resources in helping some of these young people get out of gangs.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: There's a need for more sensitivity training around issues related to indigeneity and helping people leave street gangs.

Thank you for that. I believe my two minutes are up.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zuberi. That's exactly right. Your time is up, literally to the second.

Thank you, colleagues. This ends the first hour of our meeting this morning.

I would like to thank the witnesses very much for their generosity with their time and their insights from an accumulation of so many years of experience. On behalf of all members of the committee, thank you very much for your contributions to this study.

Colleagues, we'll now move to our second hour. I'd like to introduce the individuals who will be making presentations, followed by questions from members of the committee.

We will be welcoming Mitch Bourbonniere, outreach worker for the Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatwin. From the Bear Clan Patrol, we will be welcoming Kevin Walker, who is the interim executive director. From the Native Counselling Services of Alberta, we have Marlene Orr, chief executive officer; and Nicole Whiskeyjack, community coordinator.

They will have up to five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions.

Welcome to all of you. Thank you for being with us today.

I now invite Mr. Bourbonniere to make an opening statement of up to five minutes—

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, if I may interject, could you suspend for a few minutes? We need to let the witnesses go from the first panel, and then invite the witnesses from the second panel and do a sound check.

The Chair: Yes, you need a changing of the guard.

Colleagues, the meeting is suspended for five minutes, give or take.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1210)

The Chair: Welcome back, members of the committee.

To the witnesses who are joining us for the next hour, or most of an hour, thank you very much for offering your wisdom and your expertise to us.

All of the witnesses for this hour have already been introduced, so I will go right to Mr. Bourbonniere and ask him to make his opening statement, for up to five minutes.

Sir, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere (Outreach Worker, Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatawin, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Carr, and thank you to all of you for doing this important work.

My name is Mitch Bourbonniere. I'm coming to you from Winnipeg. I am a worker for a gang diversion or gang exit program called Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatawin, or OPK Manitoba. I have been doing this work for 35 years. I'm also honoured to be on the call with my colleague Kevin from Bear Clan.

From our standpoint, there has been an increase in gun violence in Winnipeg. The participants I work with describe having used long guns and altered long guns as well as homemade guns, replica handguns and handguns, but by far the most prevalent are long guns that have been used either in their current form or in an altered state.

Guns are needed to carry out the drug trade. They are needed for protection. They are needed for intimidation, failure of payment, hostile takeovers, retribution, payback and retaliation in the drug trade. Anyone in Winnipeg can purchase a firearm illegally, much the same way as you would be purchasing illegal drugs. My understanding is that guns are manufactured mostly in the United States and smuggled through our two provincial borders and the American border.

My strong opinion is to put money and resources into law enforcement to concentrate on smugglers and the gun trade, and also to pour more money and resources into groups like the Bear Clan and OPK Manitoba, which are doing the work of helping people exit that gang life.

Those are my comments for today.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I appreciate those comments.

Now I would like to invite Mr. Walker to make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Mr. Walker, it's over to you, sir.

Mr. Kevin Walker (Interim Executive Director, Bear Clan Patrol Inc.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon. My name is Kevin Walker, and I'm the interim executive director for Bear Clan Patrol Inc.

Our organization was formed in 1992, and it has since grown from a single chapter in the north end to four chapters in Winnipeg and many throughout the province and Canada. Our mission is to provide a constant, visible presence on the street addressing conflict with non-violent interventions, promoting and providing safety and empowering our women, youth, elders and the vulnerable sectors of our community.

As many of you know, Winnipeg is home to the largest urban indigenous population in North America. This population is concentrated in the inner city, where there is a high rate of poverty, homelessness, addiction, mental health issues, exploitation and intergenerational trauma. All these ingredients fuel the topics that we are to discuss today.

Since forming in 1992, Bear Clan Patrol Inc. has maintained its core mandate as a community-based organization, while evolving to meet the ever-expanding needs of the community. Some of our initiatives worth noting are the food security program, youth patrol, missing persons and our involvement working in tandem with the Winnipeg Police Service, and working relationships with the Canadian military in regard to natural disaster situations and search and rescue assistance.

Our food security program saw 400 hampers hand-built and delivered to community elders, families in need, members with mobility issues and some of our city's most vulnerable. Unfortunately, without core funding, we're not able to maintain this initiative at this level. Our food den, however, does serve 300 to 500 people daily at the door with donations from our community allies such as Costco, Red River Co-Op and Sobeys. Food security can aid in family cohesion and better physical and mental health, which in turn equals a healthier community.

We have introduced a youth patrol with some cultural programming with activities ranging from medicine picking to beading, painting and other land-based activities. This program will be the future of our organization. We hope to inspire and engage our youth throughout the city. We hope to continue this with appropriate and adequate funding.

