HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

SECU • NUMBER 067 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, January 31, 2013

Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone. This is meeting number 67 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. It is Thursday, January 31, 2013. This morning we are continuing our study on the economics of policing in Canada.

We're fortunate to have a number of esteemed guests with us here today. First of all, appearing on behalf of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police is Mr. Dale McFee, past president. We also have, from the Canadian Association of Police Boards, Alok Mukherjee, who is the president of the association. Appearing by video conference from Vancouver is Tom Stamatakis, president of the Canadian Police Association.

We certainly appreciate all of you being here today, but if there were an award for a special thank you, it would be given to the Canadian Police Association in Vancouver. The time out there is about a quarter to six in the morning, so obviously their president has been up early and is appearing.

Our committee thanks you. We're taking this study very seriously, as we do all our studies. We know the costs of policing in Canada are increasing. Certainly as a committee and as a government and opposition, we all want to work together to see how we can play a role in proper decisions for this very important file of protection and policing.

I'll invite all our witnesses to make a brief opening statement, and then we'll move into the first round of questioning.

Perhaps I should go first to Mr. Stamatakis in Vancouver.

Welcome. It's good to see you so early in the morning.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis (President, Canadian Police Association): Thank you very much.

Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. I do have an opening statement that I'll start out with. Hopefully there will then be lots of time for questions.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning to discuss the economics of policing, an issue that's been at the forefront of our association's efforts over the past two years.

I'd also like to offer my thanks to your colleague Minister Toews and the Department of Public Safety for their efforts in organizing the recent national summit, which brought together stakeholders from all aspects of policing in Canada to study the issue, and, perhaps more importantly, to find common ground.

Since the economics of policing is such a broad topic, I'm going to try my best to keep my opening remarks brief in order to leave as much time as possible to answer questions. However, there are a few important issues that I would like to address with you this morning.

The focus of my presentation will be on the men and women who wear the uniform of front-line police personnel. I have the privilege of representing over 54,000 police officers and civilians serving in over 160 municipal, provincial, federal, and first nations police services.

I appreciate having a seat at the table here when it comes to your discussion on the economics of policing, since 80% to 85% of the costs associated with policing in this country are directly related to the members I represent. Of course, it's impossible to separate those costs from the equation, since policing is a public service that's provided by people, one that requires a constant application of discretion and judgment that cannot be replaced even with advancements in technology.

There's no argument that police salaries make up a significant portion of the costs, but there seems to be a false belief among some observers that the easiest solution is to cut those salaries and then everything else will fall into place. What those observers tend to ignore is the tremendous change that's gone into the job description of today's front-line police personnel.

Police today are called on to serve roles as diverse as substance abuse counsellors, mental health workers, marriage counsellors, and youth intervention officers, all while maintaining their primary responsibility for community safety.

On top of those various roles, our officers also have to keep pace with quickly changing technology and investigative methods, which requires significant investments in training and retraining over the course of their careers.

On top of that, there is also the need to constantly and immediately adapt to new regulatory frameworks, usually the result of court decisions or other inquests and commissions.

Even further on top of that is the simple fact that policing in Canada is already one of the most accountable professions that can be entered into, with almost every province in this country having in place at least one civilian oversight body, and in some cases three or more, regularly putting our actions under the microscope. There's no other profession that's subject to, and held accountable by, so many political, legal, internal, and civilian agencies.

To be absolutely clear, I'm not suggesting that any of the oversight or accountability is not necessary, although I can and will certainly make the case that the amount of duplication and redundancy in the system is a significant driver of costs.

I just hope that this committee will understand that police officers today can be more accurately compared with those in other skilled professions or trades. There's no question that those professionals have also seen their salaries increase.

The question of salaries for front-line police officers in Canada is often the elephant in the room when we discuss the costs of policing. I think it's very important to note that during the recent summit, there was very little interest among the stakeholders at all levels of this sector to make salaries a focus of this discussion, and I think for very good reason: those stakeholders themselves are best positioned to recognize that Canadian taxpayers receive tremendous value for money when it comes to their police services.

In fact I'd argue further—and the statistics back this argument up—that the increases in police budgets are not entirely the result of corresponding increases in our salaries. Just take the City of Toronto as an example. Since 1980, while salaries for front-line police personnel have increased, the percentage of the total municipal budget spent on policing has remained virtually unchanged. Obviously costs are increasing across the board, but police salaries on their own are not the main driver of these increases.

Another argument I'd like to directly address is the often-heard refrain that crime rates are down, so why do we need to spend so much on policing?

First and foremost, it's precisely those increased investments that all levels of government have made that have had a direct influence on the declining crime rates.

I admit a certain amount of frustration when I'm told that police should be penalized for their successes by having their budgets cut. However, I find it important for us to consider the facts when it comes to budget cutbacks. I'd like to provide you with a couple of first-hand examples.

● (0850)

In 2011 the City of Sacramento in California laid off over 300 police officers in response to budget cutbacks. Following those cutbacks, the city saw a 48% increase in gun violence as well as increases in crimes such as rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and vehicle theft.

In Camden, New Jersey, which is the possibly the poster child for police service cutbacks, aggravated assaults have more than tripled and shootings have nearly doubled since the municipality laid off a significant portion of their police service due to budget shortfalls.

In fact, research conducted on five New Jersey cities—Newark, Camden, Irvington, Paterson, and Trenton—before and after police layoffs indicates that the costs incurred from an increase in crime are almost 13 times greater than the costs they saved in municipal budgets from any cuts.

I also think it's important to note that Canada currently employs 203 police officers per 100,000 population and that this number is by no means out of the ordinary when compared to our international partners, who are often used as an example of why we should be having a discussion around reducing the size of our police forces. In fact, that number puts Canada behind similar countries, such as the United States at 242, England and Wales at 252, Australia at 262, and Scotland at 331 officers per 100,000 population. In fact, the numbers for England and Wales and for Scotland reflect massive cutbacks to officer strength that their police services have already suffered, and Canada's numbers are still well behind theirs.

Of course, now that I have painted a picture of doom and gloom, and before I get painted as a typical union boss who's standing in the way of progress, let me just say that the situation isn't nearly as bad as some might have you believe, and that I'm in fact hopeful that by adopting a few very achievable steps, we can begin to tackle the challenges facing our sector.

First and foremost is the need for additional investment, particularly by the Government of Canada, in the field of research for the police profession. Canada has over 200 police services at the municipal, provincial, federal, and first nation levels. Almost every one of these services is currently innovating new methods for tackling the challenges of community safety. However, we lack a formal structure to collect—and more importantly, to evaluate—the effectiveness of these innovations, which often means that not all communities are able to take advantage of the work being done on the ground in Canada.

I should note that this recommendation is not particular to my association. At the recent summit held here in Ottawa, this call was echoed by colleagues from across the spectrum, and I believe this is an excellent opportunity for the federal government to show leadership without making additional direct and financial investments in policing.

Second, there is a need to focus on finding efficiencies within the system as it currently exists. As I mentioned near the beginning of my presentation, there's no profession in Canada that is subject to and held accountable by so many political, legal, internal, and civilian agencies. Eliminating some of the duplication while still maintaining the necessary oversight would improve the job quality of our police personnel while introducing important cost savings into the sector.

However, it isn't simply the oversight mechanisms that need to be improved. We also need to examine methods to streamline the processes that currently keep our officers tied up doing administrative work behind their desks rather than having them out on the street where the community expects them to be.

As you have no doubt heard by now, changes forced on our profession by well-meaning judicial decisions have led to increased workloads and processing times for some of the most basic charges our officers lay.

Take impaired driving, for example. A process that in 1980 took one to two hours has now increased to eight to nine hours for a single officer. These sorts of increases are simply unsustainable across the board. I'd also note that improvements to court scheduling times would go a long way toward more efficient staffing. Too many of our officers spend their entire day sitting in a courthouse waiting for a particular trial, only to have that appearance rescheduled at the last possible moment, all at tremendous cost to the taxpayer.

Impaired driving charges and court scheduling are just two of the many examples I can provide in which common sense seems to have fallen by the wayside. With an increase in funding for research that can use evidence to study innovations to fix these basic problems, I have no doubt that we can go a long way toward cutting costs without resorting to the kinds of cutbacks in personnel that have led to the problems I outlined in other jurisdictions.

Finally, I'd like to suggest that your committee direct a focus toward the coordination of services across government lines, including policing. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, police today are called upon to fulfill a number of diverse roles in providing services that wouldn't necessarily fall under the term of public safety. We need a holistic approach, particularly with respect to funding for policing, that recognizes those diverse tasks.

● (0855)

Without a more coordinated approach, people may not realize that cuts to police services will also entail cuts to health care, as the officers who regularly deal with Canadians suffering from mental health problems will be affected. Those potential cuts will impact education, as officers who currently serve in our schools across the country will feel the impact. The list goes on. We cannot separate the investments we make in our police services from the benefits we receive across all of these sectors.

The fact is that police officers do a great job. Citizens call us because we solve problems in an efficient manner, and we can only do that because of the skills and training we have, skills and training that arguably are hard to replace and do not exist anywhere else in the public or private sector.

Police associations across Canada have been the leaders in our sector when it comes to addressing the challenges facing police funding, because to put it simply, the members I represent are all taxpayers too.

I think this committee has a tremendous opportunity to directly influence these discussions, and while my presentation today has by necessity focused only on a small section of this issue, I look forward to your questions and comments and hope I can provide additional clarity to help you in your deliberations.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move over to Mr. Mukherjee. Forgive me if I've mispronounced that. We look forward to your comments on behalf of the police boards.

