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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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● (0845)

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The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. This is meeting 82 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. It is Thursday, April 25, 2013.

Today we're going to continue our study of the economics of policing in Canada. On our first panel today is Mr. Geoff Gruson, executive director of the Police Sector Council. We also have the chief of the Edmonton Police Service, Chief Rod Knecht. Welcome.

Our committee thanks both of these witnesses for appearing before our committee today to help us with our study on the costs of policing in Canada.

I invite Chief Knecht to make a few opening statements, followed by Mr. Gruson, and then we will go into a round or two of questioning.

Can you hear me in Edmonton?

Chief Rod Knecht (Chief of Police, Edmonton Police Service): Yes, I can. Thank you.

I have about a 10-minute prepared commentary. Is that too long?

The Chair: No, that's just perfect. Thank you.

Chief Rod Knecht: Okay. Very good. I'll start then.

Good morning. Thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to speak to the committee today on a topic of critical importance to the profession of policing and the communities we serve, including all levels of government.

The proactive work of this committee is vital to the future sustainability and public confidence in policing and the broader criminal justice system. I congratulate the committee for taking responsibility for fulsomely examining this issue.

Police services across Canada are experiencing unprecedented challenges. Demands for service and public expectations continue to increase while budgets remain static or are decreasing in some jurisdictions. The recognized position is that the current situation is no longer sustainable. No single organization can stretch and adapt continually to meet all of the demands and expectations that are placed upon it when those demands grow unabated.

As we look for workable and affordable solutions, we are reminded that public safety is a fundamental expectation by citizens and a critical function of government at every level. The police are an essential service with a broadly reaching mandate. My personal policing career has spanned 37 years, in five provinces, two territories, and 16 communities across Canada. Over the previous 17 years, I've occupied senior leadership roles within two policing organizations, including a term as senior deputy commissioner for the RCMP in Ottawa, and my current role as Chief of Police for the City of Edmonton.

The simple reality is that policing costs are going up, and many are rightfully challenging the value of these expenditures. The policing profession is at a critical juncture that requires the need to reform our practices within the broader environment and better communicate value for investment of precious and limited tax dollars.

What is driving up police expenditures and costs? Police service growth has consistently reflected a growth in the greater population. Citizens want their streets and neighbourhoods safe to walk and live within. The governments are expected to deliver on safety and security through an investment in policing. That growth has a cost. Policing is very expensive, and like most commodities, you get what you pay for. However, per unit labour costs for sworn and civilian or non-sworn police employees are higher than they have ever been before, reflective of the broader public service. Of note is that since 1999, police compensation has significantly outpaced inflation, and the cost of pensions and benefits have been a major contributor to those costs.

In Edmonton, 80% of our operating budget is dedicated to employee costs, leaving only 20% for discretionary spending on police service delivery. These percentages mirror what I experienced when I was with the RCMP. Rising wage increases are a natural result of the greater mobility among younger Canadians, demand for specific skills, and tighter competition in the labour market.

In Alberta, we have a highly competitive market that challenges our ability to attract new employees and retain experienced employees. This is not exclusive to policing. However, to meet demands, we are currently recruiting aggressively in Ontario and the eastern provinces, due to the competition for new hires in Alberta. It continues to be a challenge to maintain highly qualified employees who are constantly cajoled into higher-paying jobs in oil and gas.

Those costs pale when compared to the costs that are now being incurred when police become engaged in ever-increasing social issues related to the homeless, mental health, and addictions. Our health and social services infrastructure is continually challenged to adapt to the same human resource and fiscal pressures of our changing environment, particularly as it relates to the most vulnerable in our communities.

As a result, police spend an ever-increasing amount of time and resources dealing with complex social issues as opposed to more traditional public safety issues. In point of fact, interaction with the mentally ill, homeless, and addicted has been our greatest area of increased deployment of policing resources over the past five years. I can say with confidence that we, the police, have become the social agency of first resort for many of our vulnerable citizens.

Last year alone, Edmonton police dealt with 35,000 calls relating to mental health, addictions, and the homeless. Each call took an average of 104 minutes. If you do the math, that's seven and a half years. Most often we are dealing with the same people over and over. We have documented over 150 contacts with a single individual during the course of the year. Our colleagues in hospital emergency wards, ambulance, and shelters are dealing with these same people, in some cases more often than us.

● (0850)

Policing has become increasingly complex. In my early years as a police officer it took 55 minutes to process a drunk driver; today it takes four hours. Obtaining a search warrant was a single page when I was in a drugs section in 1986; today a search warrant application is consistently hundreds of pages long.

