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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, everyone.

This is meeting 79 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, Tuesday, April 16, 2013. Today we are continuing our study on the economics of policing.

We're going to go for an hour and a half with the panel we have here, if that's all right, and then we will move into committee business to discuss some of the issues we have to deal with.

On our panel today we have with us the chief superintendent of the Ontario Provincial Police, Mr. Gary Couture. Welcome. Thank you for coming on a rainy day in Ottawa.

Appearing by video conference from Toronto is the deputy chief of the Toronto Police Service, Michael Federico.

Appearing by video conference from Regina, Saskatchewan on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan is the deputy minister of corrections and policing at the Ministry of Justice, Dale McFee. We welcome you back.

Our committee wants to thank all of the witnesses for appearing today to help us in our study. I would invite our witnesses to make a brief opening statement before our committee moves into the first round of questioning.

Chief Superintendent Couture, if you would you be so kind as to begin, we look forward to your comments.

Chief Superintendent Gary Couture (Chief Superintendent, Ontario Provincial Police): Thank you, sir. I do have a prepared statement, if I may read through it.

Mr. Chair, vice chairs, committee members, good morning. Thank you very much for the invite here this morning.

I am Chief Superintendent Gary Couture, commander of the east region, field operations of the Ontario Provincial Police.

Since 1909 the OPP has had a long and proud history of ensuring the safety and security of the people of Ontario. The Ontario Provincial Police fulfills its mandate as one of North America's largest deployed police services, with more than 6,200 uniformed officers, 2,800 civilian employees, and 850 auxiliary officers. I understand this is of interest to this committee.

The OPP's mission is policing excellence through our people, our work, and our relationships. This guides each OPP member toward achieving the OPP's overall goal of safe communities and a secure Ontario.

The OPP provides core policing services to 323 of Ontario's 444 municipalities. Of these 323 municipalities, 151 are policed under contract, with the remainder policed on a non-contractual basis.

Policing is conducted through our provincial headquarters, five regional headquarters, one divisional headquarters, 165 detachments, numerous investigative and intelligence offices, four provincial communication centres, the OPP Academy and in-service training facilities, forensic identification units, and other facilities.

Both the obligation of the municipalities to provide core police services, and the methods by which a municipality may opt to have these services delivered, are outlined for us in section 5 of Ontario's Police Services Act. If a municipality does not provide police services by one of the methods outlined, the Ontario Provincial Police is required to provide police services to that municipality.

Under Ontario's Police Services Act, the OPP is further mandated to deliver a wide array of specialized services, including criminal investigative and technical expertise, and leadership, not only to OPP communities but also as support to all municipal and first nations police agencies across Ontario.

The OPP utilizes a variety of diverse positions to ensure an efficient, cost-effective service delivery, while operating within the limits and guidelines of the Ontario Public Service Act, Ontario Police Services Act, and current collective agreements.

I'm here to outline some specific roles filled by members of the OPP, as requested by this committee. These include special constables, court officers, court security, and auxiliary members. I will describe in greater detail the respective general roles and responsibilities as well as the legislative limits of their respective authority.

Special constables are classified by the OPP as bailiffs. They constitute a unique category in law enforcement. Unlike police officers, whose duties have been established by legislation, special constables do not have specific statutory authorities. Under subsection 53(2) of the Ontario Police Services Act, the commissioner of the OPP is authorized to appoint special constables to act for the period, area, and purpose that the commissioner considers expedient, subject to the approval of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

As a result, individuals are provided limited peace officer and/or police officer powers, as defined in the appointment. The appointment is utilized for a variety of positions to provide the necessary authorities to perform their duties. The specialized and focused roles of those appointed as special constables involve law enforcement, security, and investigation services, closely related to the duties of police officers.

To ensure that the public trust and professionalism related to the appointment by the commissioner is maintained, anyone who is appointed as a special constable is subject to strict accountability outlined in their conditions of employment. Subsection 53(4) of Ontario's Police Services Act clearly states that a special constable should not be employed by a police force to perform on a permanent basis, whether part-time or full-time, all the usual duties of a police officer.

Within the OPP, special constable status is primarily awarded to these positions: offender transport, court security, and court officer civilian positions.

As the name implies, members of the offender transport unit, provincially and regionally, are responsible for the physical movement of offenders between OPP detachments, municipal police services, regional jails, and court locations. These uniformed special constables receive extensive training to ensure their own safety, public safety, and the safety of the offenders. This category can further be broken down into the following areas: offender transport, provincial; offender transport, regional; and offender transport, within municipal contracts.

● (0850)

Court officers are responsible for managing the files, making notifications for court appearances, updating databases after court appearances, DNA sampling, processing court briefs, and organizing offender transportation. This role is filled by a combination of regular uniformed members and special constables. The court officer is the face of the local detachment within the court environment in relation to all judicial and administrative matters.

In terms of court security, the OPP has a mandate under section 137 of Ontario's Police Services Act to ensure “the security of judges and of persons taking part in or attending” court “proceedings”where the OPP is a primary police service. This also includes the security of those in custody at the court facility.

A local committee establishes the appropriate level of security, and the OPP uses a combination of regular uniformed members and special constables to meet these requirements. In communities policed by the OPP under contract, individual municipalities are required to pay the costs associated with this court security, which affords opportunities for enhanced special constable positions within the parameters of OPP contracts. In smaller, non-contractual municipalities, the requirement for court security has resulted in financial and operational pressures for the OPP.

On the OPP auxiliary program, the Ontario Provincial Police supports a contingent of dedicated civilian volunteers through its auxiliary program, which also receives its mandate from Ontario's Police Services Act. The mission statement of the auxiliary program is:

> To provide fully trained volunteer Auxiliary members to assist in the delivery of traffic safety and community-based crime prevention initiatives and; to perform police duties only in special circumstances, including an emergency that the police officers of the OPP are not sufficiently numerous to deal with.

An executive committee comprised of senior auxiliary officers, commissioned officers, and representation from the OPP Commissioned Officers Association and the Ontario Provincial Police Association administers the provincial auxiliary program.

Members of the OPP auxiliary have no police authority or power and must rely on the same arrest provisions afforded regular citizens. Ontario's Police Services Act does, however, provide for instances when an auxiliary member may have the authority of a police officer. This can occur in an emergency situation where the OPP requires additional strength to cope with a special occasion or event.

Being a volunteer with the OPP auxiliary allows citizens an opportunity to experience the excitement and challenges as well as the routine and the uneventful in any tour of duty in police functions.

Members of the OPP auxiliary are not paid but are reimbursed for travel and meal expenses.They include people from diverse backgrounds and civilian occupations. Their duties in assisting front-line officers are extensive and may include ground security at major events, doing surveys, seat belt clinics, assisting with RIDE spot-check initiatives, assisting at safety displays and presentations, foot and road patrols with regular members, accompanying regular members on marine and snow vehicle patrols, and ceremonial duties.

OPP auxiliary members are not used to replace regular members in any duties. Training for auxiliary personnel must occur to a level to provide necessary skills to safely fulfill the requirements of their mandate under the Police Services Act. And they participate within those duties that enhance community policing efforts, crime prevention programs, and public service as opposed to direct police service delivery. Our auxiliary members must always be under the direct supervision of uniformed OPP members.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you, Superintendent.

Let's move to Deputy Chief Federico in Toronto.

Deputy Chief Michael Federico (Deputy Chief, Toronto Police Service): Thank you very much for this opportunity.

I'd like to say on behalf of Toronto Police Service's Chief of Police William Blair, thank you for the opportunity to share some information with you.