● (0900)

Dr. Alok Mukherjee (President, Canadian Association of Police Boards): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

As has been said, my name is Alok Mukherjee, and I appear before you on behalf of the Canadian Association of Police Boards, of which I am the president. Thank you for giving us an opportunity to offer our comments on a study that is very important to our organization.

For some time now, our association has been working on the issue of economics of policing. In 2010 the CAPB took the lead in forming a coalition on sustainable public policing. This coalition includes the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Canadian Police Association, so if you hear some common themes, you will know that we have been working together. Public Safety Canada has been an important resource and ally in the work of our coalition.

Our active engagement with the issue stemmed from an initiative of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. In 2008 the CACP asked our organization, along with the FCM and the CPA, to endorse a framework for integrated policing on the basis that division of policing functions into federal, provincial, and local jurisdictions was artificial, since in the final analysis all policing was local.

While there was broad consensus that this framework reflected the reality of Canadian policing today, it was the CACP's position that discussion of the framework was incomplete without addressing the issue of financing of policing. As a result, in March 2010, CAPB, in cooperation with the other stakeholders, formed this national coalition. We are pleased that questions related to economics of policing are now on the national agenda as evidenced by your committee's study, the engagement of FPT ministers, and the very successful national summit hosted by Public Safety Canada recently on January 16 and 17.

The police boards and commissions that are our members are responsible for the governance and oversight of more than 75% of municipal police in Canada. One of their key responsibilities is the development and approval of the annual operating and capital budgets of their police services. It is their job to then explain and defend these budgets at their local city councils to justify the allocation of a significant portion of property tax revenue to policing. As you know, in communities where policing services are provided by the RCMP, or as in the case of Ontario by the OPP, the municipality enters into contracts directly with these national or provincial police agencies. Again, the cost is borne by the local property taxpayer.

Regardless of whether a community is served by a municipal police service or through contract policing, there is national concern and an intensifying debate as to whether our current model is sustainable. While our police agencies and the women and men who serve in them by and large enjoy high public esteem, the public at the same time is questioning the affordability of these services.

I should say this is not a new concern. In 1977 Judge C.O. Bick, the first chair of the Toronto Police Services Board, then known as the Metropolitan Toronto Board of Commissioners of Police, sounded the alarm in his final annual report as he ended his 21-year tenure at the helm. He said, and I quote:

> The very real, very present danger is that the continued escalation of costs for police services will seriously weaken the financial ability of Metropolitan Toronto to contain the growth of crime.
>
> In its assessment of the future financing of police services, the Ontario Task Force on Policing stated that there is "a very real potential crisis in financing municipal police services. This crisis could result in the imposition of constraints to growth." For us it is not a "potential" crisis, it has arrived.

● (0905)

That was in 1977, but Chair Bick may well have been speaking these words today, as trends in police expenditure from different police services show.

I'd like to share with you trends from three large police services in Ontario: Toronto, Durham, and Peel. These are three of the largest police services.

I draw your attention to the red line representing the rise in gross expenditures on policing. These are tracked over a period of approximately 12 to 15 years. As data from Toronto, Durham, and Peel police services demonstrate, a relatively consistent trend line was maintained until 1999. However, since then, total police expenditure growth has far outpaced all other indicators, including population growth, the growth in the number of police officers, and inflation. The situation is very similar throughout Canada.

Public policing in Canada has evolved significantly. Growing public expectations and demand for service, legislative changes, transfer of responsibility by different orders of government, and securitization of local policing in our post-9/11 world are among the factors that have changed the nature and mission of policing. Combined with trends in police sector compensation in the last decade, there are questions about sustainability of the cost of policing and the continuing relevance of the current model of financing local policing.

I have provided to the clerk of the committee a small number of background materials that shed light on these factors, and I ask that they be taken note of in any report your committee prepares.

Local policing today involves a number of functions besides dealing with crime. You have heard Mr. Stamatakis about that. Our officers are in schools. They assist people suffering from mental illness. They prevent social victimization. They police international waterways. They are involved in national security and anti-terrorism matters. They participate in integrated and joint policing projects, and the list goes on. Often they are the agency of first resort as other programs are reduced or eliminated due to the fiscal challenges we face. The mandate of our police services ranges from keeping local neighbourhoods safe from petty crime to interdicting acts of international terror.

For these reasons, we have accepted an integrated framework of policing. It stems from our recognition of reality. However, what we do not have is a sound and comprehensive economic analysis of our integrated system of policing. This is a broader analysis than of cost alone.

The discussion so far has been based on a subjective and largely political assessment that we are paying too much for policing and that the local property taxpayer is bearing a disproportionate burden of this cost, which should be shared by all orders of government. In fact, we cannot really tell what value our current model of policing truly adds in terms of factors such as community safety and wellness, national security, savings in other public expenditures, and impact on the community's total social, cultural, and economic development. We may have a fairly good idea of inputs and outputs, but we do not have any economic valuation of outcomes.

Further, we cannot tell whether the current system of financing policing from the local tax base is appropriate. We cannot tell whether, from a strictly economic standpoint, it is too much or just right to allocate between 25% and 30% of a municipality's annual budget to policing. We cannot tell objectively the extent to which this system of financing policing locally is subsidizing provincial and federal responsibilities.

● (0910)

I believe that an authoritative, credible, and independent economic model of local policing in Canada, taking into account all the variables, is a key prerequisite for an informed discussion of the economics of policing and the responsibility of different orders of government. This informed discussion is the missing track in our efforts to deal with the economic aspect of our model of policing.

The track on which we are beginning to make some progress is in controlling and reducing the cost of providing policing services. This was the main focus of the national summit on the economics of policing. This is what is being explored, for example, in Ontario through the provincial government's future of policing advisory committee. This is what many municipalities and police boards or commissions are trying to deal with through efficiency reviews, searching for alternative delivery models, determination of core and non-core police services, examination of functions that can be performed by personnel other than uniformed police officers and volunteers, consideration of public-private partnerships, maximization of the use of technology, efforts to determine what constitutes the right size of their services, struggling to achieve lower contract settlements, outright reduction in police budgets, and so on.

For example, the Toronto Police Services Board oversees Canada's largest municipal police service, which has total gross expenditures exceeding $1 billion. Over two years, the Toronto Police Services Board has reduced the police budget by a cumulative total of nearly 10%. There is no question that this is an important track for us to follow. By itself, however, this track will not help us deal comprehensively with the broader question of economics of policing as I have described it above. This is why it is the position of the CAPB that we first need to develop an objective and authoritative economic model of policing.

Second, we need a whole-system approach involving all our partners—those in health, education, social services, and justice, to name a few—in a meaningful dialogue on an integrated, broadly understood approach to community safety.

Third, we need the federal and provincial governments to acknowledge their financial responsibility for policing our communities. It is from this perspective that we welcome your study.

I will be glad to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Mr. McFee, please.

Mr. Dale McFee (Past President, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try to sum up quickly so we have some time here.

Let me as well begin by thanking each of you, the members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, for having me appear today regarding this very important study.

I am also very pleased to appear with our colleagues from the Canadian Police Association, the Canadian Association of Police Boards, and the Quebec association of chiefs of police. Together, we have undertaken to examine this issue over the past few years.

During my presidency of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, we recognized the fact that the growing cost of policing was unsustainable. We became well aware of the impact that the global economic downturn was having in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. We sought to learn from their experiences and questioned how we could improve the services we provide to our communities in a sustainable manner, recognizing that the complexities of policing continue to grow.

In 2012 the CACP initiated five regional conferences across Canada, bringing together chiefs of police, the CPA and the CAPB, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, government, academics, and private security organizations. Most recently, Public Safety Canada held its national summit on the economics of policing, which again brought together 250 representatives from each of these areas.

Jointly, we frame this issue using a three-pillar approach: one, efficiencies within police services; two, new models of community safety; and three, efficiencies within the justice system. Allow me to comment briefly on each.

From the point of view of efficiencies within police services, I agree with the CPA. They state that in comparing Canada to other G-8 countries, we have, serving in this vast land, the lowest ratio of law enforcement personnel per population. I also join them in saying that we achieve great value from our police officers, who deal with the ever-growing complexities of our profession.

Typically, in an overall police services budget, salaries represent 85% to 90% of the overall budget. Salaries are determined between union representatives and police boards or governments, depending upon jurisdiction.

Chiefs of police, however, are given the task of reducing overall costs. From this perspective, as chiefs, we cannot affect collective bargaining, but we can attempt to ensure that our officers are focused on utilizing their professional skills for more complex policing issues.

I have heard an appropriate analogy from the auto sector, which states that we do not need to use master mechanics to change flat tires. Perhaps we should not, for example, have police officers directing traffic. We are looking at striking the right balance among civilianization, privatization, and tiered policing. Tiered policing is already gaining acceptance through the use of special constables to perform routine duties.

We are increasingly looking at technology as a means of achieving greater efficiencies as well. The use of automatic licence plate scanners, for example, while controversial, allows us the means to provide even greater enforcement capabilities with less resources, and new analytical tools are producing the kind of business intelligence that can help us put our resources where they can have the most effect.

We are also reassessing what our core services are and the alternatives to how we deliver those services, which leads to the second pillar: new models for community safety, an area in which I have been a very strong advocate. The feedback from all of our conferences has been that law enforcement has often become the front line for all social issues.

Most chiefs will say that between 70% to 80% of all calls for service are not related to crime. The CACP's current president, Chief Chu, states, “I used to call us the social service agency of last resort. Now...we're the social service agency of first resort.” The evidence shows us that the federal and provincial government cuts to social services, the general impacts of the global economy, increasing problems arising from mental health, the abuse of substances and of alcohol, literacy rates, and the growing number of Canadians living in marginalized circumstances all have a profound impact on policing costs.