In Winnipeg, the number of missing persons has been ever-increasing, and we saw the demand to become involved. We have had great success in this initiative and have formed a solid working relationship with Winnipeg Police Service, sharing information to better serve the families of the missing.

Our newest initiative is our involvement with the Canadian Forces, especially 17 Wing. They have been participating in our patrols. We've been looking at ways for Bear Clan to assist in natural disasters and search and rescue situations. With the proper training and protocols, we believe we can be an asset and liaison in northern communities.

Bear Clan achieves success in our communities by being a non-violent, non-threatening organization that has earned the trust of the community by being consistent and getting respect by giving respect.

At Bear Clan Patrol Inc., we strive to empower our women and youth. All patrols are female-led. We have proudly put in place a youth patrol and program. Over the last several years, we have seen a rise in violent crimes in the city, most notably in the north end. Bear Clan is doing due diligence when it comes to our involvement with gun control. Any matter in which firearms can be removed from being used in any violent manner is applauded. An example of this, and of the trust that we have within our community, is that we've had a fully loaded handgun with ammunition turned in, and

we immediately contacted the Winnipeg Police Service for removal and disposal, along with many improvised weapons.

In relation to gun trafficking and our relationship to that, we are seeing ever-increasing use of firearms within the city and many other communities throughout the province and the country. Guns seem to be more available and accessible to the criminally oriented. What we see with gun crimes committed by street gangs is the tragedy and heartbreak of those affected by gun and gang violence. Bear Clan has attended almost every vigil for those impacted by gun and gang violence. It's with these tragedies that we have devoted a youth patrol with programming in place. With proper core funding, we may be able to provide and fulfill the need for acceptance to feel that sense of family and to give our youth the opportunity to grow and prosper in a safe environment to one day become the next generation of leaders.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Bear Clan Patrol. I'd like to say a big thank you to Mitch Bourbonniere for always being in the neighbourhood and being a brother to us, the Bear Clan. We really appreciate that, being out there with us.

Thank you to all the participants involved in this discussion.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Walker, for the very important work that you lead in our city.

Now I would invite Ms. Orr from the Native Counselling Services of Alberta to take up to five minutes to give us some introductory remarks.

Go ahead, Ms. Orr.

Ms. Marlene Orr (Chief Executive Officer, Native Counselling Services of Alberta): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen and my indigenous colleagues. Thank you for being here today.

My name is Marlene Orr and I'm speaking to you from Amiskwaciy Waskahikan, the Cree name for Edmonton, Alberta, in Treaty No. 6 territory.

I'm here to share what I've learned about gangs from my many years of working with indigenous offenders in the federal and provincial correctional systems, working in indigenous communities with individuals trying to exit gang life, as well as dealing with challenging behaviours, from gang members who were incarcerated to helping gang members exit that lifestyle. These are some of the examples of the work I've done with indigenous gang members.

I was invited to participate in the Alberta gangs and guns network to link with government, police and practitioners. The first question I asked was why the Edmonton police and the RCMP were not part of the initiative. There was no one who could answer that question.

When I met with a member of the Edmonton Police Service lead team and asked the question, I was told that police are tired of the ineffectiveness of networks like this in the past that failed to make a change, and that these initiatives start up every couple of years but go nowhere. How do you have a guns and gang network without police involvement? This individual was someone I respect highly for really doing a lot of work in understanding indigenous criminality and gang involvement, and for the research he's done in linking historic trauma and victimization to criminality.

How does historic trauma feed into gang activity? The means by which Indian residential school survivors parented children are directly related to how they were conditioned with violence and abuse in the schools. Prior to Indian residential school involvement, parenting and raising children involved many others in the community, who taught the values embedded in natural law: the values of kindness, respect, humility, sharing and self-determination. Indian residential school replaced the nurturing of community with control, violence, abuse, identity shame and loss of connection to family, community and nation. Survivors of Indian residential school parented their children in the only way they were taught—with violence and abuse.

This intergenerational violence, combined with other colonial impacts like community poverty, loss of cultural identity, blatant racism and the lack of opportunity for education and employment, has left indigenous youth powerless and hopeless. Involvement in child welfare systems that separate families, punish children and parents for historic trauma behaviours and continue to traumatize our people leads youth directly from foster care to the prison system.

Normalization of violence through learned behaviour, poverty, whitewashing indigenous history, racism, systemic racism and trauma leave indigenous youth disconnected and feeling oppressed. Gangs prey on this and exploit trauma-based behaviours like alcohol and drug addiction, as well as exploiting the deep longing for cultural identity and a place to belong. Gangs take concepts of historical identity, like warriors, and twist them to their advantage.