Policy changes for levels of government, changes in legislation, and increased liability are often out of the direct control of the police. However, they create new and growing pressures on police officers and police budgets. Our citizens and our stakeholders have increasing expectations of their police, requiring higher benchmarking in equipment, training, accountability, and technology.

The Internet, social media, and new technologies have had a profound impact on policing in a very short period of time. We are seeing an emergence of new crimes that cross geographic, cultural, and organizational jurisdictions. Child pornography, cybercrime, human trafficking, financial frauds, and national security investigations are but a few of the serious crimes being facilitated through the Internet in this new community within our current community.

Ten years ago it was the police who had the most up-to-date technologies at their disposal; today it is the organized criminal element who have the resources and access to cutting-edge technology without legal, budgetary, or regulatory restriction, often leaving police in the position of playing catch-up or simply being neutralized. Most, if not all, major Canadian municipalities are also dealing with the realities of shadow and transient populations. For example, Alberta has in excess of 100,000 persons who report income from that province but file tax returns elsewhere.

The knowledge level for leadership in policing is also morphing from the requisite administrative and operational skills of an experienced senior police officer to that of an educated chief executive officer with significant corporate acumen. Policing has evolved into a modern business form, so senior executives need to know the intimacies of modern policing and the intricacies of running a business. This fundamental shift reinforces the challenges I mentioned earlier in terms of recruitment and retention.

Last, police organizations within the broader government structure are often competing with other departments and agencies for operating funds within a zero-sum game. One department or organization wins at the cost of others. This promotes competition and inefficiencies, while stymying cooperation, integration, innovation, and broader-based strategies for collective long-term success.

The accepted wisdom is that crime is down. This statement is accurate within some categories and in some jurisdictions. However, there are few front-line police officers who will agree that crime is down. In Edmonton, calls for service are up significantly. Certain categories of crime are way up, specifically sexual assaults, domestic violence, and vehicle thefts, and there is a burgeoning trend to not report certain crimes, as the belief is that police do not have the ability to respond.

The points I have made outline the complex drivers and pressures that the present and future policing environment faces. However, all is not lost. Out of adversity is born real opportunity, and I believe there is plenty of opportunity to address current challenges. The good news is that policing has historically proven to be adaptive and flexible, albeit sometimes slow and resistant, and often personality driven. Our traditional model of policing has evolved over time and in response to a changing environment, from being problem-focused and reactive to being more strategically active and proactive by utilizing the principles of community policing, intelligence-led policing, integrated policing, and, most recently, predictive policing.

The future requires us to employ intelligence-led management and systems-wide integration; that is, integration across ministries and across agencies, both public and private. As stewards of the public purse, it is the responsibility of today's police leaders to continuously and judiciously look for efficiencies in the delivery of public safety.

Current fiscal realities require continuous reprioritization around crime trends and community priorities while exploiting emerging technologies and human resource exigencies, supported by strong communication and relationship-building skills. It is essential that police leaders are constantly managing the demand for services more effectively, efficiently, and economically. A major component of this is the absolute necessity to manage expectations by communicating reprioritization to stakeholders, funders, and communities. This requires senior police leader competencies to be broadened to encompass skills that support business acumen, while still having a holistic understanding of policing as a distinct craft.

● (0855)

Related to this point is the need for police to do a better job of measuring and articulating the value of a dollar invested in policing. One of the challenges is trying to measure the intangible. How do we quantify a life saved, the elimination of an emergency room visit, or a second chance as a future contributor to society as a result of a drug bust? How do we assess the reduction of a life-long health care cost as a result of arresting a drunk driver?

We need to undertake a detailed review of our current policing model and determine the true impact on the cost-benefit ledger of policing. In my world, we have often experienced increased and uncontrollable demands for service, absent of requisite resources. This is particularly poignant as it relates to the mentally ill, homeless, and addicted.

Notionally, there are considerable savings to be realized through police diffusing social tension, preventing conflict, and reducing victimization and revictimization. There are clearly downstream benefits for families and communities, as well as increased economic development. We need to explore methods and metrics to effectively quantify this.

As I indicated earlier, responding to our most vulnerable impacts between 30% and 40% of policing budgets. It also has an impact on health, social service, criminal justice, and correction services' budgets, as the same people are being cycled through the broader system. While the fiscal outcomes are huge, the real tragedy is the suffering of our most vulnerable. In Edmonton, we have recognized that a limited number of the same citizens are consuming an inordinate number of police, ambulance, health care, and social service resources. We are doing something about it.