I'm going to quote Chief William Blair about the reviews that the Toronto police are currently undergoing in the context of the economical climate that we face, who has said: “The service is a solid foundation of excellence upon which to build an adaptive and flexible organization. We have the chance to benefit from our past experience: what's worked, what hasn't, what we could do better.”

In the context of the discussions today, I will just make some observations. The governments in our city, our province, and in fact right across the country are facing enormous challenges in maintaining the economic sustainability of the services they are tasked to provide to their communities. The Toronto Police Service is operating in an environment of budget deficits at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels, and our own budget is verging on over a billion dollars a year. Our policing budget has grown to become one of the most expensive line items paid for by the Toronto taxpayer. Cost-cutting in police budgets is taking place throughout the United States, Great Britain, and Europe.

The Toronto Police Service has earned the trust of our citizens by delivering excellent service to our community and by keeping our community safe. We have an obligation to maintain the trust of our community and maintain a safe city. We also have the responsibility to deliver those services in an effective, efficient, and economical matter.

Chief William Blair has initiated a review of the Toronto Police Service, including how its services are delivered, its business processes, and its organizational structure. The purpose of this review is to examine how we are currently conducting business and ask whether we can do it better, more effectively or economically, and whether we are delivering service that is of value to our community.

The chief's decision to direct a comprehensive review was reinforced by the recent release of the report of the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, colloquially referred to as the Drummond report, in 2012. The Drummond report calls for reform of government programs and the manner in which they are delivered as a way to address deficits. It recognizes that simply cutting budgets will not address the problem. A similar approach is called for in the policing sector.

For the Toronto Police Service, our review is not a cost-cutting or budget exercise, although we must be mindful of the fiscal environment we are in. Therefore the review includes an examination of options for more economical ways of delivering services and meeting our obligations. The desired outcome is to prioritize our service and deliver those necessary services in a manner that allows the police service to meet its legislation obligations and maintain a safe city.

The new model of policing that will be achieved will represent changes in the organization. Those changes will include the manner in which the services may be delivered. That new delivery of service may include the use of new technology, civilianization of services currently delivered by police officers, consolidation of resources, outsourcing of services, and shared delivery. In the same way that my OPP colleague discussed the use of special constables and auxiliaries, suffice it to say that our model of the use of special constables and auxiliaries in Ontario is comparable with that described by the OPP.

Toronto police have special constables working in courts for prisoner and court security and in our police precincts booking prisoners. We also have a special constable working at the Toronto Police College in our armoured section, so that they can handle restricted and prohibited weapons. Our auxiliaries, just as those in the OPP, are subject to the Police Services Act and participate in special events, crime prevention events, and ceremonial events.

The service has looked at a number of functions internally that might be performed by alternative methods. I would like to point to two examples. We are currently working in detailed partnership, closer partnership, with the City of Toronto, the United Way, Toronto Community Housing, and what we're calling a hub or focused approach to crime prevention and crime solution. It focuses on intervening in the cycle of violence at an earlier stage, on behalf of both victims and perpetrators, in an attempt to try to intervene before matters escalate into more serious activities in the community. So it has both a crime prevention as well as a crime interdiction approach.

● (0900)

In the same way, we're looking at using technology more efficiently in Toronto to help enforce traffic safety. Our belief is that through automated traffic enforcement or photo enforcement, we can achieve more efficient and safer movement of vehicles and pedestrians on the roadway and free up police officers to deal with more habitual offenders or more dangerous locations in the community.

These are just a couple of examples of how Toronto police are addressing some of the challenges facing our community.

Again, like my OPP colleague, I would be happy to answer any questions the panel may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Deputy Chief.

We'll now move to Deputy Minister Dale McFee from Saskatchewan.

Mr. McFee, we certainly appreciated having you on our committee previously, especially when you were talking about the experience in Prince Albert. Just to make you aware, the committee plans on travelling to Prince Albert to see some of the things you were talking about with the hub and spoke system they have there and also with the aboriginals.

We look forward to your comments again and welcome back.

Mr. Dale McFee (Deputy Minister, Corrections and Policing, Ministry of Justice, Government of Saskatchewan): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Like the others, I would like to start by thanking each of the members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for having me appear here again in support of your ongoing studies.

I was pleased to receive this invitation to build upon our previous economics of policing discussion, and I have been very pleased to hear of the continuing and growing interest that you and others have expressed in the work of my colleagues and I in Saskatchewan.

There is a movement taking shape across Canada, and we in Saskatchewan are very proud to be at the leading edge of what we regard as one of the most important breakthroughs in community safety that we've seen in Canada in many years. As many of you will know, we had no choice but to seek out new solutions. Conventional approaches were failing to keep our cities, towns, and first nations communities safe and healthy, and continued investments in policing, while still necessary, were never going to be the answer alone.

We looked at research and experience far and wide, and we looked very hard at our own systems and practices. What we have been able to do with that information is to fundamentally change the ways that the business of community safety is seen, understood, owned, led, and done.

You will no doubt have heard this referred to as hubs and CORs. I would like to take a minute to offer a bit of an explanation of what the movement is really about. It's not only about hubs. It's about risk-driven, collaborative, and immediate intervention by all parts of the human service system working effectively together. It's about learning as much as we can from those interventions to bring about the necessary changes to the system so those chronically recurring risk factors that lead to crime, social disorder, and a range of other unhappy outcomes, can be more effectively managed and reduced over time.

In essence, it is moving away from the traditional approach of "hard on crime", such as arrest and incarcerate, or "soft on crime"—intervention and prevention—to smart on community safety. It is all about balance.

At the hub level, this means that every Tuesday and Thursday professionals from multiple disciplines sit at a table and bring to each other's attention situations in their community that have come to the attention of their own part of the system. These situations can include those of individuals without safe housing, children showing troubled behaviour in classrooms, people in pending crisis attending our emergency rooms, people in danger of lapsing in their addictions treatment, people at risk of becoming victimized in their homes, or people representing an immediate threat to public order on our streets. Within minutes, through collaboration and the proper and allowable sharing of information, multiple agency interventions and solutions are crafted and executed. Risks are reduced and, quite frankly, lives are saved.

At the centre of responsibility, or COR, this also means constant and rigorous analysis into what these situations are telling us about the nature of our communities and the effectiveness of our social systems. It's about how we can all do things better to more effectively meet the needs of our community.

I'd like to give you some insight into both parts of this process. First, I will provide some examples of what these immediate collaborative hub interventions have achieved in Prince Albert, a city that had witnessed steady years of increases in virtually every one of these indicators prior to adopting this model.

The hub in Prince Albert has been active for 27 months. In that time there have been 300 sessions and about 600 situations of acutely elevated risk—I think it's important to remember the words "acutely elevated risk"—brought to and acted upon at the table. It's important to remember that the average hub discussion takes six minutes, and interventions are typically executed, with multi-agency services being provided within 24 to 48 hours.

Over the past two years, violent crime there has come down. In the first year it came down by 11.8%. It came down a further 31.9% in the second year, and in the first quarter of this year, another 36%. Youth victimization was reduced by 28% in the first year alone, and by an additional 13% in the second year. Public prosecutions were down 12%, and an additional 18% in year two. The education system reports significant improvements in students being connected to services they need, and student attendance and retention are trending up. Health, mental health, and addiction services report they are providing more immediate supports and are more effectively bridging services to those in elevated risk circumstances. Our child and family services report that over the first full year they were able to divert 86 families to preventive services, thus avoiding over one full month's caseload of investigations in one year. They are tracking a similar pattern in the second year.