In the Prairies, indigenous gangs control the institutions. Even gang members with international links and might know that their status doesn't get them protection in federal institutions in Canada. Paying indigenous gangs to protect them is a usual practice. The overrepresentation of indigenous people in justice and corrections has resulted in a lot of power being centralized in the hands of indigenous gangs in the institutions. The power of sheer numbers of indigenous gang members means strength in the institutions, so as we continue with high incarceration rates of indigenous people, we are contributing to the gang problems in this country.

Young indigenous offenders serving their first federal sentence in penitentiaries are vulnerable to the pressure. They are targeted for membership and are taught how to be more violent and more dan-

gerous. They're taught to expand their criminal skills during incarceration.

● (1220)

Although direct penitentiary placement into indigenous healing lodges run by the indigenous communities is possible, the ratings at first incarceration during remand make that impossible. Therefore, the opportunity to address the impact of historic trauma, build pride in cultural identity, and replace perverted versions of indigenous values proposed by gang members with true teachings—

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

If you can just wrap up your final thoughts in a few seconds, I would be very grateful.

Ms. Marlene Orr: Thank you.

My concern is that as more funding becomes available to address historic trauma in Canada, the funding will be directed to non-indigenous organizations that don't understand our communities, that don't understand our trauma, and that have no connection to the people we serve.

Healing dollars for indigenous people need to be directed to indigenous groups.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll move into a round of questioning.

The first questioner will be Ms. Dancho, for six minutes.

Ms. Dancho, the floor is yours, please.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the hard-working witnesses for the incredible work they're doing to adapt to the needs of their community and fill the gaps from current government institutions and programs. I greatly admire the work you're doing, so thank you for making time for us and for this study today.

Mr. Walker, it's been a pleasure to get to know you and the Bear Clan over my time as a member of Parliament and a representative of Winnipeg. As I mentioned to you previously, one of the first things I did when I was elected was go walk with the Bear Clan. I chose a day like today in Winnipeg to go walk in the community and it was very cold, so I really admire everything that you guys are doing on the ground every day. Thank you for your work.

I find that the model of the Bear Clan is very interesting, and I can understand why it's being duplicated across the country. It's women-led. The indigenous matriarchs in Winnipeg are coming together and creating this phenomenal program on the ground. In your opening remarks, you even mentioned that a loaded handgun was handed over from a community member. Because of all the trust you built with the community that you represent and support, that handgun was handed over and you were able to give it to the police.

I just wanted you to elaborate a little more on what you see on the ground and what you feel needs to be done to stop the rise in violence in Winnipeg. Of course, you know that a lot of young people are getting glamorized into gangs. How do we stop that from happening?

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Walker: I know for ourselves we're trying to put together a youth patrol program so we can work with our youth. I think the key for everything is to start with getting our youth involved. I know that when I was growing up, sports was a very big influence in keeping me out of trouble and keeping me busy. I think that's what's happening today: The kids aren't getting outside, getting busy and getting involved in sports. It doesn't necessarily have to be sports, but getting involved in something they're passionate about so they can really grow and prosper; that's the key for us.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: What I'm hearing from some grassroots organizers is that government programs may send social workers and other government representatives who are very knowledgeable and have studied how best to approach these situations, but at times it sounds like if you're not from the community, that trust of a government official isn't there and that penetration to bring them over to the good side, to get them on a good road, is difficult.

Can you explain the gap that Bear Clan fills and how you are able to relate to them on a human level and speak directly to them and bring their walls down?

Mr. Kevin Walker: From my experience, I walk five nights a week in the north end. I'm on the ground with my people, and for us it's about being consistent, being out there, engaging with the community members at their level and meeting them at their level, not going there to try to change what they're about. It's just trying to meet them at their level, meet them at their needs, supply them with the resources they need.

Right now in Winnipeg, with COVID and everything going on, resources are being stretched thin. Everybody is doing their best, and we're trying as well to make a difference.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: From your level and from the community you're talking to, are you seeing an increase of weapons use, like firearms? Are you seeing more of that on the streets, and drugs as well? We know that drug deaths are going up in Winnipeg.

Mr. Kevin Walker: We see a lot of that with the rise in improvised weapons, handgun use. Violent crimes are on the rise for sure.

Everything stems from poverty, trauma, and things like that. If we can start with programs to get the people looked after, maybe we can start working on some of the crime issues.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: There's been a lot of talk of various bans across the country for firearms. Do you get the sense that the criminals who are bringing over these young people to their gangs, the criminals you have encountered on your walks and you know are in the community influencing our young people, would be handing over their weapons to police if a government ban was brought in for those weapons?