We have brought together a select group of impacted key stakeholders that include public health care, medical services, shelters, community members, and levels of government, in order to work together, to work smarter and to case-manage our most vulnerable to a better place. This is system-wide integration of service delivery. Our focus is currently on the top 50 consumers of police resources and how our list compares to our colleagues in other agencies.

We are taking steps to examine where these people are falling out of the system and becoming frequent flyers. We are changing a system that has been in place for dozens of years through partnerships, collaboration, innovation, and the recognition that there has to be a better way.

By leveraging resources, we are able to realize efficiencies and economies of scale and better service delivery. From a strictly policing perspective, we are able to reinvest that scarce 30% of our resources into targeting those who prey on the most vulnerable and other prolific offenders.

The end game is safer communities, more effective deployment of policing resources, and reduced costs to our criminal justice partners. There is no zero-sum game. There are simply benefits to the vulnerable and benefits to the system.

This takes me to the main point I want to make this morning. There is a better way, and not just within policing; a better way needs to encompass the entire criminal justice system and the broader system of health care, social services, communities, and relevant stakeholders. Police are most often the first responders and gatekeepers to the criminal justice system, but the system is not ours. To look at the cost of policing without giving equal attention to the efficiencies and costs of these other components gives only a partial picture. The solution lies in challenging the system beyond the economics of policing. A new model is required, one that clarifies roles and responsibilities of the entire criminal justice and social justice systems and one that articulates a clear vision. Increasing the cost of policing is one system of a larger problem, not the problem itself.

Police have become the social agency of first choice by more and more Canadians, and the costs of that are real, tangible, and excessive. In small communities across Canada, particularly in isolated, northern, and first nations communities, the problem is far more acute. Police are most often the only social agency of choice.

In closing, police services are not going to become more affordable based on more effective delivery of current services; this is simply biting around the edge of the cookie.

There are three questions we should be asking ourselves about policing into the future, and upon answering them, we should be re-engineering our processes toward a broader systems-based approach accordingly. Those questions are: What are we doing that we should be doing? What are we doing that we should not be doing? And what are we not doing that we need to do?

A response to these questions by governments, communities, and policing will allow us to create a higher degree of flexibility, manage expectations, be appropriately funded, and continue to deliver a level of public safety that is the envy of the world.

Thank you.

● (0900)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chief.

We'll move quickly to Mr. Gruson, please, for 10 minutes.

Mr. Geoff Gruson (Executive Director, Police Sector Council): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to pick up on a few points that Rod touched on, and in fact reinforce them in my presentation.

My thanks for the invitation. More importantly, I thank all of you for the effort you're putting into looking at a new model of policing and the evolution of that model here in Canada. Clearly, the economics are driving a serious re-examination of the work and costs of policing, and a potential re-engineering of the model toward more efficiencies and effectiveness.

If I may, I'd like to add a personal comment and take a couple of minutes to talk to you about what the Police Sector Council was and did. I use the past tense, unfortunately, because the federal program that funded our work was terminated with the recent round of deficit reduction initiatives. Following that, I'd offer a recommendation on moving forward, based on the work and research of the Police Sector Council.

My opening thought—a personal point of view on this one—is based on many years in the public sector, six years with the RCMP as assistant commissioner, and eight years with the Police Sector Council as executive director. The current model of policing in Canada has been evolving for about 140 years, based on the British model of Robert Peel. It's a quasi-military structure operating for the safety and security of Canadians and communities.

The model has been evolving slowly in response to many dynamic factors in the environment, but in recent years a number of critical factors have increased the pace of that evolution: the economic recessions of the 1980s, the 1990s, and certainly the one we're in now; technology that has brought information intelligence to the cars and the mobile devices of police officers; the growth of private sector industry, private security, especially post-9/11; the change in our communities, the face of our communities, the age, the diversity, the urbanization; and even the politics of governments at the federal-provincial-municipal levels. These have all had a significant impact on how policing is done and under what framework.

My personal comment on this is that the economic factor now trumps all of those other environmental factors—society, technology, politics, demographics—and really, based on the economics alone, the current model of policing is not sustainable. In reality, the economics of policing is a derivative of all the others, but it certainly is moving things forward.

The Police Sector Council—what we were and what we did—was a small, national, not-for-profit organization fully funded until March 31 of this year by HRSDC under the sector council program. Like all other sector councils, the Police Sector Council focused on the strategic long-term sustainability of the sector, did research, and undertook initiatives to ensure that the policing sector continued to be efficient, effective, and responsive to policing and public needs.