Police in Canada are introducing new, innovative approaches and sharing best practices towards developing new models of community safety. While I was the chief of the Prince Albert Police Service,we undertook extensive research and study, which led to the implementation of our community mobilization model. To summarize, we brought together social services, health, education, and other human services to share information, to understand better who in the community was having difficulties, and to help with immediate intervention plans to reduce the risks that lead to crime before crime happens. Victimization and a range of other social indicators all act in the same manner for the right reasons at the right time.

● (0915)

The model has already yielded unprecedented reductions and improvements across a range of indicators, from violent crime to emergency room admissions. It is a common sense model that has achieved significant success and has since been adopted by many police services, including those in Toronto and Sudbury and several throughout Saskatchewan. Just yesterday, my team was in Waterloo assisting multiple human services partners to move forward in similar ways.

If you subscribe to the fact that there is only one taxpayer, then you must subscribe to the fact that community safety is bigger than the police, and that collaboration also saves costs and delivers better service to those in need. As a matter of fact, it saves more costs than just those focused in one particular area. I hope that during this discussion you will afford me the opportunity to expand on the Prince Albert model, as I believe it is a game changer when discussing the issue of the economics of community safety.

We note changes made internationally by law enforcement in countries facing tough economic circumstances. For example, the deputy commissioner of the New Zealand Police stated:

> We were very good in enforcement, in response, but our changes resulted in more focus on prevention and on victims. We knew everything about crime but not necessarily about the victim—that changed. Prevention is now at the forefront. We are focused on a 4% redeployment into prevention and are required to deliver 13% less recorded crime and 19% fewer prosecutions. Putting people through the criminal justice system alone does not produce the desired outcome.

We must ask ourselves if we need to re-evaluate those things we measure. Also, what does success look like, and what is the most cost-effective way to attain success?

We also support and are actively encouraging greater research in this area, in partnership with Canada's leading academics, to develop empirical best practices for policing and crime reduction.

The third pillar of our approach relates to finding greater efficiencies within the justice system. This is a role in which the federal government can provide leadership.

We can no longer afford to have police officers standing around in courts, often being paid overtime, and wondering if they are going to be called to testify or not. Driving under the influence arrests once took a couple of hours of paperwork; now it's a full shift. Warrants for such items as basic subscriber information relating to lawful access for Internet information will place an enormous burden on police resources. Case law changes that have expanded our responsibilities for disclosure absolutely demand that we make effective use of technology, such as electronic file transfers, right across the criminal justice system.

New strategies such as those I've described require that we find alternative ways of dealing with repeat offenders and the chronic administrative breach charges that clog the system. Also, mental health and addictions issues are creating a bottleneck for all service providers, leaving us with the distinct impression that we must do better.

By streamlining the justice system, we can reduce the costs of policing. It is quite astonishing and thought-provoking to understand the reality of the costs of justice in Canada. The overall cost of the Robert Pickton investigation in B.C. totalled $102 million, of which $70 million was spent on the RCMP investigation.

Academia tells us that there is a correlation between the financial markets and the evolution of policing since inception. This clearly shows us that we have the opportunity to be better than we were yesterday. That doesn't mean throwing out the baby with the bathwater or reinventing; it just means tweaking to make ourselves better.

Allow me to conclude my remarks with a quote from international finance crime author Jeffrey Robinson, who said, “We live in a world of laws based on a 17th century definition of jurisdiction, overseen by an 18th century model of jurisprudence, enforced by a 19th century model of law enforcement and governed by a pre-digital 20th century world of...regulations.”

And we are dealing with 21st century crime. Those of us who work within the system are pursuing new evidence-based innovations to change how we do business, and what we need is the active support of political leaders and policy-makers to continue these efforts and to engage all the necessary partners who can truly make a difference.

Thank you.

● (0920)

The Chair: Thank you very much to all our presenters.

We'll move quickly into the first round of questioning.

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

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

Thank you to our witnesses. Again, you have given us a lot to look at and to think about.

I want to begin with you, Mr. Stamatakis. Mr. McFee, maybe you can also comment.

Mr. Stamatakis, you talked about the importance of research and investing in research. I think that one of the challenges we identified very early on in this study when we talked about this on Tuesday is the challenge of our country being so vast and so varied. What works in Toronto clearly doesn't work in rural Saskatchewan, and what works in northern Canada might not work on the east coast in terms of where money can be saved and where resources need to be spent.

I'm wondering if you can tell me if you're aware of any other countries or any other parts of countries where some of this research has already been done and reflects somewhat our country and some of the same challenges we face.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: Thank you for the question.

What I would say in response is that Canada is the only country that doesn't have some kind of national body or holding area for the research that is being done, so I guess I would use the same words to describe research done in other countries. When you try to look at it to bring it into this country and apply it here, what works in the U.K. doesn't necessarily work in Canada, and what works in Australia doesn't necessarily work in Canada.

However, what those countries do have is a national organization established specifically not just to conduct research but also to gather research and to hold it, so that the small rural department in Saskatchewan, for example, can go to that body and ask, “What's out there?” It can then find those pieces of research that are informed by good information and have been evaluated and can actually establish that there are clear benefits to these programs. Then they can pick the ones that will work for their community. Toronto might go with a program that works in that densely populated urban area, whereas a small community in Saskatchewan would go with something else that works in a rural area with many different challenges.

It is a vast country. We have challenges that urban areas face, and there are other challenges that rural communities face that are just as significant but that create different problems for governments, for police agencies, etc.

That's what's missing in this country. Australia has a national agency. Scotland has a national agency. The U.K. has a national agency. The U.S. has several national agencies. They have a sole function: to conduct research, to gather research, and to make it available to police forces across those countries.

● (0925)

Ms. Candice Bergen: Thank you very much.

We had some officials from Public Safety here on Tuesday. Mr. Potter was referring to a catalogue. It seems like that's probably just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what needs to be done, but it's good to know that there are other countries doing it. Maybe then we don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Mr. McFee, do you have anything you wanted to say on that?

Mr. Dale McFee: Yes, I have a couple of things.

You make a few distinct points that I think are bang on. The thing before the research comes in is the framework to “act local”. We do have that in Canada. We have it in a few locations. The Prince Albert framework that I've given you basically has all the agencies working under one roof and setting the local priorities. The framework will work anywhere.

As is being shown, it's starting to go across the country. That is giving a community the ability to act on local community priorities and invert the CBOs and the NGOs to ensure they're in line with the same activities. Then what you've created is alignment, and basically you save on the resources, the services, and the money because you've streamlined the process. In a community, you might be working on the top seven priorities instead of having a whole group of agencies working on priorities 17 through 20, which you don't have the resources to do.

The second part of what we're tying to that right now is that the CACP has started a research foundation, which is brand new. They're starting to look at topics, but the piece that's missing is that pointer journal. There are examples of it in the U.S. That can be as simple as having a box checked that tells you if something has worked or hasn't.

As a practical example, if you have a community in northern Manitoba that's in trouble and we've had something that worked with regard to those same issues that the community in Manitoba has, why do we go and study it for four years? Why don't we take it off the shelf, reroute it through the process, put it into the community in Manitoba, and get the action today, rather than letting them suffer for another three years? We are working on that. We're very close to trying to make that happen.

Those are bang on, those key components. It's the streamlining of the process, and the savings are in the streamlining. You put a peer group above that. In our world, it'll be a DM advisory council with various academics, such as Irvin Waller and former chief judge Ray Wyant, and collaborative people such as a mental health expert out of New York, a cross-training expert out of the University of Cincinnati or Cincinnati's justice institute....

So yes, that does exist. We're not far away. We presented this to Public Safety Canada on Tuesday.

Ms. Candice Bergen: That's good.

I think the website that you're referring to in the States, at least the one that we were told about, is CrimeSolutions.gov.

Mr. Dale McFee: Yes.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Could you also expand a bit on the Prince Albert model? Is it called Hub and COR? Is that correct?

Mr. Dale McFee: Yes, the Hub and the COR; that's back to giving the framework to act local. I always use the analogy of a McDonald's in Canada and a McDonald's in Japan. With a franchise, basically everything is the same. The letters are the same, the cookware and the software are the same. The only thing that varies is the menu; the menu is what really gives communities the “act local”.

If you focus a structure that has multi-collaborative agencies all under one roof, and they all put in their resources and realize that they have to do business more collaboratively or differently, the cost savings from going once collaboratively versus literally 40 or 50 times individually is huge. More importantly, it gives better service to the client.

With Hub you have 24- to 72-hour solutions for things that come to the table. You don't form a committee, you don't push it under this person's phone, you don't worry about who pays for it; you go and find out what the issue is and you deal with it.

Those things that aren't solved in those 24 to 72 hours, things that basically overlap the brain trust or the brain piece, are the systemic issues, the things that maybe we have to push up or write a policy paper on for government to make decisions.

The policy paper isn't written by health, it isn't written by the police, and it isn't written by social services; it's written by all, with front-level, front-line people actually reviewing it before it comes up to you, so that you see a more comprehensive piece of work that looks at how it affects the individual and the community and not just how it affects policing.

● (0930)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you very much to all three of you for appearing today. It's really quite refreshing to talk about some new approaches to the problems of community safety and building safer communities in Canada. I really commend all three organizations for working on it both individually and collaboratively, as I know you've been doing.

Mr. McFee, we've seen a lot of emphasis in this Parliament on legislative actions that increase penalties for crime. I wonder how that fits with the Hub and COR model you've been talking about in Prince Albert, and also how that fits with the administrative burden that gets placed on police. There are many people who will argue that more mandatory minimums and higher penalties cause more people to fight more cases in court rather than have the alternatives of diversion.

Perhaps I could ask you to comment on that.

Mr. Dale McFee: Sure. That's a great question.