Mr. Kevin Walker: I don't think so. I think the people who are using the weapons criminally won't be turning them in to anyone any time soon.

We were fortunate that we had gained the trust that one time when we were able to get that one firearm off the street, but it's not like.... We're not taking them off.... They're not delivering them to us at all.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: How do you see the influence of drug trafficking? What is that doing to our young people? We know that it's coming across the border. A lot of that isn't homegrown hard drugs; it's been smuggled in and trafficked. Is that having an influence as well?

Mr. Kevin Walker: Of the hard drugs in the city, meth is getting to be a real problem. Just to give you an example, since September, we've picked up 11,000 needles. It gives you an idea of what's going on in the north end and surrounding areas.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Yes, I remember when I was walking with the Bear Clan and they were picking up all these used meth needles. We found a bunch in a very fluffy snowbank. We were all scurrying to pick them up and dispose of them safely. It was nighttime and I looked up and there was a two-storey house. We were in the backyard picking up these needles and there were three little kids. Their heads were just poking out the window looking at all the flashlights and the commotion. I couldn't help but think how inviting that fluffy snowbank filled with needles would have been to these three young children watching us.

I really thank you for all the work you are doing. Please keep going and please hold our feet to the fire to ensure we're providing the support you need to do your good work.

• (1230)

Mr. Kevin Walker: We appreciate it. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you both very much.

Now, for a six-minute slot, I will turn to Ms. Damoff, who now has the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Whiskeyjack, we didn't get an opportunity to hear from you. I know you have a very interesting story. Should we not be able to get interpretation from the headset, perhaps you could send us something in writing with your experience and the recommendations that you might have for the committee.

I wonder if we could just take a couple of minutes to hear from you in terms of your experience and what you think we should be doing as a federal government.

Ms. Nicole Whiskeyjack (Community Coordinator, Native Counselling Services of Alberta): Good morning. Can everybody hear me clearly?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Just keep talking. If there is a problem, it will be with the interpretation, Ms. Whiskeyjack.

Ms. Nicole Whiskeyjack: Good morning. My name is Nicole Whiskeyjack. I live in Pendleton, Oregon, in the United States. I come to you today with the lived experience of everything that is being talked about today.

I grew up with lots of trauma in my life. My mom died when I was 14. My dad passed away when I was 16. I have three younger brothers, and I had to raise those boys to be who they are today.

I was basically manipulated by a high-profile gang member when I was 18 years old, got pregnant with a child, had the child, was involved with so many different experiences that I had never before experienced in my life—drug dealing, gangs, violence, shootings, all of the stuff that's being talked about.

When I was 18—obviously, my parents had passed away—I had no guidance and had never experienced being an adult, basically having to be a parent to my younger siblings. I experienced everything that's been going on and what the whole conversation is about today. During that time, I committed lots of offences, went to jail as a first-time offender, ended up in prison and got a five-year sentence, but that doesn't define who I am today.

This is a topic that's really tough for me because nobody ever sees the lived experience. People talk about their story and share it with these types of people who are wanting to listen, so I really appreciate all the work that has been done by everybody, and all the ears that are listening, because most of the time all the indigenous children's complaints and all the help they need falls on deaf ears, and nobody ever listens.

The topic always comes back to why indigenous children are doing this. Why is this happening to indigenous children? Why is this? But it all goes back to—piggybacking off what Marlene said—residential school. A lot of indigenous children don't have the trust of the police service anywhere in their community because they know that the police service came and took their parents away, took them to a residential school. They never saw them again. It's all of that stuff.

How do you build that trust between indigenous children, indigenous communities and indigenous people if that's the relationship you have built and you have had since the sixties scoop, since residential schools? All of those children have had a lot of trauma in their lives, historical trauma, and nobody has ever been there to help them deal with it or to give them the tools they need to deal with it.

Nobody has been there to build the relationships with them that need to be built, whether it's in school, in health care, in federal government, in social workers or in child care. It's always, let's take these children away. Let's put them in foster care. Let's strip them. Let's cut their hair. Let's teach them all the stuff they don't know about or never grew up learning. Let's take their cultural identity away. All of that stuff has been done to these children. Then they

lose their identity, who they are and where they come from. How are they going to make a life for themselves?

Then these gangs come in, pick these kids up, build those relationships with them, make them feel safe, and then guns come into play: “We will give you this gun; this is your protection.” Then they feel safe. They have a relationship, and they have protection. Most of the time, that's what indigenous children want—a relationship, protection and trust, somebody they can trust and build a relationship with.

• (1235)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Ms. Whiskeyjack, I hate to interrupt you, but I only have a minute left and I wanted to ask you a question about incarceration because you said you had been to prison.