In the past eight years, under the guidance of a board of directors, which included key stakeholders in policing—ADMs from the federal and provincial governments, the presidents of the CACP, the chiefs' association, the Association of Police Boards, the Canadian Police Association, the union folks, the FCM, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and the heads of academies, learning institutions, and reps from private security organizations—the council has focused on a number of issues really related to national solutions to strategic workforce management challenges.

One example of our recent research and facilitated/collaborative undertaking has been the phased introduction of key elements to embrace more professionalism. That's common language, tools, and processes specifically through competency-based HR management of the critical HR functions: recruiting, education, training, leadership development, succession planning, and performance management. I'm going to speak a bit more about this in a second.

What we really do as a sector council is bring leaders and practitioners in policing together to break down the jurisdictional silos, to address common issues, and to collaborate on nationally applicable solutions. In other words, we facilitate a common pursuit of management efficiencies and effectiveness. That's been our eight-year exercise.

Our belief is fairly simple. In Canada, we have 201 police forces in 11 jurisdictions, compared with over 16,000 police services in over 100 jurisdictions in the United States. We should be significantly more capable of bringing together a common national policing management framework and leveraging the investment of taxpayers into enhanced policing and security.

When you think about it, we don't expect different kinds of policing from coast to coast to coast. Whether it's handcuffing skills, counterterrorism training, or HR management, we should do it once and use it many times. Such a national approach will result in more efficiency and effectiveness. Of course, the council's tag phrase was “connecting forces - securing futures”. More importantly, we just focus on skills up and costs down. The work we were doing in this area in fact led to the minister's summit on the economics of policing.

● (0905)

I'll give you a quick note just to reinforce a couple of Rod's points on the economics of policing, the costs, and the workload. In any one police service across this country, there is limited room for cost savings and efficiencies. Eighty per cent of the 96,000 employees work in 8% of the police agencies. Those are the top 16 police forces across the country.

Police budgets have increased at a rate of about 7% a year in the last 10 years and are an ever-increasing portion of municipal and provincial budgets. On average, about 85% to 90% of the police services budget is employee costs: the salaries and the benefits dictated by collective agreements.

Salaries have increased by 40% over the last 10 years, compared to an average of about 11% in any other sector of the economy for the same period. That's mostly due to leapfrogging collective agreements and arbitration awards. With a recent award in Windsor, for example, it looks like a first class constable will be making $93,000.

With the other 10% of the budget, the 10% or 15% of the services budget, there are costs for procurement and maintenance of infrastructure, technology, equipment, vehicles, and training, and other costs associated with managing the workforce. These are mandatory costs for the optimal delivery of policing.

Canadians currently spend about $12.6 billion on policing. Even if we were able to freeze contracts and reduce costs, we'll be at $17 billion by 2015 due to current collective agreements and locked-in contracts.

As you heard from Deputy Minister Dale McFee when he spoke to you earlier—and I think he will be here later today—policing has even less control of the workforce, and certainly Chief Knecht talked about that this morning. Every law enforcement regulation passed, every recommendation from commissioners, and every deficit-fighting reduction in other community service departments increases the work and creates complexity and complications in policing. We're the first responders and we're the last resort.

One recent study conducted by the University of the Fraser Valley in B.C. showed that the work of police officers has changed significantly over the last 10 years, post charter and subsequent to any legislative and regulatory changes in the 1980s and 1990s, with breaking and entering at 58% more processing time, driving under the influence at 250% more processing time, and a relatively simple domestic assault at 950% more processing time.

I offer this information to suggest that it's not very useful to place the burden of solutions to the economics of policing on individual command executives or their individual police services. They have very few discretionary options when it comes to their own budgets. They have very little control over 95% to 96% of the costs and can only really exercise discretion when it comes to triaging crimes or their responses to social issues or social misconduct, which for some services make up almost 75% of their calls for service.

When our sector council asked chiefs what are the implications of the economics of policing, they responded that they feel they are under a lot of pressure. The reality is that an inflexible tax base plus fiscal constraint equals capacity erosion, and we've estimated that to be at about 12% in the last five years. Also, chiefs continue to have to manage under the highest expectations of public oversight, media scrutiny, and the highest bar of public accountability.

The discussion of the economics of policing really has to be raised up and elevated to another level. That's the responsibility of governments and governance: to set a workable national framework under which chiefs can then manage their workforces. We don't do that now.