I was in front of the committee on Bill C-10, I believe, and we support that. I think the reason we support it is that this is the balance piece. If I could change one thing in a conversation, I would change "hard on crime, arrest and incarcerate; soft on crime, prevention and intervention" to "smart on community safety". As I've said many times, the reality is that we're not going to arrest our way out of our troubles, but at the same time, we're not going to stop arresting.

There are people who need to go to jail. People who are committing horrendous crimes need to go to jail. It doesn't mean we forget about them; we have all kinds of great programming in our institutions that we need to basically give them and try to rehabilitate them and get them back into society in that contained environment.

At the same time, if you look at police services and you take down our calls for services—this comes from when I was a chief of police—it's the 75:25:5 rule: 75% of the calls are for antisocial behaviour, meaning that left unchecked, it will become criminal activity; 25% of the calls are criminal in nature; and 5% lead to criminal charges. It's about balance. We have to attack all sides at the same time, so I fully support this on behalf of the CACP, but I think what we're having a discussion about today is what that balanced piece looks like, if that makes sense.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Can I ask you the same question, Mr. Stamatakis?

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: I agree with Mr. McFee. It is a question of balance.

There needs to be some deterrence. The Canadian Police Association and the police officers I represent on the front line support there being a strong response to those who wreak havoc in our communities and engage in activities that victimize citizens. At the same time, we're engaged in many crime prevention activities. The proactive piece is just as important as the deterrence, but the fact is that in some cases.... I think Mr. McFee referred to the chronic offenders we typically deal with. At some point, incarcerating them means that people are not going to be victimized for a period of time, whatever the duration of the sentence is.

The final comment I'll make is that the reality is that even before the introduction of minimum mandatory sentences or other measures around that, in our system right now the fact is that people dispute and argue everything. That's one of the significant inefficiencies that exist in our criminal justice system. We're spending days and days attending to matters in court that are relatively minor matters and that we're not dealing with efficiently at all. That comes at a tremendous cost to the taxpayer.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Is there a solution there perhaps for some alternative dispute resolution measures as opposed to using the justice system for those more minor matters?

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: We completely support that. All across this country police agencies are involved in alternative dispute resolution processes.

It's interesting. There was a recent study out of New York, for example. New York seems to be bucking the trend in terms of the number of police officers deployed in that city. They're also bucking the trends that exist in other parts of America, because they have lower incarceration rates and, as a result of that, significant savings because they are not housing prisoners.

It's probably because they have a lot of police officers who not only have driven down crime but also are engaged in a lot more proactive policing activities. As a result, they're finding that more people are being dealt with in advance of getting into the prison system, and if they are going, it's for a short duration, so they're not getting the longer-term housing issues that come with tremendous costs.

● (0935)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you.

I would also like to thank you for bringing our attention to some of the research that's been done on the results of layoffs in policing. I know that police all across the country have been working on efficiencies and will continue to do that. I know everybody appreciates those efforts.

I want to turn to the Association of Police Boards. As a former police board member myself, I know police boards have been asking these questions of themselves for a long time. I appreciate that the police boards have now started to ask others to join them in trying to tackle these local policing costs.

Maybe I could ask Mr. Mukherjee something.

You talked about the factors that have helped drive costs, including securitization of local policing after 9/11. Can you say just a little more about the impacts you see from that?

Dr. Alok Mukherjee: Sure.

As I said, we support an integrated framework that includes all of these different functions, but we do face some challenges. Just yesterday I was in a place called LaSalle, near Windsor. I was talking to a board member from Windsor, and he said there's a small river, the Detroit River, that separates Windsor from Detroit. On the U.S. side, the guarding of that water is the responsibility of the U.S. Army and four other agencies. On the Canadian side it is the responsibility of the Windsor police. It's one of those unguarded borders through which a number of different kinds of trafficking take place, including human trafficking, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and so on, and the responsibility falls on the local police with their limited resources.

We face it in Toronto. As you would know, when 18 individuals were arrested and charged with planning a terrorist act, the Toronto Police Service was very actively involved in the operation, and for good reason. I mean, who knows the local community better than the local police service? Toronto worked closely with the RCMP and with other partners to investigate and identify those individuals and to gather the evidence, but doing that does come with a cost.

Those are just two quick examples of how securitization, legislatively, has placed some responsibilities on the local police service. It has other implications in terms of governance and oversight, as we found out during G-20, when the local police cease to be under the oversight of the local police board, but that's a different issue.

In terms of the economics of policing, as I said, there is good justification for involving the local police service in these important matters, but it does come with a cost.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you to the witnesses, thank you for appearing.

Because Mr. Stamatakis and I have a similar background, I'll start with him; you always go with the most familiar people.

Having been a police officer and having faced some of the issues you face on a daily basis, and having had an active part in the bargaining unit in this area of eastern Ontario, I understand the pressures you're under from your membership.

One of the things I've mentioned to some of my Ontario Provincial Police friends and family is my fear that policemen are going to bargain their way out of a job. We've just heard witnesses say that perhaps policemen don't need to direct traffic, or perhaps they don't need to run a radar set because we know there is technology out there that can gauge speed. All I see is the number of well-trained police officers becoming a very special unit, and then a whole bunch of others. I see danger there. I see huge dangers there.

I have a question. Our government is trying to find efficiencies government-wide. We're going to be able to find efficiencies of about $4 billion by the time we hit 2014-2015. Are you able to speak to how you will be reducing spending or assisting the jurisdictions that your police departments are in? Are you working with the police services boards and the chiefs of police and looking for cost savings, or is your message to us that it's their job and your job is to bargain the best deal you can for your members?

● (0940)

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: My job is to bargain the best deal that I can for my members, but it has to be in the context of the challenges we are discussing here today and that taxpayers across this country are facing, which is why we have been working collaboratively with the Canadian Association of Police Boards and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. You have seen lots of common elements in our presentations today.

We're—

Mr. Rick Norlock: Excuse me, Mr. Stamatakis. You say you're working with them. Are you working with them to look for ways to reduce policing costs as they are mandated by their bosses and in the end the people who pay your salary? It's easy to say you're working with them, but are you working with them to find efficiencies and cost savings?

I ask this because there are certain municipalities in the province of Ontario where 50% of their municipal budgets, I am told, are for policing services alone. That's why I'm asking you this question. If you're truly going to work collaboratively, you have to do that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

Please continue.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: With the greatest respect, sir, in my presentation I included at least a couple of examples of recommendations we made at the federal level around changes that could be easily made and that would realize significant efficiencies and reduce costs.

I think, though, that we need to have the conversation in some context. When it comes to the kinds of police officers you want to recruit, you can't add layers of accountability and increase scrutiny and increase expectations with respect to training and impose more training on police officers, and then expect there's not going to be a cost associated with that.

We are making presentations on a regular basis. I would argue that we're at the front of the discussion around where to find better ways of doing things and how to use technology better to find those savings. However, as I said in my submission, when—depending on who you talk to—80% to 90% of the costs are associated with people and you start to look at finding savings, unless you want to reduce the size of your workforce, it's a challenge.

We're part of that discussion. We are not just engaging in discussion; we're providing real examples of things that could be done to find those savings so that we can use tax dollars as efficiently as we can.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much for that.

In reference to policing costs, would you say there's a fair balance between federal, provincial, and municipal governments in regard to responsibilities and resources? In other words, are there costs savings to be had?

Number one, have we struck the right balance in this country? I look at other countries that have more integrated police. Have we struck the right balance? Do you think there would be efficiencies in looking at this whole jurisdictional issue?

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: I think you have to look at the jurisdictional issue, but I think you need to look across government services. I don't think this is a question of spending more money; I think there's lots of money being spent in this country at every level of government in terms of providing services. It's how we use those services, and I think you've heard some examples today from Mr. McFee.

There are many other examples, if we had more time, that I think show there are tremendous opportunities to have all agencies, whether police or social services or education or health, working together more efficiently and sharing information so that we utilize the dollars that exist in the system now more effectively to provide better service. I don't think it's a question of saying we have to spend a bunch more money.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

Mr. Mukherjee, you heard my questions. We have only about a minute left. Can you give some brief responses to those two questions?

Dr. Alok Mukherjee: Well, your first question about police contracts is an important question, as you mentioned and Mr. Stamatakis mentioned. Over 88% of our budget goes into policing costs and compensation, and in Ontario, for example, the difference between the highest-paid and the lowest-paid jurisdiction is under $1,000.

That doesn't make sense. The cost of living varies from community to community, so it is an area that has to be looked at. We have started talking about it. You are quite right; we are talking about this. I mentioned that in Toronto we reduced our budget by about 10%. How did we do it? We had to put a freeze on hiring and promotions—i.e., reduce the number of people in our organization—in order to be able to afford the contract.

On your second question about jurisdiction, I think Mr. Stamatakis is quite right that there is a lot of money being spent—$12 billion just in security, and if you add up the other jurisdictions, there's even more. Have we struck the right balance? I would have to say no, and that's why you heard both of us say we need a whole-system approach in which we need to look at policing in the broader context of community safety. The things police are doing these days—Mr. McFee talked about this—cut across jurisdictions, but we look at policing only in the context of public safety.

I propose that we need to do an economic modelling, because relief is being provided in other portfolios because the police are taking on certain costs. We need to do that analysis. We don't have that.

● (0945)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

First of all, I'll ask Mr. McFee or Mr. Mukherjee or whoever would like to answer this question whether there are areas in which we're not putting enough resources. We've heard about how we put too many of our police resources into dealing with mental health issues among the population, for example, or into spending full days in court, but are there areas in which, if there were savings, it would be wise to reinvest those savings?

I'm thinking, for example, of financial crime. I guess that would be more RCMP. Would the local police be involved in financial crime? I'm thinking, of course, of cybercrime.