I had the Library of Parliament do an amazing study on the mother-child program. In 2011, 48% of the kids in foster care had moms in prison, so that connection with the kids was broken.

How critical is it to deal with the number of indigenous women going to prison, the indigenous kids in foster care, and the link between that and their getting involved in gangs, guns, drugs and everything else?

Ms. Nicole Whiskeyjack: As I said, when I went to prison I was 20 years old. Actually, I was 21, because when I first got incarcerated I was in the Edmonton Remand Centre. It's kind of a crazy story, because it was my first offence ever in my life. I never had any gang involvement, drugs involvement, nothing like that. For the first offence in my life, I was in the remand centre for a whole slew of charges, all the charges that come with being involved in gangs, high-profile gangs, and guns, a whole slew of charges. Finally, I was not able to be released on a promise to appear or be released from a justice of the peace.

Finally, I was incarcerated in the Edmonton Remand Centre. I was five months pregnant with my first daughter. She's now 15 years old.

The Chair: It's a fascinating story and it deserves a lot more time, which, unfortunately, we don't have. I hope there will be other occasions for us to hear more from you, Ms. Whiskeyjack, because these life experiences are absolutely vital.

Thank you very much for sharing yours with us now, and I'm sorry we don't have more time.

Ms. Michaud, you have a six-minute slot in this round. The floor is now yours.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your testimony, Ms. Whiskeyjack. It is really very moving.

I have more than one question and we have a number of interesting witnesses with us. But I am going to give you time to continue what you were saying. Take all the time you need.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Whiskeyjack, this is an opportunity for you to continue. Please, go ahead.

Ms. Nicole Whiskeyjack: While I was incarcerated, the first thing that happened.... I was five months pregnant with my daughter, and eventually I was sentenced. While I was pregnant and incarcerated, the goal of the police service and everybody around me was to apprehend my baby as soon as she was born. Because I was smart about everything, I had everything in place so that when my daughter was born, she would go home with my family, and my family only.

Today, she lives with me, obviously, because I got her back when I was released from the penitentiary. She was there to pick me up with the people in my family who looked after her. Just for that.... There was no system set up so that she would go with family. It was immediately children services: "Let's take her away; let's get her. She's a gang member's child, a gang member's baby; let's get her and take her away."

There was no system in place. There were no resources for anybody to come to visit me while I was incarcerated to ask what I wanted for my unborn child and where I wanted my child to go. There was nothing like that. It was my own smarts that gave me the intuition that said I do not want my daughter to be involved in children services; I do not want my daughter to be in foster care; I do not want my daughter to be stripped of all her cultural identity.

That's what I did. I set it up so that my younger brother would take her home from the hospital when she was born, and that's what happened.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: It was your impression that you did not have access to the resources you needed and that you were not well supported. Do you see any improvement today? We have witnesses here representing organizations that are really helping the community. Do you find that things have changed? Do you feel that the government should invest more in the area?

Gangs are heavily involved in firearms trafficking, but, in my opinion, it's not simply a question of investing in policing. It is possible to work on prevention and community support. I would like to know what you think about it.

[English]

Ms. Nicole Whiskeyjack: I think the most important thing is to have people like me, who.... When I got out of prison, I completely changed my whole life around. I disconnected myself from all those people. As I said, my daughter is 15 years old now. Obviously, we moved to the United States five years ago. She has never had any direct contact with her biological father. I'm sorry to say it, but he's probably still in jail up there somewhere, living the same old gang life, distributing guns and drugs and violence. I guarantee that nothing's changed with him, because he's done it his whole life. I haven't talked to him in 20 years.

I would say, have people like me, who have lived experience, who have changed their life around, present to people and let them know. Let people like me help bring light to the real issues that are happening. I know that when I talk to people, and I tell them....

My daughter goes to Pendleton High School. She's an honour student. She just got an award yesterday for being the best for first semester in advanced leadership. I guarantee you that if she did a presentation at her school and said, "I was born while my mom was incarcerated", nobody would believe her. They would think she was lying.

People like me have the lived experience and know what it's like. We've experienced those systems. I think if those systems were really talked about on a lived experience basis, it would bring more light to the end of the tunnel on what really needs to be done and what work needs to be done. When you're incarcerated, you're basically forgotten about. You have free room and board. Nobody cares about you. Nobody needs to worry about you, or they think they don't need to worry about you, because you're incarcerated. Really, it's the federal government that puts money into that, to feed those people, to clothe those people, and to give those people a place to sleep.