● (0905)

Finally, for the last two years running, police calls for service have gone down by 1.8% and 2.9% respectively, after doubling over the previous eight years. We all are professionals and all professionals know that if something is predictable, it's most often preventable. It's easy to see from this last statistic how this model links directly to the work your committee, the CACP, and many others are doing on the economics and sustainability of policing.

These outcomes are compelling, especially for those at the local level. In my role as a provincial deputy minister, the real excitement for me comes from what we learn, and from how these local experiences are informing our way forward. We now know, with absolute accuracy, that certain identifiable risk factors are driving the demands on our policing, criminal justice, education, health, and social services capacities. An analysis of a year's worth of hub situations tells us that the top seven recurrent risk factors in Prince Albert are substance abuse, criminality, victimization, mental health, missing persons, inadequate parenting, and truancy.

We know that many parts of the system are implicated in these at-risk situations in ways that have not been easily recognized in the past. For example, health-related risks have been a factor in 83% of all cases brought to the hub table, and child welfare issues have been present in over one-third of the cases.

It comes as no surprise that in our own government here in Saskatchewan, this risk-driven approach to community safety is pointing the way forward. My colleagues on executive council have collectively committed to moving forward together. My ministry is now supporting nine communities in Saskatchewan that are engaged in their own implementation of the hub model, and we expect to have over a dozen fully operational this year. We also anticipate operationalizing a second COR in the near future.

More than this, it's important to stress that this model is only one part of the broader chartered commitment that was announced jointly in 2011 by our premier, Brad Wall, and our police leaders in Saskatchewan. This is our strategy of building partnerships to reduce crime. It was a combination of research, practical experience, and experimentation that led us to Community Mobilization Prince Albert, and my ministry is committed to following that same path as we address a cradle-to-grave approach to risk reduction and better outcomes.

We have formed strong and active relationships with our two universities, and we recently announced the formation of a deputy minister's expert advisory council, a small group of leading-edge, international experts from academia and professional practice who will advise my executive team and me from time to time to ensure that our program across the full spectrum of criminal justice is anchored in solid evidence and research.

It is important to us, as I believe it should be to all who have a role to play in community safety, to ensure that the work reflects the best in emerging technological solutions and applies the most innovative methods as we tackle everything from road safety to drugs and alcohol, and from mental illness to literacy issues in our neighbourhoods and our correctional facilities.

We are currently reviewing our entire learning system for professionals, and we hope to develop a centre where, on the one hand, forensic studies can integrate more effectively with other parts of the system, and on the other hand, the emerging knowledge base can be shared widely through a Canada peer-reviewed journal dedicated to these studies.

It is important to acknowledge that these emerging approaches to community safety are no longer a Saskatchewan-only phenomenon. We have now exchanged visits with more than 15 cities and regions, representing nine provinces and territories across the country, as well as some from the U.S. and the UK. Five police services in Ontario—Toronto, Sudbury, Waterloo, Peel, and the OPP—have recently formed a working group to collaborate as they each work with their own local partners in adapting some of our experiences and making them their own.

We have delivered well in excess of 250 presentations on the mobilization model. We in Saskatchewan are proud to have been asked by Public Safety Canada to take the lead in writing one of the three pillars of the upcoming strategy on sustainable policing—the pillar that addresses new models of community safety.

● (0910)

I am pleased to report that following the discussions that were held in February in Ottawa, federal ADM Shawn Tupper will be leading a delegation to Prince Albert next week.

We look forward to more productive discussions aimed at increasing the federal role of our hubs and CORs. We have been very well supported by the RCMP's F Division throughout this process, dating back as far as our original visit to Scotland. We believe there are real opportunities for meaningful involvement by other parts of the federal system, especially as we move forward in our northern and first nations communities.

We have restructured the Ministry of Corrections and Policing in Saskatchewan, with the intention to ensure that we have a structure designed to focus on evidence-based practices, within a ministry that our partners can follow, one that is focused on meaningful outcomes.

We have just come up with an acronym that we use, VOICE. If you write in a column the word “Voice” as V, O, I, C3 with an “equals” sign under it, followed by E, the V is for value, the O for outcomes, the I for innovation, and the C3 for core business, client-centred collaboration, and the “equals” sign means that the way to get there is to follow the evidence, as in E.

Needless to say, I can go on speaking about this and many facets of this emerging approach to community safety—and believe me, I welcome each and every chance to talk about it. With the chair's permission, I would certainly welcome any questions.

As you can see, what we're now tracking is that there's a significant cost savings to a lot of this stuff, through all the ministries. It is a lot bigger than any one particular area that you study, such as wages.

Thank you.

● (0915)

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

We'll move into the first round of questioning. As a reminder to everyone, this is a seven-minute round.

We'll go to Mr. Norlock first, please, for seven minutes.

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

I read recently in a police magazine—I think it was *Blue Line*—that with a recently negotiated contract, in Windsor, Ontario a first class constable will be making $90,000 a year next year. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it goes to show that the costs of policing—and this is where my question is leading, which I'll be asking all three witnesses today about—are, based on my old experience, 85% to 90% strictly for pay and benefits. Could you just respond to this as succinctly as possible.

But I'll start my questioning with Mr. McFee and then move on to the deputy chief and the chief superintendent. I was very impressed by some of the statistics you gave us.

You ended your testimony, Mr. McFee, by saying that you have done a cost analysis, which was exactly what my first question was going to be. In other words, judged by your costs before you started the hubs and CORs program, have you put a dollar value on the savings this new program has provided?

Mr. Dale McFee: We currently have the university studying that right now, and we will have more in-depth numbers. But the real question here is that if you focus just on wages, the work needs to get done. You can find different ways to do the work more cheaply, or you can take a different approach and say that maybe a lot of this work shouldn't be on the table. If you look at that, you have a whole bunch more money to look at, because then you are looking across sectors.

I'll give a quick example. My government wants to create 60,000 jobs in Saskatchewan by 2020. It's a great idea that is very ambitious and job-focused. I will put this in a corrections perspective. If you take those jobs and say that these are $50,000 jobs—which you know they won't be, but some of them will be—a $50,000 job creates roughly $4,000 of provincial income tax. What that means is that it takes 12 jobs to pay for the housing of one inmate.

With our inmate growth last year, it would take 2,340 jobs to pay for inmate growth alone. Out of those 60,000 jobs, it would take 16,380 of them just to pay for inmate growth over that same timeframe. That doesn't include policing, it doesn't include the court system, and it doesn't include the health system.

I think the answer to this is to look more comprehensively at where the big savings are. The wages are dictated by the market. That doesn't mean that you don't have controls in place, but in my opinion, there is a bigger question to be asked.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you, Deputy Chief.

I have some comments surrounding my question and your recent.... I live not too far from Toronto so I get CFRB and all the news out of Toronto, and I know some of the challenges you've had recently from a budgetary perspective. I wonder if you'd comment on Mr. McFee's statement and some of the things you're doing to reduce costs and look at your operation.

● (0920)

D/Chief Michael Federico: Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

I would echo what Mr. McFee has said about the cost of policing, because in my opinion it's really reduced to what level of service the community is prepared to accept, because these are the cost drivers. At the same time, our institutions have to be mindful that there are some economies that can be achieved through the use of alternative methods of delivering policing. For example, I mentioned that technology may in some small way relieve the burden on the number of police officers needed to carry out a particular task. There's some conventional thinking, of course, that perhaps we can acquire some lower-cost employees to carry out the functions.