I'm going to give you one example, just one, of our sector council work: an opportunity to derive real efficiency and effectiveness in workforce management. In the past five years, the sector council expended almost $5 million of taxpayers' money to develop a set of national occupational standards, researching and leveraging the best practices in three continents and consulting and validating findings with 900 subject matter experts across the country—the police people and supervisors doing and managing the work—and consolidating contributions from 70 police organizations and 90 members of steering committees or working committees. This is something that has been done for policing and by policing.

We now have in place fully defined, competency-based behavioural and technical standards for over 160 roles in policing in three broad work streams: general duty, which is constables through chiefs of police; general, specialized, and investigative support; and leadership and management from supervisory right up to executive command. All of these roles have been fully defined in terms of competency-based technical or behavioural standards.

Why is this important for our discussion about efficiencies and effectiveness? The logic goes as follows. If the work of policing is consistent across Canada and we can define that work and the competencies required to do that work successfully, then the roles and occupations can be standardized through national and provincial occupational standards. If we have standards, then like any other sector, such as doctors, electricians, etc., we can have standard processes and mechanisms to manage that work in a consistent and more effective manner.

● (0910)

Right now we don't have that. By that I mean national workforce management standards, including curriculum training standards, certification accrediting trainers and training institutions, and certification and qualifications for each role. Think of policing as a national company. We want all police officers to be qualified for their jobs and promoted only on the attainment of new and higher qualifications.

Progress is being made. Today's narrative has much improved, but it goes something like this: we promote by rank and base criteria, not by skills and competence; we compensate by rank, not by skills and competencies; and we recruit and train by rank, the same way we have for 50 years, not by skills and competencies. This leads to overqualified and overpaid workers doing roles that they probably shouldn't be doing. I think Dale McFee used the analogy of a turbo mechanic being forced to do oil changes. This often leads to a mediocre and demotivated workforce.

The result of the sector council-led approach on the competency-based work is the economies of scale that drive efficiencies. Build it once, use it many times. Then refocus the cost savings on operational effectiveness on the important areas of policing, such as organized crime and cybercrime.

Successive RCMP commissioners have stood before this committee and talked about the fact that they only have the resources to actually investigate 20% to 25% of the known organized crime in this country, let alone deal with issues of cybercriminality. To emphasize this point, through the work of the sector council facilitating the collaboration of many stakeholders, we now have a competency-based workforce management framework. It's made for policing and by policing. It's been embraced by managers and unions. It has clarity, objectivity, learner orientation, and employee focus, and it's a simplified HR management tool and process.

Implementation of this framework needs focus and leadership. As you've heard before, delegated responsible policing goes from feds to provinces, from provinces to municipalities, and creates a policing culture that works against a nationally led direction and transformational change. We've been slowly working with pilot police services, specific provincial ADMs, and keen individuals across the country in the police service boards and associations to start the change process.

The recommendation to the committee is very simple. It's going to take time; it's going to take some leadership, but five years from now, if focused and concentrated effort can be made, there should be a national qualification framework in place and implemented, while the window of opportunity, our Canadian economic opportunity, still exists.

Let me leave you with five points, a sort of vision, if you like, of Canadian policing. We recommend a national qualification framework based on national workforce management architecture; role-based, not rank-based, occupational standards; professional training and certification through rationalized, cost-effective delivery structures; rigorous leadership standards so that we have fully qualified leaders in deputy and chief roles; and a national college of policing, administering the training and education to national standards, much like they have in the U.K.

This vision requires a not-for-profit organization at arm's length, with full stakeholder involvement, to implement and administer. It requires a national competency-based framework for managing human capital, including certification and accreditation with collaborative endorsement from the provinces and from Public Safety Canada.

This not-for-profit organization would continue to work on the sector council, which, over the past eight years, has been building collaborative networks, improving the capacity of all stakeholders to work together in a sectoral environment, identifying common approaches to optimize resources devoted to the management of personnel on a national, sector-wide, competency-based certification and accreditation of police officers and civilians. In other words, continue this professionalization of policing in Canada.

As you can all appreciate, any new evidence-based innovation to change how we do business today requires political leadership and policy-makers to champion and advance these efforts and to engage in the necessary partners who can truly make a difference. That's not the case today. The challenge, really, is how we develop a digital-age response to an analog-age system and structure.

Thank you for letting me make this statement. I'd be happy to take any questions you have.

● (0915)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

You were a little long on the statement, so we're going to cut to six-minute rounds, if we can.

We'll begin with Mr. Hawn, please.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of the witnesses for being here.