Mr. Dale McFee: If I could pick areas, being a practitioner now in the current role that I'm in and having listened to some of the examples we've seen coming out of the collaborative work, I would say that we're doing fairly well on organized crime. Obviously it's something that always evolves. I think cybercrime will become something that we need to do a lot of further work on, because there will certainly be an evolution in that area with technology.

I think we could put it into three streams. If I were at the helm and were designing three streams, the first stream I would design would be the multi-collaborative approach to crime reduction. If it's predictable, it's preventable. That's the front-end intervention, taking folks right out of the system.

I think we are staffed well to investigate the back end. We do very well in solving crime and we do very well in investigations, but I think if we had a collaborative approach based on the data and the technology, based on evidence and outcomes, we could take a large portion of the people right out of the justice system.

For instance, in Prince Albert with its model today, violent crime is down 31.9%. That's phenomenal. That has never happened. That's one stream.

If I could have stream two with that same collaborative approach, it would be focused solely on mental health and addictions. If there were a collaborative approach for mental health and addictions, you could have the same framework. You wouldn't need another framework. Basically that framework would be an A to Z, right from facilities to how we take folks out of correctional facilities to how we rehabilitate to how we use the forensics or the science to make sure we get the right basic intervention or the right treatment at the right time. That would be stream two.

If I built the third stream, it would be based on educational outcomes, focusing on literacy, focusing on parenting, focusing on absenteeism in schools, focusing on all-inclusive, because we know through the data that there's a direct correlation in the ability to read before grade three and the connection to crime.

When we're looking at a comprehensive strategy, those are three things that plague our country, especially in our marginalized areas. In that other stream you mentioned, I think cybercrime is another area that will continue to evolve.

In a lot of the areas we do a really good job. Canada is known for its professionalism in policing. We're known for our transparency in how we deal with it. It's not by accident that Canada's going to Saudi Arabia to train them in how to investigate. We get asked that all the time.

With regard to the accountability framework we talked about in response to Mr. Norlock's question, we have to be careful not to lose that. As soon as we move police into the private sector versus having police in maybe a low-risk policing model, we run the risk of losing that accountability and professionalism we've striven so hard to attain in this country, so I think we have to tread carefully there.

● (0950)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You're saying to reinvest the savings in non-policing strategies—literacy, and so on and so forth—but when we're talking about where you would reinvest in terms of police budgets, it would be in things like cybercrime, I suppose.

Mr. Dale McFee: I don't think those are non-policing strategies.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But you would use police officers in those areas of education, literacy—

Mr. Dale McFee: Absolutely. That's the problem: those aren't health strategies and they're not police strategies; they're community safety strategies. That's where the discussion is and the savings are. They're the high-use folks in our system, and how we deal with them, I think, needs the collective expertise of a police officer, a social worker, a cognitive person in a correctional facility, a mental health and addictions worker, and a social worker on housing. If we don't put that expertise at the table, it doesn't—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, and I agree with those strategies. I'm just not sure about the role of police officers in all those aspects.

Someone mentioned—perhaps it was Mr. Stamatakis—that nowadays a charge of driving under the influence means that a police officer is tied up for a full day in court. What would you change so that wouldn't be the case? You said you had many specific recommendations to unburden police officers.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: In response to your first question, let me just say this. Here's the frustration.

I represent front-line cops, and that's where my experience comes from. We're already talking about savings and reinvesting those savings. We're having a discussion around the economics of policing and what's sustainable and not. To Mr. Mukherjee's point, no one has defined yet what sustainable funding for policing is in this country. No one wants to talk about what core policing in the 21st century is, so what is it that we're not going to have police officers do? When are we going to engage the community in this discussion so that we can hear from them what they don't want police officers to do?

To your first point around where we would reinvest savings, we're not even scratching the surface when it comes to financial crime, white-collar crime, cybercrime.

This has to be part of the discussion of what we expect police to do in the 21st century, because we're not the agency of first resort. We've become the agency of preferred choice in this country. People phone the police because they know that we will come and deal with whatever their issue is. The trick is what happens after the police come. How can we use the other opportunities that exist out there to be more efficient in the aftermath of the police response? That's what's missing, so to your point around what do we do with the savings, I'm not even sure we've had a discussion around what we think the police should be doing in this country.

In terms of the court piece, police officers go to court to provide their information. In my experience as a front-line police officer going to court, I can't tell you the number of times I've sat in court all day long, only to be told at the end of the day, or after the defence counsel knows that I'm there to give my evidence, that there's a rescheduling or there's a reason to find a way to delay the trial. It's become part of the strategy, because if witnesses don't show up, then the trial can't go ahead. That means the accused person gets to walk, or whatever. There have to be ways of using technology, particularly in the minor cases, so that my evidence could just be admitted as part of the record.

If it's a contentious issue. It affects a person's right to have a fair, appropriate, and full defence. Fair enough; let's have the officer come in and give evidence, but there have to be ways we can use technology so that the police officer won't be sitting in court from nine o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon.

● (0955)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Like teleconferencing.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move back to the opposition.

Madame Doré Lefebvre is next, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our four witnesses for joining us today. This discussion is extremely interesting. Many points have been raised that we may not have considered and some others that had already been mentioned but should be looked into further.

The examples you provided show that police forces across the country are facing growing challenges. I thought Mr. McFee's and Mr. Stamatakis's remarks were very interesting. Among other things, they talked about an integrated or co-operative approach among various public assistance services.

In Quebec, some attempt was made to use that integrated approach in the fight against street gangs, which represent a growing problem in our large urban centres.

Can you propose any potential solutions—integrated solutions—regarding the fight against street gangs? We could be talking about reaching out to young people before they join a street gang. Do you have any examples of what your members do when it comes to that?

Mr. McFee, I would like to hear your comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Dale McFee: I agree with you on the integrated approach. I think the Quebec example is an excellent example, and there are many others across the country.

The response boils down to the risk. If we categorize folks as low, medium, and high risk, the response should be in accord. The response in relation to an active street gang shouldn't be the same as for those who we can predict are headed to the street gang. If we use risk assessment and an assessment tool at the earliest opportunity, maybe we can stop folks from getting into the street gang. That's a huge opportunity for us.

That said, you are not going to deal with it the same way at the back end. If we look at it from a cradle-to-grave approach based on risk and assessment—in other words, as Thomas said, if we put in the research and the evidence and we focus on the outcomes and the best response in a particular situation based out of a centre of excellence or based on the science—then we are further ahead.

Across the country, for the most part, we do a pretty good job with organized crime. Could we get better? Will we need to keep up? Will we need to enhance that? Absolutely, because it's an evolving world where there are not a lot of rules. They get to change quickly, whereas the police have all the rules on their side and quite frankly don't change as quickly. How do you stop those pre-identified folks? In our case, it was the Joe story when we built it. In Scotland, it was the David story. There are many other examples across this country. How do you do a timeline on an individual when you know where they are actually headed? How do you use the collaborative response —the collaborative agencies, teachers, and social workers—and how do you take that young person out of that environment and give them the help they need based on what they need?

We have a system in Canada that is much like the system everywhere else. Our system is designed to wait for people to get in the system, and then we tell them how to fix them. The reality is that for the majority of those who are headed into our system, we know they are headed there, but we don't offer the olive branch to ask what we can do to help. Most people will choose that right thing, but they are so stuck in environments that they can't get out of.

A lot of it is the marginalized component. We know they are headed there, but as soon as they are there, we say, “Here is the thing you need to do. Here's what you need to do.” I know how I am when somebody tells me what I have to do, and I don't think anybody else is probably any different.

Could we balance that? Yes, 100%, we could balance that.

That said, as Tom and Alok have mentioned, we have to keep our eye on the ball on this side, too, because there are risks to community and business. There are financial risks. It's tied into some of the major businesses that we bring into our country. We have to have a cradle-to-grave response.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Excellent.

Mr. Mukherjee, do you have anything to add?

[*English*]

Dr. Alok Mukherjee: In 30 seconds....

An integrated approach takes different forms, depending on what we are talking about.

I agree with Dale and the explanation he gave. Within the service, there can be an integrated approach as well.

A question was asked earlier about using a police officer for everything. I would suggest—this is a discussion that's happening—that we can have an integration of different skill sets within the police service to deal with a problem in the way that Dale mentioned, from diagnosis to prosecution. We don't need to have a police officer perform all the roles.

We go into schools for school safety; there is no reason the police agency couldn't have youth workers doing that, rather than a uniformed police officer.

We go and deal with domestic violence. There is no reason social workers couldn't be part of an integrated approach taken by the service to that issue. We already do that, for instance, in dealing with mental health: we pair up a mental health nurse with a police officer. They go out in a mobile crisis team, and they deal with the issue together.

In addition to the kind of inter-agency integration that Mr. McFee has talked about, there can be integration of different skill sets within the agency .

● (1000)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will move to Mr. Hawn, please.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to our witnesses.

I have a very specific question, first of all, for Mr. McFee, which relates to the excessive amount of time that police officers spend processing impaired driving and so on. Have studies shown that cameras in the cars that show the driver's performance in and out of the car led to more guilty pleas and less court time?

Mr. Dale McFee: I believe that's the case. Certainly we can get back to you on it, but I think that's the early evidence in relation to impaired driving. It's the reason that a lot of people have gone to cameras.

The impaired driving discussion is an interesting one, though, and it comes up in the economics of policing because it's a problem in our country. Police chiefs and front-line staff are seeing so many young people lost to impaired driving, it's sad. It truly is sad. I know my home community just had one the other day.