But as Mr. McFee mentioned—and I support this—a thorough program evaluation of the nature of the work that gets done in our community will help reduce the demands on the services. For example, in the area of mental health and challenges for social services, supportive housing is often cited as one of the foundations upon which we can grow a healthier community.

I would encourage our community to look at policing as an investment. Where we have demonstrated a closer collaboration with community agencies, we are in fact building an investment in that community through social development. I like to use the phrase “crime prevention through social development”. The police services in every community have a strong role to play in providing a greater capacity in the community to resist the harms they face, including reduction in crime.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

Chief Superintendent.

C/Supt Gary Couture: Yes, sir. Thank you very much.

I certainly agree in all respects with what I've heard so far. I think we'll agree that anyone in public services and public safety will understand that the complexity of policing has climbed incredibly quickly in the last few years. The expectation in the community has continued to grow. The resources have remained—I'm speaking for the OPP—reasonably limited within the confines that we have. We always focus on efficiency. We continuously strive to deliver the best we can within the parameters we have, while responding to the expectations of the community.

There's been a lot of discussion nationally in regard to crime rates and reductions, etc. For those contracts that are renewed, where we can, we sit with the community. We assess the required resources and respond to the appropriate levels required at that time. That's a luxury we have in some locations.

What remains, as everybody has commented on, is that we need to look forward to alternatives to certain issues and instances that we address as a police service. The police are often the first call for all issues. In Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police is beginning to develop their community engagement and mobilization model, which I think is what Mr. McFee was referring to, which engages all agencies within a community to work towards community safety issues and social issues, to perhaps defer some of the issues that are weighing down policing to other types of agencies.

If I can give you just one quick example, in the last two weeks our region responded to a tactical call concerning a mental health issue and we found that there were a hundred incidents on the system related to this individual's mental health issues. Our concern is that we are always the first responders to this type of issue, and it's already been pointed out that there are other community agencies that can address these types of issues, instead of always having the police as the first response.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

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

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

Thank you to all three of our witness who are here today. In particular I want to go back to Mr. McFee, who I think has done us a very useful service in both of his appearances here by drawing our attention to some of the broader issues regarding costs of policing.

My specific question is that it would seem that the transition into this new model would require some shifting of funds. In other words, other agencies may have to pick up some of the costs, even if down the road everybody would save money.

Can you say a little bit about how that transition is working with this model?

● (0925)

Mr. Dale McFee: Well, that's a very good point. How we got operational in Saskatchewan was by trying to develop a model that is very similar to what a lot of folks would know as a franchise, which can be replicated. So you build your processes and get everything in place, dot your i's and cross your t's, but at lot of this work is about redirecting or having a paradigm shift in your thinking on how you use the lot of money that is in the system.

So as a police chief back then I had to make a committed decision to move some of my resources into this, and that was my commitment. The provincial government came in with $450,000 for each CORs. The provincial government's role was to pay for the brain piece. They paid for an executive director, executive support, and two analysts. With analysts, obviously, what gets measured gets done, and we had one tactical analyst and one analyst trained on social return on investment. Every other agency had to bring in their staff plus $25,000 worth of operating money, which is very, very affordable with the types of budgets we're talking about. But that was a conscious decision that we were going to try to do business differently.

The piece that we're missing is the federal government's role in this. In short, what is the federal government's role in this? We're still trying to flesh that out. There's no question that if you're going to build the right formula you need to have everybody at the table. As we've often heard, there's one taxpayer and the reality is there's also one client that we're trying to deliver these services to. So that seed money, I think, is imperative to shifting how we think. But I don't think this is a money issue, by any stretch of the imagination: it's about trying to look at some things differently.

Let's not mix this up with totally going prevention-intervention.... We all sat around our TVs and watched the unfortunate incident yesterday in Boston. We're not going to arrest our way out of our troubles, but we're not going to stop arresting. There are people, quite frankly, who need to go to jail and we can deal with those. We do a very good job in relation to rehabilitation and recidivism. But what we need to do is that balance piece, in my opinion, that we're doing it collectively all together. As in any business, you leverage results and you increase your gains by multiples.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much.

I want to ask a more specific question, maybe first to Chief Superintendent Couture and then also to Deputy Chief Federico, concerning the use of special constables.

Can you tell me about public accountability for special constables? Are they fully covered by the public complaint process, or is that accountability for them solely an internal police matter?

C/Supt Gary Couture: Actually, sir, the special constables would be more subject to our internal accountability aspects. As I referred to earlier, when we engage or hire a special constable there would be certain criteria in place related to their contractual agreements, and that's where we outline the expectations of that position.

On the conduct aspects, we don't have the same parameters we would have with a constable.

Mr. Randall Garrison: So would it be an internal investigation by your police force if there were a complaint from the public?

C/Supt Gary Couture: Yes, sir.

Mr. Randall Garrison: What kind of discipline is available to you, then? Is it only what's specified in the contract?

C/Supt Gary Couture: In that respect, for us, we would be controlled by the Ontario public service guidelines with regard to the civilian side of our employees. It goes through levels of reprimands —verbal, etc.—and we can and we have with civilian employees reached points of termination. So there are varied levels but it's very different in regard to our constables and the Police Services Act.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Deputy Chief Federico, I presume things might be similar for you. Can you comment on that?

D/Chief Michael Federico: Yes they are. There are two classifications of special constables. One classification represents employees of the Toronto Police Service. Others are in other sectors, universities, for example, hospitals, and maybe Toronto housing. They are subject to our police services board scrutiny. They face the same jeopardy as any other person who might engage in misconduct. So they're subject to provincial law, they're subject to criminal law, and of course they're also subject to their employers' rules and regulations.

So internally like the OPP, while the special constable may not be subject to the provisions of the Office of the Independent Police Review Director or the Special Investigations Unit, he or she is subject to the same scrutiny and discipline, but it's applied by Toronto Police. Here the penalties for civilian members, of which our special constables are part, include dismissal for serious misconduct. It is summary dismissal and it's not subject to a hearing that a police officer must be subject to. The due process for a police officer is encoded in the police act in Ontario, whereas the due process for a special constable is subject to the Employment Standards Act and Ministry of Labour conditions, that is, the normal employer-employee conditions that are recognizable across most sectors.

● (0930)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Maybe in reverse order, I'll ask a question about training for special constables. Can you tell me what kind of training the special constables would receive? Let's go first to Toronto.

D/Chief Michael Federico: In Toronto, of course the training will encompass the fundamental values and responsibilities that are associated with the position of special constable, but then it depends on their particular assignment and they will be trained to carry out their assignment. But if we're talking about public accountability, public scrutiny, the oath of office, it reaches the same threshold for a special constable in Toronto as it would for any other employee, including uniformed members.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Superintendent Couture.

C/Supt Gary Couture: We're a little bit more limited as to the range of positions that our special constables can hold, so for us it's offender transportation and court security. They are trained for a two-week period upon their engagement. It relates to their positions, as the deputy referred to, the expectations of their role, and they also complete a use-of-force training component. That aspect of the training is renewed on an annual basis afterwards. We are limited in where we can put these civilian court officer positions—very few in our respect—but they would not be trained on the use of force, etc. They're more administrative positions. Again as the deputy said, it's specific to their role.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move back to Ms. Bergen, please. You have seven minutes.

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

And thank you to all the witnesses who are here today.

Mr. McFee, I want to talk to you a little bit about the hubs and CORs program you described. I think we've heard of hub and spoke, and in this case it's hubs and CORs, and we get the general idea. I think you described it well as something that you could almost franchise, that you can move to bigger or smaller markets, I would assume, and be able to develop it.