Chief Knecht, I want to start with you, but I'll ask for Mr. Gruson's comments on this, too. You raised the issue of Internet crimes, and certainly that's been a focus here with some recent events. You also mentioned intelligence-led policing, which leads me to ask you about legislation in the past, which was dropped for a variety of reasons, with respect to lawful access to the Internet, to IP addresses, and so on, with supervision, obviously, with some checks and balances, to allow police forces to gather intelligence on things that are going on, on the Internet that are in fact crimes or are indicative of crimes, whether it's terrorism, cyberbullying, or whatever it may be. What's your view on the necessity of having some kind of lawful access legislation to aid police in that area?

Chief Rod Knecht: I think it speaks to the economics of policing. We spend a lot of time preparing to get access to the Internet, to buildings, to locations, etc. Hours are spent behind the scenes working up to that particular event. Lawful access is essential for us to do our job.

I think there has to be oversight, checks and balances, similar to getting a search warrant, when we go before a justice or a judge and explain the rationale behind getting lawful access. I don't think any of us want carte blanche access by any stretch of the imagination, but I think there has to be a more streamlined ability to gain lawful access and IP addresses, etc.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Gruson, may I have your views on that?

Mr. Geoff Gruson: I fully agree. I would add one point of comparison to push it a little further. We did a survey of 190 countries through Interpol last year and asked them what they were doing about cybercrime.

Every one of those countries was separately and uniquely setting up cyber-centres, cyber-processing, cyber-structures, cyber-facilities, all of which leads to this issue of a lack of intelligence, a lack of integration, and a lack of capacity in policing to deal with the issues that are coming at us in the future. Certainly this is one of those areas we have to deal with.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

Chief Knecht, back to you again. You talked about some challenges with the judicial system, the court system, and so on. I know that police officers spend a lot of time in court. Some of it is wasted because the defendants don't show up and the police sit there for two or three hours and nothing happens.

Have you looked at or thought about any sort of technological solutions or assistance to that, i.e., appearing by teleconference when the police officer could be in the station or wherever and doing other duties? If and when the defendant shows up or the time comes up in court, they could appear by teleconference. Might that be feasible?

● (0920)

Chief Rod Knecht: Yes, absolutely, that is one option.

I addressed this with the justice department the day before yesterday. Through their own efficiencies they are able to free up court time first thing in the morning, when they are able to deal with court cases that are coming before them.

Unfortunately, from a policing perspective, our people will still have to show up someplace, whether it's at a video location or at a courthouse. If they don't get their notice, they automatically get compensated for eight hours. So they may show up, and if they're told they're not required for court today, they still get compensated for eight hours.

We have to build something into the system that allows us to notify our people in advance that they don't have to show up. It's a huge burden.

In the Edmonton Police Service alone we're probably looking at $3 million in overtime annually when our folks show up for court cases and are never required to testify.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Okay. Sticking with you, Chief Knecht, you obviously have a lifetime of experience with the national police force and now with a major municipal police force. Can you compare and contrast the challenges with respect to the economics and getting the job done with a limited budget between a national police force and a municipal force, and differences in solutions, if necessary?

Chief Rod Knecht: Sure. In some ways the costs are greater and in some ways they're less. I look at my time with the RCMP. Many of the challenges were policing in isolated communities and our folks needing the same equipment, the same training, etc.

I know to keep a member in Iqaluit fully trained, often they have to fly out for their training. There are costs attached to that. The fact that you have to have so many police officers...there are safety issues for our police officers that require us to staff at higher levels in those smaller communities, although the workload may not be there to justify that. Those are great challenges.

The nice thing about the national police service is that we have the resources you can deploy into a particular situation; whether it's an emergency response team, specialized equipment, a helicopter, a plane, or whatever else, you have that accessibility. Again, it's often far away and at an increased cost.

In municipal policing we're very lucky, to the extent that we have immediate accessibility to backup and related equipment.

There are advantages to centralization and decentralization. We have to do a better job of finding what that balance is. We are integrating better in police services, much better than we did ten years ago, five years ago. I still think there's a lot of opportunity to integrate more, to leverage it among ourselves.

I know here in Edmonton we're working a lot more closely with the RCMP because our jurisdiction is surrounded by theirs. We're looking at the potential of sharing a helicopter, a tactical team, an emergency response team. We can collaborate on that, and we can save the taxpayers money by investing municipal, provincial, and federal resources into one pot for the benefit of all citizens.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hawn, and Chief Knecht.

We'll move to Mr. Garrison, please.

You have six minutes.