If we really want to think differently when we look at impaired driving and we want to challenge the system a bit, we can look at the three things around impaired driving—the driver, the drug or alcohol, and the vehicle. Wouldn't we just tackle the vehicle and make it so that we had to blow into something to drive the vehicle? You would drop impaired driving by 70% or 80% overnight.

I mean, it's just a thought; I realize that a lot of different things come into play. But it's the same thing as the airbag, it's the same thing as the seat belt, and it's the same thing as the headrest. I know they're studying the technology in the U.S.

Impaired driving is a case that we have to get right, because we're just losing too many young people.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Yes. I agree.

Mr. Stamatakis, you talked about the crime reduction dividend, I believe. People took that to mean they could spend less money on policing, and violent crime actually increased. Did I understand that correctly?

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: That's correct. That's been the experience in the jurisdictions in the States that I referred to.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I would suggest that this is similar to the peace dividend when the Cold War ended. People thought that because the Cold War had ended we could stop spending money on defence, not realizing that the peace dividend was in fact peace. The crime reduction dividend is in fact crime reduction.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: That's right.

I mean, if we're going to have an honest discussion, I think we have to accept responsibility for some of the issues. In the policing community, I think one mistake we've made is that we've tied success too closely to crime rates and we haven't spent enough time talking about all of the other activities we're engaged in. Naturally we achieved that success—because crime rates are down—because of things we've done along with some other factors.

Then people go, “Okay, crime rates are down, so let's reduce budgets”, but I think the consequence would be that we'd see a return to higher rates of crime in a variety of categories, just as we see in communities that are struggling with police resources.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Following off that, Mr. McFee, and getting back to finding a balance between sentencing and prevention, prevention obviously is cheaper in the long run than anything, but in Edmonton's case, a couple of years ago I was told there were about 250 hard cases, people who were known, and if they could do something about those 250 bad guys in Edmonton, they could reduce the serious crime rate by about 50%. I was also told that the habitual criminal will commit about 15 offences a year.

So if we take, in Edmonton's case, those 250 hard cases, give them a mandatory minimum, put them away for something that's meaningful, and work with them while they're there, obviously, to try to correct their behaviour, it seems to me that would do a lot for public safety.

● (1005)

Mr. Dale McFee: That was my comment earlier with regard to arrests and not arrests. We're going to continue to arrest, because quite frankly there are people who need to go to jail, but we don't forget about them, as you've stated. It becomes about balance, and I think that's where the real effort is: we've got that now, we continue to do that, and we make sure the accountability pieces are there, but to really change the system we have to do them both at the same time.

I think that's what you're alluding to.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: We can't ignore both ends of the system.

Mr. Dale McFee: Absolutely. You can't do one or the other, you need to do both. That's why we call it “smart on community safety”.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Yes.

Mr. Stamatakis, you talked about duplication in the oversight system, about redundancies equalling costs. Obviously I understand that, but can you give us a specific example of how you can reduce some of the oversight and still have effective oversight at a reduced cost?

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: I can give you one obvious example, from my perspective, in terms of duplication. I'll use British Columbia as an example, although Ontario is in the same boat, and I think most other provinces are going the same route.

When there is an incident involving a police officer on the street, there will typically be at least two, usually three, investigations conducted. At least in British Columbia, for example, there are two independent agencies that investigate police conduct issues. They'll conduct their own separate investigations, and usually the agency might have another investigation that they undertake as a result of the incident.

I think it's important to have independent oversight of police. That's critical, and we support that, but do you need to have three separate agencies, with three separate infrastructures and three separate sets of investigators conducting that same investigation into that one incident? Can you do it in a different way that's independent, that's objective, that's accountable, but that's also a bit more efficient?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hawn.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rousseau, you have five minutes.

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

I want to thank the witnesses very much for joining us today.

My question is for Mr. Stamatakis and Mr. McFee. I would like to hear the opinion of both of them.

At a time when we should rather be talking about modernizing police forces, how can we be discussing their potential savings? In the current context, the individuals or organizations that commit crimes have increasingly sophisticated tools at their disposal.

I would like Mr. Stamatakis to answer first.

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: That's exactly what the point is—and I alluded to it in my presentation—because for every one strategy that we undertake, a lot of the criminal groups, particularly on the organized crime or commercial crime side, cybercrime, will find new technologies to overcome whatever initiatives we undertake. This means that the police have to adapt to that with more training and through acquisition of different, newer technologies. It's continuously evolving, and that's part of what adds to costs, which is a reality of policing today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: What do you think, Mr. McFee?

[*English*]

Mr. Dale McFee: My answer is that there are always going to be those new things in crime. That's reality. There's going to be always only so much money.

I think it's a refocus. The refocus should be on evidence and outcomes, and those things that we do well that make sense to our bottom line we need to continue to do. As for those things that we don't do well and don't make sense to our bottom line, we need to get out of them and reinvest. Before it's new money, it needs to be reinvestment.

One of the things we have to look at.... I'm not a big proponent of private security. I know they have a role; I'm not so sure the role is policing, but there is a low-risk model of policing in which a lot of agencies are using special constables at a reduced rate to do specific police duties, which in essence should free up some end money to reinvest in those areas that we need to keep up.

Police have to operate cradle to grave. They have to be good at all ends of the spectrum. To be good at all ends of the spectrum, you need to focus the expertise on those particular areas to keep up with them. To get back to the comment we had here, that's why I think when we focus on other areas and have police involved in mental health strategies and in educational outcomes, we truly do have a community safety program.

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Thank you.

My question is once again for you, Mr. McFee.

In my riding, the safety and security of communities is dependent on multiple stakeholders: the Canada Border Services Agency, the RCMP, the Sûreté du Québec, and occasionally a municipal police force. When one of those organizations undergoes budget cuts or restructuring, all the stakeholders are affected.

Since you also talked about effectiveness, I will give you an example. In my riding, we have small municipalities of 1,000 people that pay the Government of Quebec $70,000 a year for the Sûreté du Québec services, and that gives them two half-days of patrol per month.

Do your members provide you with comments? Is there a dialogue between the various agencies to better respond to cuts? Have there been any cases in Canada where effectiveness was enhanced through restructuring?

[*English*]

Mr. Dale McFee: That's a great comment and an interesting comment. It's the same in northern Saskatchewan, just so you know that.

What is the expectation on what you're funding? In northern Saskatchewan, if you're funding the RCMP and you're paying that same type of rate, you might not be seeing a police car, but if something bad happens in your community, you'll see a whole raft of resources show up to solve that problem. Everybody plays a role.

More importantly, the structure needs to give everybody the ability to act on local priorities, going back to what we were talking about earlier. If we can really focus on having a structure in place and figuring out how the finances go with that structure or commit that particular thing that works on the priorities, and then apply that structure in a cradle-to-grave approach based on risk, then I think you're on to something. Then what you may be able to do in those communities is if you did truly have a low-risk policing model....

A lot of the issues coming out of northern Saskatchewan aren't crime issues, they're anti-social behaviour issues. Is there a different way, connected with police, whereby we can deal with those? The answer is yes, but the answer is that it needs to be based on research and on evidence, and not on somebody's best guess.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Stamatakis, you raised a relevant point when you expressed your concern regarding the resources available to your police officers in areas such as mental health care and training.

Can you give me an example of health care services you cannot do without because they are indispensable to your members?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rousseau.

Mr. Stamatakis, you're going to have to wait on that one.

We're going to go over to Mr. Leef, please. I will remind everyone that the second round is a five-minute round, while the first round was seven. We have to be a little more concise, perhaps, in our questions and in our answers.

Go ahead, Mr. Leef.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to our witnesses.

My question will be directed to Mr. Stamatakis and Mr. McFee.

The conversation now is largely around efficiencies and cost savings. I'm just wondering if there's been any discussion at the table about revenue-generation possibilities and what some of the challenges might be. Are there legislative things that can be done, and are there ways to start moving things that would otherwise just end up in provincial or municipal general coffers back into policing services directly?

Could you both speak on that aspect?

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: The challenge when it comes to police agencies looking to generate revenue is of course that the priority for police organizations is public safety, not generating revenue. The challenge will always be the concern the public would rightly have that police agencies were getting involved in activities just to generate revenue.

There are some good examples. For example, here in Vancouver they have an excellent false-alarm reduction program for which they worked with the city to create a bylaw under which there's a requirement to have a permit to have an alarm. It is a strategy that was undertaken to reduce the need for the police to respond to false alarms on a continuous basis. It's raised some revenue and it's reduced the impact on the police, because they don't have to respond to as many false alarms since people are being more responsible. There is a consequence now to not managing your alarm system properly. That's just one example, but it's one in which there is clearly no conflict regarding the revenue generated and the police response. I think there are other examples like that out there, but you have to be very cautious.

I'll give you one last example. In British Columbia the provincial government, independently of the police, returns traffic fine revenue to local governments to help offset the cost of local policing. I think that's an excellent program, and one that can be looked at across the country.

● (1015)

Mr. Dale McFee: I echo what Tom said. Obviously most jurisdictions in the country have looked at all three of those, including criminal record checks. Obviously some work has to go into that.

An interesting one if you really want to look at revenue, if the issue is revenue.... I think you've heard all three of us say that maybe we need to focus within and see how we redirect resources first. I've been a big believer that if we're going to get into evidence and outcomes and we're going to pay for those things that have been evaluated and so on, then if you want to take the driver of our business, put a 1% tax on alcohol at $200 billion a year. That would be $200 million, and you would pay for everything and then some. The problem is you would have to make sure it was focused on the things that matter.

Mr. Ryan Leef: I appreciate those comments. Thank you.