Actually, this break week, I had a chance to meet with a group out of Selkirk. It's called START, and it actually is more community driven, which is interesting because they have it basically arranged the same way that you describe but at a smaller level.

So, for example, the Selkirk school board contributes about $5,000 a year, the child and family agency, the local one, contributes $5,000, $10,000 a year. The RCMP provides an office, a computer, a BlackBerry. It's sort of the same scenario but on a smaller scale, and again it's community driven. I think that what we're hearing from you is something that can be transferred to a rural area, as well as used in a larger urban setting, which is very encouraging because I know that some of us had concerns about that.

Chair, I think this group will actually be sending us a letter. I think they'd like to come and present to us. It would be useful to have them here.

But what I'm wondering about, Mr. McFee, is the cost of training. You talked about the possible federal role. I'm really just brainstorming here, because during the break I also had a chance to stop at RCMP Depot division in Regina over the last few days and see some of the great things they do, the training that they do. They're actually starting to do a bit of training at that facility, for example for the Correctional Service of Canada, and there seems to be an opportunity for continuity as far as training is concerned.

Is there a role for the federal government to play, even for example at RCMP Depot, to help with training not just with the RCMP but actually at the OPP level also, or at more of a local level? Is there some opportunity? I'd like to get your feedback—yours, Mr. McFee, and then the other witnesses'.

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

Their success is the ability to act locally. For instance, in northern Saskatchewan you can't give a Regina solution, just as you can't give an Ottawa solution.

There's no cost to a hub; it's just folks doing their business differently, committed to meeting to address issues on a regular basis in a short timeframe.

The COR is taking another step to the franchise. We have a group of workers from multiple disciplines: mental health, addictions, police, social services, education. They work for a community governance board. So they're focused on working on community priorities—not police priorities, not health priorities, not social service priorities. That is the part that absolutely 100% can be franchised and built. That's why it was built.

What we're really talking about is focusing on risk, early and immediate intervention, and multiple agencies and services. To your point, what we're trying to do now in Saskatchewan is to look at a centre of excellence concerning the following: why are we not training, whether it's in a public safety college or moving from a policing college to a public safety college, front-line police officers, workers in mental health, social services, education, and corrections? You're bang on. Is there a role? Absolutely, there's a role, and it's important that we get it right and we do the right thing. That stuff is all on the table to be discussed.

The opportunities here to deliver better service to clients are phenomenal. With those opportunities, there's no question that significant value comes. Better service to clients gets people out of the system. The court system wasn't designed to deal with everything it does.

We even go a step further. Every time we have a specific issue, we design a different court on the back end. With due respect, our judges do a great job, but are we giving them the opportunity to be successful? A lot of policing, 75% to 76%, is anti-social behaviour calls. We need to take that stuff out of the system before it's in it so we can do a better job on the back end with the serious stuff. The only way to do that is back to balance. So I fully support what you're saying.

● (0935)

Ms. Candice Bergen: Thank you.

Superintendent Couture, what are your thoughts as far as training is concerned? Do you find that the cost of training at the OPP level is a big portion of your costs? Is there a role, for example, for RCMP Depot, which is their established, built infrastructure? Or do you find that training costs are not an issue?

C/Supt Gary Couture: The biggest for us is the desire to move forward and engage our partners in our civilian governance on the training aspect. If I may, I'll speak with regard to east region, because our commissioner is coming on Thursday.

But if I can again go with the community engagement mobilization model, in Ontario its relating to much that's been said this morning about engaging everybody in the community to start focusing on local issues that we can address before these get to the point where there's an arrest, a court process, etc. But we need to get everybody trained and engaged in that aspect to make sure they move forward with it. In this region, in the last year, we've started with our governance. We've brought in our police service boards, our local councillors, etc., to try to get them to endorse this and support us moving forward. Some municipalities have.

Somewhat to the point you made earlier about smaller communities versus larger ones, I'll talk just to the region I command. I know three detachments are moving forward heavily with this model. Bancroft has 3,000 people. They have developed a plan with the community engagement model. Everybody's engaged. They're talking about issues they can address and resolve and reduce before they become criminal activities that police need to address. Another community is Quinte West, which has 50,000 people. They are engaged in it. Hawkesbury has 15,000. So I don't believe there's any population limitation to the application of this mindset to get everybody engaged to work toward issues that can be resolved together.

We need to commit to the training piece. For us, it involves bringing in the officers, bringing in partners, etc. We don't have a budget line for it. For us, our priority—as a region anyway—is that we see a huge beneficial outcome afterwards. So we do invest in training, etc., and we develop as we move along.

Ms. Candice Bergen: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You're out of time.

Thank you.

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

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

Mr. McFee, could you go over the point you made a little while ago about the part of your system that is franchiseable? You seem to be saying while part of your system is maybe unique to your circumstances, part of it could be a model for others. I wasn't clear on the distinction. I understand what your force is doing by getting all these intervenors active at the same table to deal with matters in a collaborative way.

As you say, I envisage a table with people working together, and so on. As you say, it doesn't cost anything, it's just bringing people together. But what portion of your system can be replicated and is franchiseable?

● (0940)

Mr. Dale McFee: Let me give you that in a visual example that I think probably would help everybody understand. If you take a MacDonald's in Ottawa and a MacDonald's in Japan, basically MacDonald's International runs both of those. The software systems are the same, the cooking order is the same, the “M” is the same, the colours are the same. Everything is the same. The COR is exactly that. What's basically deliverable in each community is the same. The only thing that's different between the MacDonald's in Japan and the MacDonald's in Ottawa is the menu. The menu shows the ability to act local on local problems.

So use the structure of the process, solve the privacy issues, solve all those issues that cause troubles and let the local folks, who are the experts in their community, use the structure to deliver results at that community level. If you keep it that simple, it works all the time.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Your COR system that can be used anywhere, is that a set of procedures? Or does it involve software? Does it involve, for example, an economic model that, following Mr. Garrison's point, could estimate the costs not only to the local police force but also to the social agencies involved in collaborative interventions? Is it that sophisticated, or is it really a set of procedures, like a manual? Do we get into some highly technological instruments or tools that can be used in different jurisdictions?

Mr. Dale McFee: It's basically policy procedures. It's putting it all in a box. It does have a system we've designed that makes it a lot easier from a technological point of view, but it's basically boxing it all up so that it's replicable. You may have to tweak that to meet each region in the country, no question, but that's easily done. The whole point is that we're getting to the final strokes with our privacy commissioner. We've made sure that every system—health, social services, education—understands how it works. It meets everybody's needs. It has a rotational executive director, so one year it could be the police supplying that person for two years. Every two years it rotates. It could be health, social services. It's meeting everybody's needs. It's following a process through some defined practices, and it has research and evidence and outcomes in the middle of everything.

Don't do it if it's not based on outcomes and research and evidence. We're doing a lot of things that we found, quite frankly, we shouldn't be doing. The World Health Report tells us the number one world problem is violence. That's not the case in Canada. I would ask why. Public safety or community safety is way bigger than policing.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'd like to ask you about the point of entry into this system. I think it was Superintendent Couture who was saying the calls keep coming to the police and then they find out that some of the calls could have gone to a social agency or what have you. In your system, Mr. McFee, is the police call centre the point of entry? Or is there some other point of entry?

I thought the point of entry for just about any kind of call was 911. You call 911, the operator asks you first what the problem is. You may say you'd like to speak to the police. But if they ask what the problem is, and you say somebody just had a heart attack, they're going to direct you to ambulance services. Isn't 911 the triage centre for these calls? I don't understand why point of entry is such a problem—we have 911 and they seem to do a lot of this sorting.