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

Thanks to both the witnesses for being here today.

I want to start with a question to Chief Knecht.

You started by talking about salary costs. I believe you said those costs pale when considering the demand that's generated from complex social issues. I'd like you to say a bit more about that, because there has been some emphasis on salaries. What you appear to be saying to me is that this is a fact, but the demand factors are even greater in the policing costs. Is that true?

Chief Rod Knecht: That is correct.

Salary is the focus. There's no doubt about that because it makes up 80% of our budget. When it comes to our police response and our duties, I recall when I first became the chief of Edmonton the way it came to my attention is that our folks were picking up people who were essentially either homeless or intoxicated. There was no place to take them because shelters or locations were not open after 4 p.m. It was an 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday business. They had no place to take these folks at 11 o'clock at night or 3 o'clock in the morning. They were driving around with them in the back seat of the police car because there was no place to take them; they had no family members available, etc. The impact of that was extraordinary.

The other thing we dealt with were homeless persons who were injured, for example, or were mentally ill. On any particular Saturday night we would have three police cars parked at the emergency ward at the hospital, with six police officers sitting there waiting six hours for the individual they had picked up or arrested to get medical treatment. Those folks are not out on the street doing police work, keeping the predators off the street. They're basically babysitting, because they have to take care of these people; the system is backed up and is not prepared to deal with these people. We become basically either taxi drivers or social workers, which is not our primary responsibility.

● (0925)

Mr. Randall Garrison: You said you're working with other social services agencies. Can you talk more about this specifically? Is it a pilot project, or is there an area of the city for this? How have you tried working on the case management system?

Chief Rod Knecht: You could call it a pilot project, but it's broader than that. We're bringing people to the table, such as non-traditional groups who we're interacting with on a broader basis. We're seeing that we're all dealing with the same people. If you talk to the ambulance drivers and the emergency service people at the hospitals and the shelters, it's all the very same people. We can all refer to them by name; our front-line police officers can refer to these people. We all know who they are, and they're cycled through the system time and time again.

For example, we arrest the same person two and three times per night. We take them to the hospital, they're treated and released from the hospital, and they show up again. That's not a way to treat our most vulnerable people in society. There's a better way to do that, and we found a better way to do that. We know there are gaps in the system. We're working with provincial, federal, and municipal governments as well as with our partners in social agencies to find where those gaps are. We're trying to identify those gaps, figure out a way to plug the gaps, and work collaboratively to get these people to a better place.

The benefit to policing is, quite frankly, that we save considerable man hours by not doing the sorts of things we were doing before—for example, sitting around and waiting for somebody to deal with the problem, or responding to the same call over and over again. Huge efficiencies can be found there. It's a short-term investment and it will have long-term gains. All our partners are seeing this, and they're excited about it. It's not only a better way to treat our most vulnerable, but we're going to save huge amounts of money because of the integration and cooperation, the working together.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you.

I want to turn to Mr. Gruson.

Thank you for being here.

I have to say the inevitable: sometimes in budget-cutting exercises it's penny-wise and pound foolish. I'll just let it go at that.

In the work of your sector council, what you presented today—and I don't want to criticize it by calling it narrow—I think is a narrow look at the management ways of efficiency and saving money.

Did the council look at these kinds of demand questions we're hearing about, the demand for policing?

Mr. Geoff Gruson: Yes, of course, we did. I was just trying to focus on one area we had done some research on to show there are some real efficiencies around management as well.

If I can just pick up on the point before I answer the question, in the U.K. they have a system where the police call up a less costly, more mobile wagon to come and pick up the folks Rod is talking about, and they do the administration and the processing before they get put back on the road for Rod to deal with them again. So there are some other opportunities for having lower-paid individuals doing the work and not having the $93,000-a-year officer spending six, seven, and eight hours in the processing.

To come back to your point about the demand, absolutely, we've looked at the demand side of this one fairly significantly over the last eight years. The problem is it just gets more complicated and more complex.

If I can suggest a recommendation, we actually need to have a model that understands multi-tier policing, that we have the fully qualified, fully functional people doing the work they should be doing and leaving some of the work that Chief Knecht talked about to some folks who are also fully qualified and have the competencies but are at a much lower pay scale. The demand's not going to change. The complexity of the work is not going to change.

I'll give you a very brief example. As soon as the commission on the taser incident in Vancouver airport finished, the training on tasers changed for police all across the country. The commission finished its work, passed this recommendation, and taser training changed. There was no assessment of the amount of effort that training would take, of the cost of the training, or of the potential cost of the requalification on that training.