We heard a great discussion on collaboration and on working with the diversified agencies that exist in a community. I can say from my past experience that our being the front-line police somewhat contributes to our being the agency of choice. You talked about priorities being set by trends or modelling or municipal-federal-provincial priorities. Ultimately, as Mr. Stamatakis pointed out, it really boils down to calls for service and what people are calling in about. When police respond and then we deal with the aftermath or the consequences of responding to that call, we can't just shut that file down; we have to carry on. There's certainly a level of frustration across Canada, and you hear front-line police officers say, “You know, we shouldn't be doing this. Why are we engaged in this activity?”

As a former police officer, I know the contributing factor in this situation is that the information gets shared upward to our agencies, and we're very reluctant to bring it back down. There are models in our country in which there have been exceptions. They've been positive, as you've indicated.

Is it a legislative shift? Is it a policy shift? How do we make sure that when we as front-line officers are complaining about doing work that we don't see as being direct police work or that we see as being something that should be integrated with the community, we're not contributing to our being that agency of choice by not sharing the information downward? I think a lot of agencies, at least those at the territory level, if you talked to them, would say they put the information up, but it's not reciprocated well.

Do you have any comments?

Mr. Dale McFee: That's a big point. When we designed the new model we're looking at, privacy was everything. Honestly, privacy was more of a barrier than it was an enabler. Everybody respects privacy. Everybody has legislation. I think there's a huge piece to enable that to happen. Absolutely, because without that information-sharing, the whole picture of being able to ask what you can do to help is problematic.

The other piece to that is we've got a five-year victimization survey compared to a one-year real-time crime stats study. The perception and the reality are out of whack. You know it yourself; if you put a five-year study to a one-year study, it's apples to oranges.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move back to Mr. Rafferty, please, for five minutes.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Thank you very much, and thank you very much, witnesses, for being here today.

I have two questions that I'd like to squeeze in. One for Mr. McFee, but that will be the second question. The first one is for Mr. Stamatakis.

As all the witnesses are aware, when it comes to funding police services, particularly from the province and the federal government, all police services are not created equal. I'll use the example that I know best, which is the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service, a first nations police service in northern Ontario. The pay is less, the benefits are inadequate, and the working conditions are very poor. As a consequence, officers' health is a big concern. As well, many communities are left without policing services, and many officers spend an extra week, two weeks, three weeks in a community before a break because there's no one to replace them, and so on.

When it comes to the economics of policing, what happens in a police service like this is you have high turnovers—you also have poaching from other police services, but I don't want to get into that—which create a real problem in terms of where money is spent. Of course, it's spent training officers continually, on a continual basis.

I wonder, Mr. Stamatakis, if you'd just take a moment to maybe give your thoughts on first nations policing in Canada and what that means in terms of where we're going in the future.

● (1020)

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: I completely agree with your comments. We're right now engaged in a research project in which we are spending a significant amount of time looking at rural and remote policing so that we can address some of these issues, or at least start to have a conversation around these issues.

Some of the frustrations for me and for the members I represent who work in the kinds of communities you're talking about—first nations, with difficult working conditions and lots of funding issues—are exactly the issues you identified. The concern I have is that we're having this big discussion about the economics of policing and finding efficiencies, but it's all centred around the piece of our country that runs along the U.S.-Canada border, the southern piece, and then there's this whole other big part of our country in the rural and remote areas that's not part of the discussion. That needs to be part of the discussion when we talk about the economics of policing because there are some real challenges in those communities. I acknowledge that for sure.

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

Mr. McFee, on maybe a more positive note, I wonder if you could just take a few moments to talk about the Prince Albert model as it concerns urban first nations, and the initiatives there.

Mr. Dale McFee: That's a great point.

First nations are obviously overrepresented in the issues, but it's not because they're first nations; it's because they're marginalized for the large part. When I came back from our research in Scotland, it was important that we brought first nations leadership right into our model, and they're part of the model. That governance model, and the actual working group, has first nations leadership right in it. They're part of determining what the priorities are for the community. They're determining the solutions. The COR has its tentacles into other hubs in the north, which is the feeder system, which are also first nations.

In this particular model, if you think about franchising and you build a master franchise, you need to be able to support five or six other smaller hubs. The hubs are basically just a new way of doing business, of which first nations are a huge component.

I really want to emphasize as well, myself being Métis, that our issues aren't first nations in Saskatchewan. Our issues are the marginalized, who are overrepresented by first nations. The reality is that if we can deal with those components, we can make a lot more progress and get our way through this. That's exactly what that's designed to do. Certainly we have that leadership in there now, and it's making a big difference.

Mr. John Rafferty: Okay, thank you.

Do I have a moment left? One minute?

I wonder, Mr. McFee, if you would also comment on the same question I had for Mr. Stamatakis concerning first nations policing, and some of the funding issues they're concerned with.

Mr. Dale McFee: I fully agree with you. It has been a long-standing issue with CACP. First nations deliver quality police services at the level set out for them in their mandate. They play a large role in our policing umbrella. They police a lot of those difficult areas. I fully agree that they should be using the same rules, have the same pay rates, and have the same expectations as other police services across the country.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Mr. Payne, please.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming today. It's an important study that we're doing.

My question is through you, Mr. Chair, to the witnesses. I know that we've talked about different things that we need to do in terms of police modelling. One of the things our government did this last February was announce the next phase of the youth gang prevention fund. I'm wondering if both Mr. McFee and Mr. Stamatakis could tell us if they've seen any impact from that. Also, how would that help in terms of your overall policing costs?

Mr. Dale McFee: I can't say that I've seen that yet. Maybe Tom has more comments in relation to that.

I can say that anything that tackles youth gangs collaboratively we'd be supportive of, but I personally haven't had a chance to review it. I apologize.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: What I would say is that I know your government has made a significant investment in policing through the police officers recruitment fund, and different provinces have used the funding they receive in different ways. In some provinces, including British Columbia, those investments went to the creation of integrated units specifically targeting gang and youth crime. It has made a significant difference.

Now, I'm also not familiar with this latest initiative, but obviously any investment that can be made and any attention focused on youth and gang crime are critical.

Getting back to an earlier comment around police officers in schools and to Mr. McFee's comments, the most important thing when it comes to youth crime and youth involved in gang crime is intervention at an early stage.

Embedding police officers in schools provides the kind of collaboration that we're talking about here. Teachers can identify the kinds of issues that a police officer wouldn't typically see: the student not showing up at school, not completing homework assignments, showing up with inappropriate kinds of things like money or clothing, or just behaviour out of the ordinary. You have that kind of collaboration with the police officer embedded in the school. You establish relationships and credibility. You can intervene and maybe direct that youth's attention to more productive and positive programs.

There are huge savings if that youth then doesn't become one of the chronic offenders we've talked about here today, one who ends up being one of the 75 or 100 people who are responsible for a significant amount of crime in a community and who create a lot of victims in our community.

This is the kind of thing that we need to be talking about. I don't think there are simple solutions of just saying, “Let's get somebody else involved in the schools. We don't need a police officer there.”

The fact is—and I alluded to it in my presentation—that police officers have the training, they're accountable, and they have the skills that are appropriate to use in a first response. The issue is, what do we do after that? That's where we need to bring in these other resources, or other people with other kinds of training, so we can have a more effective response.

● (1025)

Mr. LaVar Payne: There was another point that I wanted to talk about. I don't remember, Mr. Stamatakis and Mr. McFee, which of you talked about special constables. I'm wondering if you can tell us what those roles are. Do you see that as beneficial in helping to reduce overall police costs?

Mr. Dale McFee: Go ahead, Tom.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: I think we need to look at all models of service delivery and of utilizing different responses, but we need to be careful. Although there are programs in this country and other countries that rely on community safety officers and special constables, there really hasn't been a lot of good research or evaluation around the efficacy of those programs and whether they actually reduce costs.

We have had special constables, peace officers, and community safety officers in this country for many years. I'll use Edmonton as an example. They have a number of layers of what you could call "police response"—people with peace officer status, special constable status—so you have a whole bunch of organizations with their own infrastructures that are being funded in some way by the taxpayer. The question is whether that is the most efficient way to respond to a policing problem or a community safety problem.

Recently a study in the U.K. examined 12 million incidents. They found that 83% of them had some element of criminality; it could have been a crime that had been committed. What you need are the discretion, skills, and training of a police officer to do the assessment. When their community safety officers were responding to those calls, that person was then calling the police officer to deal with the situation because there was an element of criminality in it.

That's the million-dollar question. We need to do the research and the evaluation to determine whether it is actually the best way to spend our dollars, or are we actually adding layers of bureaucracy and infrastructure that ultimately make it less efficient?

The Chair: You're taking time from Mr. Gill. We're out of time.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: I did that yesterday. I don't want to do it again to Parm. It's not a good way to welcome him to our committee.

We'll go to Mr. Gill, please.

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

I also want to thank our witnesses for taking the time and being part of this important study.

My question is for Mr. Mukherjee. You mentioned in your remarks that you were able to cut about 10% of your budget, which is just over a billion dollars for the Toronto Police Service.

I'm wondering if you could shed more light on that and give us some details. You mentioned there was a hiring freeze and a freeze on promotions. What other areas were you able to find the savings from, and has this impacted the police services in any shape or form?

● (1030)

Dr. Alok Mukherjee: Thank you for that question.

We had to look at a range of approaches or strategies. Last year when we started talking about achieving this 10% target, I wrote a discussion paper for our board, essentially saying we need to approach what we do differently. There are functions that include human resources, business processes, alternative delivery models, and delayering of the organization to the extent possible because, as you know, in the police organization you have multiple ranks. The question arises as to how many of those are really needed.

I proposed a comprehensive model. We took interim measures to meet the 10% target, and of course, one of the things we had to do was to say we'd hold off and put a freeze on hiring and take a look at the appropriate number of police officers that a city the size of Toronto needs.