C/Supt Gary Couture: I would suggest that some of this is broad community expectations. People in some communities simply expect that police will come and solve all their issues. I agree with you, 911 in the vast majority of communities is the initial point of contact, but the person making the contact has an expectation and will often ask for the police. I emphasize that the communities we police as a provincial organization—not the size of Toronto, but our smaller communities—may have fewer resources. So it's always in relation to police.

● (0945)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: And they can call the police directly, too, I suppose.

C/Supt Gary Couture: Yes, sir.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. McFee, do you have anything to add to that?

Mr. Dale McFee: The police in a hub/COR environment is different than a 911 response. The 911 response is going to get the police, absolutely, or the emergency responders. But it's just one facet. There's stuff coming through the schools and social services. We're getting stuff through health and mental health; we're getting stuff through the community. The point is that a lot of this acute, elevated risk doesn't need a full police response; it needs a solution to a problem that's multi-faceted and multi-agency. I call it the low hanging fruit. About 75% of the call logging is generally your low hanging fruit.

We'll always be able to respond to those obvious emergency calls. We're very good at it in policing. We're very good at it in first response. We can't lose sight of that. We still need to be very good. We need to take some of the low hanging fruit, that anti-social behaviour stuff that left unchecked becomes crime, out of the system by solving some problems rather than continue to respond to it. The continued response is not effective and it's way too costly.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Scarpaleggia. We're out of time.

From what the analysts have asked me to pass on to Mr. McFee, one of the things that you said was that it everything has to be evidence-based.

But you also talked about evaluation and accountability through an evaluation at the end. Is there an evaluation form that you go through? Do you have a real process of evaluation? How do you do the evaluation?

Mr. Dale McFee: Right now, each ministry, each service provider, that's involved in the hub and the COR, evaluates themself. What we also do is that we put the university right into the COR; the University of Saskatchewan is in there. We're trying to do a more comprehensive, in-depth and brand new evaluation on how they relate to each other.

For example, we've got an economist hired in our ministry. We have him working on an optimization rule. You heard me talk about jobs and how many jobs equal how much income tax revenue, and how much that takes in relation to the system. There's got to be an optimization rule that tells you that we need this many jobs, this much done in intervention prevention, this much done in recidivism rehabilitation, and this much done in cheaper forms of service providing. There needs to be an optimization rule. There has to be. There always is for your RRSPs, when you're going to retire. There's always an optimization rule. That's the next level that we're starting to look at.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rousseau, you have five minutes.

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Our main goal, here in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, is, of course, keeping Canadians safe, ensuring our borders are secure, and protecting our nation's sovereignty. And the trend we're seeing stems from the desire to make our police systems more efficient, getting more bang for our buck, so to speak. In your view, what dangers does this eagerness to streamline and be as cost-effective as possible in meeting our goal, which is really public safety and national security, expose us to?

I am going to give you an example. When I talk to RCMP officers, they tell me that their priorities are combatting terrorism and fighting drug trafficking, including the trade of marijuana. When I talk to border services officers, they say they no longer even have the resources they need to conduct thorough searches of goods entering the country.

How, then, does an overeagerness to cut costs jeopardize our personal safety, as well as the security of our businesses?

I'd like Mr. Couture to answer first, please.

C/Supt Gary Couture: Would you like me to answer in French?

● (0950)

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Yes, if you don't mind.

C/Supt Gary Couture: I listened carefully to your question about the risk you mentioned. During the past few years, costs and efficiency have been on everyone's radar.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Indeed.

C/Supt Gary Couture: I would say the risk is calculated. Whether we're talking about the number of searches or arrests that are necessary or about the number of crimes, that work will not disappear. We don't want to see any crimes committed in our communities or anyone arrested, but the fact remains those things will continue to keep our police officers and public safety agencies busy.

What everyone is talking about this morning is the other aspect of that work—and I can't tell you whether the percentage is 10%, 15% or 20%. It's the part of the job that can be performed in another way, with different resources, by groups or agencies joining forces to work on prevention. Being careful not to create risks by favouring one element or the other is key. Both avenues are vital. They go hand in hand, and it's very important for us to have both. But we have to consider the available options in terms of being efficient and shifting the work load when it can be allocated to other agencies.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: That's great.

I'd like to hear from Mr. McFee now, please.

[*English*]

Could you answer the question.

Mr. Dale McFee: Sorry to cut in, but did you ask for me to comment on that?

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Yes, Mr. McFee, could you comment on that.

Mr. Dale McFee: Okay. First, I apologize for not being able to speak French.

What I would say is that what you said is bang on. It's about balance. In my role as president of CACP I gave evidence in support of Bill C-10. I said that we're not going to arrest our way out of our troubles, but we're not going to stop arresting. We can't enter a political debate that does one or the other: we have to do it all at the same time. That's integrity. That's obviously risk. We have to make sure that we're on top of that.

But to free up those resources and do that effectively, let's just look at the call volume of a police service that we studied. Of the calls, 25% were criminal in nature and 5% of those led to criminal charges, which left 75% of all the calls for services being about what we call anti-social behaviour, which if left unchecked we know becomes crime. The reality is that it can't be one or the other, but has to be balanced. We have to effectively work in all those areas at the same time, taking the low-hanging fruit out the system and doing a great job at the back end making sure that we're protecting the integrity and those interests in our country and our provinces that obviously pose major risks to our everyday lives.

Quite frankly, it's not one or the other. We need to do it all. The only way we can do it is to free up this end by taking stuff out of the system, allowing us to do more on this end and to use a cost-effective method to do it more efficiently.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Thank you.

That's all.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Chair, do we still have Deputy Federico?

The Chair: I believe he's still there.

Deputy Chief Federico, do you hear us?

D/Chief Michael Federico: I can hear you.

The Chair: Okay, thanks.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Deputy Federico, you talked about the value of early intervention. From a human perspective, that's obvious. Have you done any studies on the cost savings of early intervention? Can you put any empirical data to that?

D/Chief Michael Federico: I'd reference and echo Mr. McFee's observations about the cost of incarceration, for example, being four times the cost of paying a police officer to do a job. So we are trying to maintain a balance. If you avoid having to introduce somebody into the criminal justice system, there are a lot of costs that societies avoid. It doesn't necessarily result in a savings to the police department, but all of these accumulated costs are avoided if we can intervene earlier. There's a principle here of cost avoidance in community investments as opposed to direct cost reduction. You're still going to have to invest in the particular case, but that investment may perhaps take the form of a return to school, perhaps a family support intervention to support the family at home, perhaps some addiction counselling or some crisis intervention. They're still going to require an investment, so the community still has to have the capacity to respond to that. But you're not introducing the individual into the high priced, high-cost services that are represented by our courts, our correctional services, and our police services. I'd make that point.

I echo what the two other speakers are saying, that there's a balance to be achieved. The hub offers a great deal of promise, because the case conferencing can examine the individual needs and respond more effectively than trying to do some aggregate response to a community issue like poverty, or homelessness, or marginalization. You're working now with individuals, changing their condition so they don't come back and become repeat offenders or recidivists and a continual draw on the system.

● (0955)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you very much.

Mr. McFee, I can identify with your McDonald's analogy. I just got back from Taiwan and McDonald's is everywhere, but a quarter pounder with cheese is really hard to find.

A voice: Oh, oh!

Hon. Laurie Hawn: We talked about the role of the federal government and a little bit about training. Can you expand on your view of the role of the federal government in this whole process and how it can be improved?