Oftentimes, for some people who are living on the streets in that kind of life, that's why they get caught up with gangs and violence and drugs. A lot of times, that's their safe way out. They think, "If I commit a crime and I end up in jail, I have a place to sleep. I have a place to eat. I don't have to worry about this." Some people do those things because then they are finally able to focus on themselves and get the help and the resources they need. Sometimes that's a way for them to get off the drugs.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm glad we had an opportunity to hear from you more fully.

Thank you, Ms. Michaud, for allowing that to happen.

Now I will turn to Minister...Mr. MacGregor. "Minister" MacGregor...? Well, look, you never know. This is a very unpredictable business we're in. But this morning you're Mr. MacGregor, and you have six minutes in this round to pose your questions or your commentary.

The floor is yours.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just quickly, with respect to the motion I gave notice of in the first hour, I think I did hear some committee members express some interest in maybe discussing it. I do think this is a very pertinent issue with how the GoFundMe model operates and the anonymity of donors, especially foreign sources.

I'm just wondering if there's unanimous consent from committee members to maybe hive off five minutes at the end of today's meeting to have a discussion and vote on the motion. If it is the will of the committee, I'm willing to cede the remainder of my time to give us that space to do so. I don't want any discussion at this point. I just hope I can find unanimous consent to have five minutes at the end of this committee meeting to have an actual vote on that motion.

• (1245)

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent?

I see that there is unanimous consent.

We can defer the discussion to the end of the meeting for five minutes. That's only a few minutes from now, because we are now moving within about 15 minutes of the hour.

Mr. MacGregor, you have given up time, but you haven't used all your time.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: In the interest of giving us that time, Mr. Chair, I will cede the remainder of my question time to give us that space at the end.

The Chair: Okay.

We're now at a point where we have to make a couple of decisions about how we're going to use the 10 minutes remaining. We have another round of questions. Maybe we should begin with the top of that round and ask members to cut their time in half so that we can accommodate as many as we can.

Mr. Van Popta, you are first on the list. Can you do it in two and a half minutes? We'll find out. The floor is yours.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Yes, I can do it in two and a half minutes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

I have a question for Kevin Walker, but perhaps Mr. Bourbonniere can also jump in. You told us that the urban indigenous population in Winnipeg is very large. I don't really have a sense of how large that is, so maybe you could tell us. In relation to that, do you see any value in indigenous policing in an urban setting such as Winnipeg?

Mr. Kevin Walker: I'll let my colleague Mitch Bourbonniere speak on this. He hasn't had a chance to speak, so I'd like to get his views on that.

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: Thank you, Kevin.

The population in Winnipeg in terms of folks who declare their indigeneity would be between 15% and 25% of Winnipeggers. As Kevin mentioned, in the inner city and in the north end, that's much higher.

We would always welcome more safety and peacekeeping done by indigenous people in our community, and Bear Clan is doing it already. In terms of women-led, Mama Bear Clan in North Point Douglas is also a model and a sister organization to Kevin's organization, so that's happening as well.

Thank you.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: We've heard quite a bit about indigenous policing and the value of that, but in an urban setting, what does that look like? Are there enough resources being put into that?

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: I think it's happening, I think Kevin's program and Mama Bear Clan are doing it. It's not policing per se, but it is peacekeeping and it is community-led, women-led. We've taken guns off the street as well in our program, OPK Manitoba. With more support, we can continue to do these kinds of things and maybe shift the police budget away from mental health and wellness checks, missing people and non-criminal matters and allow the police to shift their budget towards smuggling and gun dealing.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Thank you.

Do you have any specific recommendations for that?

The Chair: You have five seconds, please.

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: Just shift some of what the police are doing over to community organizations like Mama Bear Clan, OPK and Bear Clan.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go to Mr. Noormohamed for two and a half minutes.

Sir, are you ready?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): I am ready. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Whiskeyjack, your testimony today is pretty profound and pretty remarkable for all of us, I think. You've changed your whole life. For all of us, I think, there's a lot of learning there. If you were to reflect now on some of what you've heard today, what would you tell us is important in terms of creating the conditions necessary for young people to leave behind the gang life? From your perspective, how important is it to make sure that we get these weapons that are being used by gangs off the streets?

Ms. Nicole Whiskeyjack: I would say the most important thing is to educate. Educate youth to be successful no matter what their upbringing is like. A lot of children I deal with even in the program I work for right now.... I'm the community coordinator for the ILAUNCH program: indigenous project LAUNCH, which stands for "linking actions for unmet needs in children's health". That's the program I work for. A lot of the time I see happening exactly everything that I've been through in my life, with my siblings, so I always give the tools and the resources to all the families I work with on where they can go to get help. Most of the time I'm an advocate for them, and I need to hold their hands.

A lot of the time, like Marlene said, they don't get that nurturing, they don't get that love and support to do those things, so just having somebody to advocate for them, to speak for them, to have that safety and that accountability that somebody is going to be there to follow up and follow through with all of their expectations, which they've never had before, is rewarding for them.