We have retained an external consultant to come in and take a look at the numbers issue. That relates also to the issue of functions. What are the functions for which you need a uniformed police officer? It is typically the case that often police officers are deployed in administrative functions. Do you need them to do those? If you have 5,600 police officers, wouldn't you prefer 95% of them to be out on the street doing what they should be doing, which is community safety?

As a result, we've been looking at functions that police officers do not need to perform. We've been looking at levels of supervision. Do we need six layers of supervision? We've looked at the span of control. What is the span of control? Do we need the 2IC, the second officer in charge, in every police division? Is there a size that justifies that?

We're taking a good look at the organization and at achieving efficiencies by streamlining old accepted practices. Then we raise the question of functions that we do not need to perform. Mr. McFee mentioned a little bit about this. We are looking at, for instance, functions in our core security services. The chief proposed taking 85 core security officers out of that unit and using them in police divisions and replacing them with partial privatization, because those are very rudimentary functions. We talked about the low-level functions. Our sense was that we can achieve efficiencies by outsourcing those functions.

You are looking at background reference checks that Tom mentioned. We have a team of people doing nothing but receiving applications from members of the public to run background checks. They are permanent employees. They involve lifetime pensions, benefits, and so on. We raised the question of whether we can outsource that. There are companies that are doing that function online. There may be certain types of background checks that must be done by police officers or police personnel; for others, we don't need to get involved.

It's a comprehensive attempt to re-engineer and redesign the organization, to deploy the maximum number of police officers to policing functions, and to give up functions that are not core to policing. We're looking at core in two ways: core to the duties of the police officer and core to the functions of the police service, and we're looking at which of those functions can be done by police officers or by somebody else.

We have implemented and are continuing to develop a combination of approaches, and we are bringing in some external expertise to assist us in those reviews and to develop ongoing changes. We achieved the 10% with some stopgap measures, but obviously we cannot permanently maintain a freeze. One year down the road we will have to lift that freeze. If we have not used that time to bring in permanent sustainable changes, we will be back to where we were.

● (1035)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move back to the opposition and to Mr. Garrison, please.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to say again that when the summit started and we saw some of the media reports on the minister's statement, we were quite concerned on our side that there was an excessive focus on police salaries and on the police efficiency work that I know is already going on. It is quite refreshing to hear the kinds of ideas that were being put forward about building safer communities and the community safety approach. What's very useful for me as a committee member, and I suspect for others, are some of the concrete examples you've been giving.

I want to ask about mental health. Sometimes people ask why police officers are dealing with mental health issues. I'd like to give each of you a chance to talk about the integrated approach in mental health and the role of police in that.

Perhaps we'll start with Mr. Stamatakis, since we always forget the person who's not in the room.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: I take a bit of a different approach from a lot of people in the police sector and police community.

The fact is that there have been a number of public policy decisions made across the country in different provinces around mental health and how to deal with it. Most of them involve deinstitutionalizing people suffering from mental health issues and integrating them into the community, which is fair enough, but the consequence is that in the first instance when those people suffering from mental health issues are in crisis, the police have to respond. I think we do a very good job of it, and it's an appropriate response.

The issue is, though—and I think it was alluded to already—to create the partnerships whereby we bring in the professional people who have the skills and the training to deal with mental health issues in the long term, after we deal with the crises. What we need to do better, whether it's through policy change or legislative change, is deal with some of those privacy issues and some of the jurisdictional problems that prevent those partnerships from continuing. This would allow us to pass those people off after we deal with the crises so that there's a meaningful solution and intervention.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McFee.

Mr. Dale McFee: Mental health is something that I had mentioned as one of the priorities.

I think there are some great examples across the country, such as police tagging up with mental health workers in police cars to attend an initial response. Going forward, to make a long story short, this is something that's going to need a comprehensive and collaborative strategy.

I was just at the justice reform committee about two weeks ago in Montreal. At the reform committee there were judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, police leaders, deputy ministers, etc., and the common response coming out of there is that we need to do a better job of mental health before it's even in the justice system. How we deal with it when it's in the justice system is another thing. It kind of follows that same pattern, based on risk, cradle to grave.

We need a balanced approach to mental health. We tend to focus on just one specific area. The reality is that the majority of mental health issues, with some early recognition, can be controlled with medication. Unfortunately, we don't get in the door, the path, or the stream early enough, and we need to do a better job of that.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Mukherjee, would you comment?

Dr. Alok Mukherjee: I don't mean to be facetious, but I sometimes refer to it as a growth industry, because for policing, dealing with mental illness has become a major piece of business. It's an unfortunate reality, but often if a person who needs help doesn't call the police, he or she may not get the help. The police have become the responders of first resort when it comes to mental illness.

There are, as Mr. McFee said, some very good examples across the country of partnership-based approaches that police services are using. I just talked about the one in Toronto, through which we have entered into agreements with hospitals in different parts of the city. In these partnerships the hospital provides a mental health nurse and we provide the police officer. At certain times of the day—from evening until early morning, when calls go up—they travel together. Quite often when a person in distress calls, the matter is resolved on the side, because the police officer makes the scene safe so that the mental health nurse can deal with the situation. When hospitalization is needed, ambulances are on standby and the person is moved to the hospital. That system is working exceptionally well. We now have that across the city.

The other thing that we have had to do is training. As you know, most of the mandatory training a police officer receives is around use of force, and this is a big issue. We have created a group of people from the community, including providers of service, consumers, and survivors themselves, to work in our police college to help us develop a good training model for our police officers.

Those two have been very helpful for us in responding as much as we can effectively to mental illness in Toronto.

● (1040)

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

Ms. Bergen, it looks like you're probably going to have the last say of the day.

Ms. Candice Bergen: That's great. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin by saying that I take exception to Mr. Garrison's comments regarding Minister Toews' opening comments at the economics of policing summit. I don't know if he read the same comments that we have in front of us, but I think the minister focused quite squarely on the very broad nature—I see Mr. McFee nodding his head—of the economics of policing and the challenges. He clearly did not just focus on salaries.

As parliamentary secretary for the last almost two years, I think one of the things I have heard over and over when I talk to front-line officers and to representatives from different organizations is that Minister Toews is extremely well respected by front-line police officers as a Minister of Public Safety because he values the work they do. I think one of the reasons is that we have 11 officers, Mr. Chair, in our Conservative caucus who are front-line officers. Some are here today. I'm very proud of the fact that we have a minister who understands, respects, and values the good work the police do.

Leading into another point you made, Mr. Stamatakis, it was in regard to inefficiencies. You used an example in British Columbia of several investigative bodies that investigate police. I wanted to ask you, then, about one of the bills that we've introduced, the bill on enhancing RCMP accountability. We've introduced a measure so that when RCMP members are involved in serious incidents, we believe, just as you do, that rather than creating a brand new body to investigate them, we should use the bodies that are already in place.

In some provinces there are investigative bodies that have been created, that are working, and that do the job very well. In certain provinces, they don't have those bodies, but then they have other police, obviously, such as city police and excellent investigative bodies, which we believe could do the job of investigating serious incidents within the RCMP.

In relation to the cost of policing, would you agree that it's probably a very poor economic decision to create yet another investigative body, either provincially, as you mentioned, or even in terms of the RCMP?

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: Yes. My perspective is that we're just adding layers of infrastructure and duplication of offices, computers, and all the things that go along with creating a new agency. The fact is that police officers are capable of investigating police-involved incidents. You need to have the right kind of independent oversight of it so you can ensure that the investigation is conducted appropriately and that it's transparent, and it needs to be timely, but I think there are models that are more efficient than just adding more and more layers of bureaucracy to these kinds of incidents.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Thank you very much.

I know that I'm going again to you, Mr. Stamatakis, but you mentioned the police officers recruitment fund, which was our government's initiative. It was unprecedented. We announced $400 million for recruiting police across this country. At that time, were your members—were you—aware that it was a temporary initiative?

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: Yes. I think the government was quite clear that it was a temporary initiative. The unfortunate.... I think it was a significant investment by this government, I think it was unprecedented, and I think it was important. Unfortunately, our experience is that it was received differently by different provinces.

Unfortunately, in some provinces I don't know that they used those funds to recruit officers, to put more police officers on the street, and of course that has had an impact on whether or not the government is prepared to continue to make that investment.

Of course, my view is that the investment continues to be important, but I realize that the return on the investment might not be what the government anticipated.

● (1045)

Ms. Candice Bergen: Then there's one other fund that we've announced, and again it's unprecedented—no other government has done this—and that's the national crime prevention fund, which I know that both you and Mr. McFee were not completely familiar with. It's $7.5 million over five years.

One of the components of it is our youth gang prevention fund. That goes out across the country to hundreds of projects in cities and in small communities, very good, local, grassroots projects that help address right on the ground the needs in helping kids stay out of crime. It sounds like that is a lot of what you're talking about as well.

Could you address the importance of those funds?

Mr. Dale McFee: In the past we've met with the National Crime Prevention Centre and we're very familiar with them. I wasn't familiar with the particular part of the gang issue that they put forward, but absolutely, they do some good work.

The discussion we had was a kind of think tank on how we parallel this so that we would better fit the needs of the individual or the taxpayer, so it was a great discussion. I'm very familiar with the National Crime Prevention Centre. They do good work.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Yes, and that is different from the national crime prevention fund that we announced.

Mr. Dale McFee: That's where it has come from—

Ms. Candice Bergen: Yes, it's a different thing.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think I can speak on behalf of all members and all parties. Certainly we have valued your testimony today. I think the questions have reflected that. We've heard a couple of contrary opinions on a few things, especially in relation to officers in the classrooms and whether they should be there or not, and I know that we want to explore some of these more.

Thank you for being here today and for being a very important part of our study.

The meeting is adjourned.