Mr. Dale McFee: I think there are some things you could really look at, some type of legislation in relation to privacy that encourages people to share information when acute, elevated risk exists. We've gone from an age where we're scared to share information—and that's crazy. When safety is in jeopardy, and somebody in your family is a person at acute, elevated risk, we need to do the right thing so that we can sleep at night. That's gone way too far. Obviously, we're trying to address it in this province. We've done our privacy assessments; we're working towards it. That's one area.

I give full marks for ADM Tupper coming out to Prince Albert to talk. My language with him is, “Don't have me chase money pots. Don't tell me I didn't apply to this fund.” We're all in this together. At the end of the day, there's a role for all of us to play as we develop some of these systems. Part of that will be money; part of that is systems. But it should never be the case that it's all on the other. In other words, if you look at anything that we've developed from this point of view in Saskatchewan, it's all affordable and all replicable.

We're not looking to drain a bank account. We're not looking to throw everything at this, saying it's the be-all and end-all. We're looking at how we can take snippets of what we do, use a paradigm shift in thinking, and reinvest some of what we do to deliver a better product. If we keep it at that simple stage, there's no question that we need the federal government involved in relation to this. I think we'll get there. It's been a while, and we've had lots of talks with the NCPC. I've been very encouraged with the recent discussions with [*Inaudible—Editor*], because I think that's what we're trying to do in essence.

I shouldn't be telling them what their role is. I think it's up to us collectively to build the right response for the clients we're serving.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Really we're talking about breaking down silos, whether they are silos between agencies or silos between levels of government. You did a lot of that in Saskatchewan with respect to sharing of information between the various services: social services, policing, and so on. What were some lessons learned there that you might pass on to your colleagues in other provinces or the federal government?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Dale McFee: Respectfully step on toes. It's about leadership and not ownership. We need to get out of ownership and more into leadership, because that's what we all do well. Sometimes you just have to go out and get it done.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

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

Thank you, everyone, for being here.

I have three questions, one for each of you. I hope I can get to them.

Chief Superintendent Couture, you indicate that one of the main functions of the OPP is, of course, supporting first nations police services. What's happened in Ontario—and I'll basically have the same question for you, Mr. McFee—is that first nations police services have fallen on hard times. It's difficult to provide that service, and I can use one example in northern Ontario of the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service, which the OPP used to run in that area. I heard from a former OPP officer that when they left and NAPS took over, they were in fact left in good shape. Well, NAPS is no longer in good shape.

I wonder if you have any comments about first nations policing and particularly the economics of policing. When you have scores of communities that are fly-in communities, not enough police officers, and not enough money—quite frankly—to run the service, do you see any way to make that better?

● (1000)

C/Supt Gary Couture: Sir, if I may, I'll give a limited response. Our commissioner may have more to say on that on Thursday.

The Ontario First Nations Policing Agreement has had some challenges in the last six years, as I recall. There are two services within each region that I deal with. I can tell you that our partnerships with them are tremendous. We work side by side. The relationships are very effective and good. But they are funded and functioning within a structure that is external to ours. I do see some of the pressures and challenges that they deal with. I can't give you specifics or comment specifically.

What I can tell you is that we're very strong partners. For example, we work 24/7 with Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory Police and the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service. We will support them—we have continuously and we always will. So there's an excellent front-line team approach supporting each other. Quite frankly, they support us as well.

Mr. John Rafferty: You must be feeling the budgetary pressures to provide the support, particularly in a first nations police service such as Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service with all the fly-in communities. According to NAPS, OPP support has been dropping. I'm assuming it's because of budgetary reasons that you can't continue to provide that support. Is there a way around that? Is there something that could be done in terms of the economics of policing?

C/Supt Gary Couture: Unfortunately, sir, I have to limit my thoughts on that. I do know it's a first nations policing agreement issue. It is a funding issue that has been highly discussed, I've been aware, in the last few months. It is a challenge for several band councils, but I can say OPP support for them will always be very strong.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you.

Mr. McFee, you talked about 70% to 80% of calls or the things that you deal with in Saskatchewan not being crime related. I would suggest that perhaps in first nations communities, or where there is a large aboriginal presence, that's probably even higher than 70% to 80%. I wonder if you could comment on that and comment in general on first nations police services.

Mr. Dale McFee: For sure you're right. There are a couple of things in relation to that. Certainly in the province of Saskatchewan, first nations policing is a significant role for us. In my former role as president of the CACP, we stated what the value of first nations policing was, and we continue with that. I think though there are a couple of things to remember here.

When you talk about calls—and being Métis, I'm adamant to a certain degree on this, our issues are not first nations' ones. Our issues are about marginalized people in relation to.... The word "marginalized" can be debated as well, but when we went to Scotland, it turned out that 15 of the key indicators were the same as they were for Prince Albert. Scotland is white and homogeneous. Prince Albert has many first nations people and high mobility. To make a long story short, we have to deal with those underlying roots and those underlying problems that we're trying to address, and part of that is first nations policing.

One of the things we're asking for—and it's possibly a role for the federal government—is to have funded first nations representation in our CORs. We have them there now, first nations government, but it's a hardship for them. I think they have a role in being part of a greater solution of problem solving. I think when we're in on the ground and we're working exclusively with first nation providers, that gives us a better understanding of culture and a better understanding of solutions, and we can actually remove some of these conditions that are driving the problems.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you very much.

Do I have one minute for Mr. Federico?

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Mr. John Rafferty: Deputy Chief Federico, we heard from a British police superintendent that one of the strategies they used—and I'm asking you because you're from a large municipality force—was to get their police officers out of cars and away from their computers, and to get them doing most of their work with BlackBerrys from which they have access to things akin to CPIC and so on, or those sorts of things. They reported higher client satisfaction, more visibility, and better timing and outcomes. Is that something that Toronto has looked at?

D/Chief Michael Federico: Yes, it is. Thanks for that question.

A greater investment in community engagement and contact is typically associated with "getting out of the cars", but as the two other speakers have pointed out, there needs to be a balance. We still have to be able to respond to calls through service, particularly emergency or crisis calls. There's no question that modern policing requires us to have face-to-face, direct communication with people. It can be virtual by way of communications devices. There need to be sufficient resources—that is, enough officers—to engage in conversations, collaborations, communication, and partnerships with our community. That means we need to be present in the community, seen in the community, talking to people in the community. So we need to make time for that.

● (1005)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Welcome, Mr. Calkins, to committee. I know Mr. Calkins is a member of Parliament where there are a lot of first nations, with Hobbema and Samson Reserve. I don't know if that's the point of your question, but we look forward to your five minutes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Well, how can it not be now, Mr. Chair?

Mr. McFee, I do have a specific set of questions for you, and then I have a broader question for all of the witnesses. As Mr. Sorenson, the chair, pointed out, I represent the constituency of Wetaskiwin, the city of Wetaskiwin and the town of Ponoka, and the counties immediately adjacent to one of the largest groups of bands in western Canada. The Samson, Ermineskin, Louis Bull, and Montana bands have about 16,000 first nations people living there.

There are over 40 RCMP officers stationed in Hobbema. There's a large contingent of RCMP in Ponoka and Wetaskiwin who spend a lot of their time dealing with issues in these communities. So I'm very curious to find out from your perspective—understanding that Prince Alberta has its own police force—what I can take back to my riding in terms of being able to get the RCMP, who are the police on the ground in most of the communities that I represent, involved in getting up to speed on what you're doing there. I ask because it sounds to me, as you just mentioned, that it's not an issue of race or whatever; it's an issue of those indicators setting off a process, which you've identified, for intervention. I was just wondering what experience you have had in Saskatchewan that I can take back to the RCMP in the communities I represent.