A lot of the time that's how gangs pick up children in those situations, because most of the time, they're in foster homes and they're not getting the love, nurturing, respect or cultural identity that they expect to get. For indigenous children, that's instilled in them. They're just born with that. It's not something that they get or that's an advantage for them.

My family is a powwow family, so we travel all over Canada and the U.S. and everywhere to do powwows, to sing. My husband is a well-known singer who produces albums of powwow music and round dance music. That cultural identity is tough for them, and it's taken them a lot of places.

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

It's very difficult testimony to hear, but it's absolutely essential for our broader understanding of the issues we're faced with.

Ms. Michaud, you have two and a half minutes. It's over to you, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am going to ask the other witnesses a similar question to the one I asked Ms. Whiskeyjack just now.

First, Mr. Bourbonniere, could you talk to us about the funding needed to combat illegal firearms trafficking and criminal activity by street gangs? I believe that we can invest more in police services and that the organizations can have better communication with each other. But I feel that we also have to consider the demand side. We have to try to understand why people, generally young people, want firearms. We need to explore that.

How can we reduce the demand? Are we talking about community action, social action, prevention? What do you think?

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: Thank you for the question, Ms. Michaud.

[*English*]

Actually, I think it's twofold in terms of money and resources. We do need law enforcement to be supported in suppressing smuggling and lowering the number of guns coming into our territories. On the other hand, we need as much, if not more, resources to do the work that Ms. Whiskeyjack is calling for. We're trying to do that work. We're doing our best to do that work in programs like OPK. Kevin runs a youth Bear Clan. Those youngsters are not joining gangs; they're joining good gangs—his gang and our gang. To do this work, we need way more resources for youth.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

Mr. Walker, do you believe that organizations like yours could be better funded?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Walker: I'm sorry. I didn't get the question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Do you think it would be good if organizations like yours were better funded? Do you consider that, right now, you have the tools and the resources you need to do your work properly and to make sure that as many young people as possible join the “good gang”, as Mr. Bourbonniere described it earlier?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Walker: It's not coming in as interpreted, so I'm not understanding the language.

• (1255)

Mr. Mitch Bourbonniere: Kevin, Ms. Michaud was asking if you would require additional resources to do this good work of turning youth's lives around.

Mr. Kevin Walker: Thanks, Mitch.

Definitely. We've started a youth program now where we've incorporated land-based ideas and teachings. I think that's part of the key to get youth involved, versus being part of gangs and things like that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm sorry that we're so stretched for time. This is just a reality of having to be loyal to a schedule.

Now let's go to Mr. MacGregor, who gave up time to pose questions in order to deal with his motion.

The floor is yours, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: On a point of order, do we want to let our witnesses go, Chair?

The Chair: Yes, the witnesses can go.

I will thank them for their generosity of time. I'm sure that in every case we could have gone on for much longer. Unfortunately, that luxury is not available to us.

To the witnesses, on behalf of the whole committee, thank you very much for your wisdom, insights and sharing.

Mr. MacGregor, go ahead.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to my colleagues for granting unanimous consent.

You all have a copy of the motion. I don't need to read it into the record again, so I'll just say that I'm formally moving the motion and I hope that we can use our time to get to a quick vote.

Thank you.

The Chair: Do we have any comments from members of the committee?

Mr. Noormohamed, your hand was up. You have the floor.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would move an amendment to Mr. MacGregor's motion to add the word “FINTRAC” after the word “GoFundMe”. The sentence would read, “That the committee invite representatives from GoFundMe and FINTRAC to appear as soon as possible”, if that's amenable.

The Chair: What is the wish of the committee?

I see a hand up from Ms. Michaud.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to discuss the motion, but Mr. MacGregor said that it is actually a friendly amendment.

Will you allow me to debate that?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes.

The Clerk: If I may?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, the debate is on the amendment.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Okay.

I agree with the amendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: Right. The debate is on the amendment.

Do we have agreement that the amendment should pass?

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

Let's move to the motion itself.

Go ahead, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have a question for you, Mr. Chair, or Mr. MacGregor.

I'm not sure if it's in the motion, but when do we propose to have this meeting, should this motion pass?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: I could answer that quickly, Chair.

I'm happy to have an organizational meeting in the future to determine that. I just want to put this on the committee's docket.

The Chair: Okay. We'll do this sequentially. The next step is to deal with the motion itself, which has been put forward by Mr. MacGregor.

Who on the committee is in favour of the motion?

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Chair, there's still a discussion.

The Chair: Yes, but not much. We're running out of time, so let's do this.

Mr. McKinnon, do you have your hand up?

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Yes. I would like to make a further amendment, that we are able to expand the study at a later time as well.

The Chair: There's an amendment to have the freedom to study it further at a later time.

Does the committee agree that this is a reasonable amendment?

Go ahead, Ms. Dancho.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you, Chair.

While I don't disagree with the friendly amendment, I don't believe it's in order.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk?

• (1300)

The Clerk: It is in order. We went back to the motion. The first amendment was voted on and all agreed to it, so we went back to the main motion. We started the debate, and Mr. McKinnon moved a new amendment to the motion.

It is in order.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: That's correct, but doesn't he have to read where he would insert that?

The Chair: Mr. McKinnon, do you know where you would insert the amendment in the main motion?

Mr. Ron McKinnon: I am happy to leave that up to the clerk. Basically, I'm asking that the motion be amended to leave it open to the committee to expand the study at later time.

The Chair: Why don't we agree to put that at the end of the motion? It's probably where it makes the most sense.

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Yes.

So I would add to the end of the motion, "and that this study be expanded at a later date".

The Chair: Okay.

Do we have a consensus among members on the amendment?

Madame Michaud, I see your hand and that you're shaking your head no.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Actually, I agree with the amendment.

However, I did not have the time to debate the motion before amendments to it were introduced.

I would have liked to ask some questions about the logistics. If I understand correctly, Mr. McKinnon's motion means that we would have time to debate it during the meeting.

Is that actually what the amendment means?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, I believe that's the intention of the amendment.

Mr. MacGregor, are you comfortable with this?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Yes, Mr. Chair. The wording of the motion says to invite them "as soon as possible", and I'm open to having the expansion at the end, as per Mr. McKinnon's amendment.

I think Mr. Lloyd also wants to intervene.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just concerned about unclear language. At the organizational meeting, it can be discussed whether we need two meetings, three meetings or however many meetings. It's kind of nebulous to put in the motion itself that this motion can be expanded. It doesn't seem like a very professional way.... I've never seen a motion worded that way.

I would support the original motion with the FINTRAC amendment, but let the organizational meeting determine how many meetings are going to be necessary for this. Just leaving it open and saying, “Oh, it should be expanded”.... We should try to set a clear beginning and end to this, because we have a lot of important things that we’ve discussed. We had a subcommittee working meeting, where we set an agenda for the whole year. I would hate to see that be interrupted with an open-ended, possibly endless, committee study.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, where do you want to take it from here?

Do you want to take it to a vote on the second amendment?

The Clerk: Mr. McKinnon had his hand up, so if he wants to speak further....

Otherwise, yes, we need to proceed to a vote.

The Chair: Mr. McKinnon, go ahead.

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Thank you.

I hear Dane's concern, except that the committee is really the master of its destiny. We can expand it, or we can put time limits later on as we go along. I just want to make sure that this briefing from GoFundMe, and so forth, is not just a one-off, so we probably want to consider it.

In any case, I'm happy to go to a vote on this amendment at this time.

The Chair: I'm very conscious of the time, and respectful of your time.

We'll go to a vote on Mr. McKinnon's amendment.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, we can do a recorded vote, unless there's unanimous consent.

The Chair: We don't have unanimous consent, so let's do a recorded vote.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, did you see anyone indicate that there was not consent?

The Chair: Let me ask.

Is there unanimous consent that we pass Mr. McKinnon's amendment? That's the question.

Is there anybody opposed to the amendment? There is one.

Mr. MacGregor, are you opposed to the amendment?

Then we would have to have a recorded vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1305)

The Chair: We will move to the motion itself.

Is there any further debate on the motion, knowing that we have virtually no time?

We can then move to a vote.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): No, Chair. I have a point of order.

Just so everybody doesn't think I've disappeared, my video has completely stopped and I can't get it back on, but I am here.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Shipley, we can hear you loud and clear.

Mr. Doug Shipley: It does have sound. It's just a blank screen and I cannot get my video back on.

The Chair: We'll make sure that, one way or another, your opinion is recorded.

The main motion is in front of us, with an amendment.

Do we have consent to approve the motion as amended?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Chair, can I request a recorded vote, please?

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, would you please administer the recorded vote?

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: That's excellent. It's very clear what the will of the committee is.

Thank you very much, Mr. MacGregor.

That completes the work of the committee this morning, and this week. I look forward to Tuesday and Thursday of next week. By the way, it's my hope to be there in the flesh. I don't know who else intends to be in Ottawa next week. That's my plan, depending on the way things go.

I will entertain a motion for adjournment. We don't vote on that, do we?

Everybody will know that officially this meeting—and you can see my gavel—is adjourned.

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