Mr. Dale McFee: I would welcome a group coming to the folks who lead our initiative in Saskatchewan. We'd have open arms to them. If we can share anything to help, that's what it's all about, first and foremost. With communities such as these, it's important that we give the ability to act locally. There are lots of lessons learned that we could provide in this particular area.

One thing I touched on that I haven't mentioned today when talking about the franchise model is that a COR, if you use that acronym for a centre of responsibility, is technically a master franchise. It was designed to support up to six hubs. In areas such as you have, very similar to Prince Albert, if you don't address the feeder systems in those particular areas with a similar type of process whereby you're actually on the ground and delivering results, nothing will matter, because the feeder system will just overwhelm you.

One master franchise supports six hubs; it's all connected together. Nothing is lost in translation: it's the same people—the same individuals, the same families—who need help. What you're in essence doing with intervention/prevention is asking them what you can do to help.

The way the justice system in essence is designed today, for the majority of stuff, is that we wait until people are in the system and we tell them how to fix them. The reality is that 95% of it is predictable. So if it's predictable, why aren't we asking them what we can do to help, spending a dollar wisely and getting them the help at the right time, which is more cost-effective and more efficient and gives them a better chance to succeed?

Doing that while maintaining this other group, for which we need to have a similar model, is not so helpful. Obviously they have to be responsible for the justice system.

Those are some of the things I would offer comments on.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I have a couple of minutes left. I'm going to offer a broader question.

Back when I was significantly younger than I am today, I volunteered for the Edmonton Police Service when I was going to university. I would do things at community policing stations. For example, I would fill out traffic accident reports and do other minor tasks such as answering the telephone, basically doing a number of things on behalf of the police service that would free up the constables stationed there to do other, more meaningful work that only they could do.

I wonder whether each of you could offer any experiences in your areas about how other types of volunteering—not just auxiliary services, but volunteers in your police services—may be utilized more efficiently to enable officers to do their jobs and get some of these minor tasks off their desks.

C/Supt Gary Couture: First of all, our auxiliary program is tremendous. I'm glad to hear that you experienced something similar.

We have 850 across the province. They work hand in hand with our officers. They don't work independently. They don't do police work on their own; they have to be with a police officer at all times. But I can say that even within a regional context, they are visible everywhere. They increase our visibility; they contribute to our crime prevention initiatives, our partnerships, etc., and are a great resource to us. But there are certain limitations as to what we can and cannot do with them, and these are outlined in internal policy and in the Police Services Act as well.

Broadly, beyond that there have been various levels of community volunteerism over the years I've been policing. There was a time when community policing was a focus for which you would often see community residents coming in to volunteer and provide support. Now we're moving towards a community engagement model that embraces the same type of participation. There are limitations to the extent to which you can embrace it in that respect as well. There are always the parameters requiring that the police officers do the police work, and they have to do the primary responses. The question is how an auxiliary officer and a civilian who is volunteering can support us in delivering that service.

It helps us in many respects—I would say mostly in our community services or visibility, etc.—but it doesn't actually remove the workload that is there for the front-line officers.

● (1010)

The Chair: Thank you.

Unfortunately, we aren't going to be able to hear from some of the others.

We go back to Madame Michaud.

Welcome here.

She's covering for Madame Doré Lefebvre, who has other things on her mind right now, as you all know.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank each of you for your presentations.

My first questions are for Mr. McFee.

I appreciated your presentation and found your various programs quite interesting. Before I became a member of Parliament, my training was in psychology, originally. Your systemic approach seems to have merit and to be rather effective.

Could you please tell us how you select the various cases that are referred to the Hub intervention team? How are those decisions made, given that the cases come from different elements in the community?

[*English*]

Mr. Dale McFee: That's a great question. Keep in mind that all of these agencies still work autonomously; they're all still working in their own jobs.

What the hub and the COR are designed for is this: all of those agencies have the ability, when they've exhausted what they've been trying to do in their own ministry or their own agency.... When they have an acute, elevated risk component, that is the benchmark or measurement to share the information. So we're not just throwing names around and thinking that we need to solve everything. When there's an acute or elevated risk, which most often these are, they are the ones that need attention now, because they identify that acute, elevated risk. They haven't been able to do something in their own agency and now they throw a team at it and the resulting conversation is six minutes on average. They get services to those people or individuals and/or families within 24 to 48 hours. That's a game changer and that's how it's done.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you very much.

How far can the action taken by partners go? You said it's more for short-term intervention, but you nevertheless figure out a strategy for the different files presented to those teams. How long can the intervention last? Can they turn into situations that require more long-term follow-up? What kind of follow-up are you able to provide with the different partners?

[*English*]

Mr. Dale McFee: The file's not dropped until the risk is reduced and professionals are comfortable with where it's at.

Let me give you an example. I'll take 45 seconds. A 14-year-old girl comes into the system, comes through education, a kid who was a straight-A student but is now having trouble, falling asleep in class, hardly attending whereas she never used to miss school. They bring the name—yes, the acute or elevated risk—and the police check the records and they find the same individual face-down drunk in a snowbank. She would have frozen to death if some member of the public hadn't found her.

Social services checks their records. They were in that home 13 times in the last three and a half months. Nobody is talking to each other here.

To make a long story short, a phone call is made and a team—a social worker, a police officer, and a mental health worker—go to the house. They did not want education because she felt embarrassed. That's fine. They go in. What can we do to help? They find out. The mum got into a bad domestic violence relationship the night she was found face-down drunk in the snowbank. Mum had a belt around her neck. She didn't think she would see mum again.

That came in. The police pushed out the criminal component. They'll do that, fair enough. This guy had a significant record. He was a really bad person. They removed the threat. Social services came in and did an emergency intervention order and got some short-term funding. Housing came in and changed the lock on the door. Mum was a full-time student taking post-secondary at SIAST. To make a long story short, the last month and a half she had fallen off.

Education reconnects that. That family that was in the system 16 times within a very short period of time has never been in the system since because we got them what they needed to succeed.

● (1015)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: That's a great example of the work you do.

[*English*]

Do I still have some time?

The Chair: Yes. I'll give you 30 seconds. That's because you're new.

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Can the work done by the intervention team or even the centre of responsibility be applied to all street gang-related issues? Could that approach help improve things on that front?

[*English*]

Mr. Dale McFee: Absolutely.The strength of this is its link to community priorities. A community dictates what its priorities are, the things that are most sought after. What you can get here when you really get into this is that you can now align your CBOs and your service providers. I'll take the region of Prince Albert, where the three top areas they aligned had numerous CBOs and NGOs in those agencies, but not one was working on the three top priorities.

So now you've also created alignment whereby everybody is working in the same direction to get results, and the results are measured. So just think of the efficiencies and the effectiveness in leveraging results once you create alignment with your external service providers.

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you to all our guests for appearing today.

I know I cut off Mr. Calkins. He had taken a minute too long as it was, but we also cut off some of the others—I think Mr. McFee and Deputy Chief Federico from Toronto—on the question of some of the voluntary services they are implementing. Whether it be that question or any other question that has been asked today of our guests, if you in the future or in a few days.... Many times after a meeting I think, man, I wish I had answered it this way. So if you have another answer or want to supplement what you have answered, if you provide our clerk with your supplementary response to any of those questions, we will circulate it and would very much appreciate your expanding on anything you've heard here today.

We will suspend momentarily and then the committee will move in camera to discuss important business, a part of which will be this study that we're doing.

We are suspended.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]