Currently we requalify in 22 technical skills every year in police services across the country, skills they should have that don't perish or decay that much from year to year.

So, yes, when we look at the demand, there are all sorts of areas we have to look at a little more carefully.

● (0930)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to Mr. Gill, please.

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

I also want to thank our witnesses for being with us today.

My question is for Chief Knecht. Chief, you mentioned in your remarks some of the offences that go unreported because the public just believes the police don't have the resources to investigate them. I'm wondering if you can shed some light on what some of those offences might be that the public doesn't necessarily call the police on.

Chief Rod Knecht: Sure. That's changing with time, actually. We're seeing even more high-level offences not being reported. Those offences that aren't being reported are minor thefts, minor damage to vehicles, often thefts from yards. We know sexual assaults are very significantly underreported.

Most people will report some property crime if they are putting in an insurance claim, because often the insurance company requires them to put in the claim, but folks who are experiencing thefts, minor assaults...those sort of things are not being reported. We have even found of late people aren't reporting break and enters. When a house is getting broken into, people aren't even reporting that. If they don't have insurance, and it's not a requirement to do so, they are not reporting more significant crimes.

So there's a whole gamut of crime that is not being reported by the public. There is apathy. Again, if you have to wait three or four hours for a police officer to show up because of volume of calls, people aren't prepared to do that. They all have busy lives and they do not want to wait around.

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you.

One other point you mentioned was regarding the $3 million cost for officers having to show up for court dates and so on when they are not necessarily required, and obviously the lack of notice and other things. You also mentioned that the police agency is required to pay them for eight hours of time when they don't necessarily show up and they aren't required. Is that eight hours a standard timeframe? Is that something that varies from one police agency to another? Does it vary from one province to another? Do you have any recommendations or suggestions as to how that can be more efficient in possibly addressing that issue?

Chief Rod Knecht: I'll answer the first part of your question.

It is different between police services and amongst collective agreements. For example, in the RCMP, if you go to court it's a four-hour callback, regardless of whether you have to testify or not. For other police services, it is eight hours. It can be time and a half; in some cases it's double time. It depends on whether it's right after a shift as opposed to a day off. It is different amongst jurisdictions and it depends on where it fits into your schedule. In most cases, that's all part of a collective agreement. With the RCMP not having a union, it is a bit different.

I think there is a better way. We have software that we're testing right now called CARM. It's software to better manage the whole shifting response, the court detail, etc. But often what happens in the criminal justice system is that a lawyer may not plead their client guilty until they see if the police officer is going to show up. Individuals may show up and plead not guilty for a speeding ticket and they'll wait to see if the police officer shows up. If the police officer shows up, they'll plead guilty. If the police officer doesn't show up, often the ticket is tossed out. There's always a bit of a shell game going on there, and it's hard to respond to that. Obviously when the police officer gets a subpoena he has to show up.

There has to be a better way to manage that, and I don't think the police can do that alone. Again, it has to be a collaboration between justice, the police, and others, in finding a more efficient way to run the criminal justice system.

The police can find efficiencies, but if there are no efficiencies in the courts or in corrections, those efficiencies may not be fully realized. It does require a full collaboration. We have to stop working in silos. We have to work together to find efficiencies because the system is crushing under its own weight.

● (0935)

Mr. Parm Gill: You mentioned traffic tickets. One thing I notice in the Region of Peel is that officers are basically dedicating a full day to court. All of the tickets that are issued by that particular officer are to be heard on the same day. That is something that I think helps the police agency to keep some of the costs low.

I have another question for Mr. Gruson.

The Chair: Quickly.

Mr. Parm Gill: In your experience working with both the private and public sectors, what are some of the private sector management practices that could be implemented in the public sector?

The Chair: Very quickly.

Mr. Geoff Gruson: We're clearly talking about modern workforce management practices. There isn't a sector in Canada that doesn't employ competency-based management. This is not something new in policing; it's just not fully implemented in policing across the country.

Chiefs of police generally aren't financial, IT, HR, or communications experts. They're cops who do operational work, and what we find increasingly is that they need to be experts in all of those areas. As Chief Knecht said, they don't yet have the competencies to be good CEOs of major organizations dealing with multi-departmental influences in the community, and that's not good. That has to be fixed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to our final question in this round, and that goes to Mr. Scarpaleggia.

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

You make an interesting point. You say that people running police forces have to have all these skills and so on, and maybe there's a shift from having the core policing skills to having skills in the management of large organizations.

Could you see a situation emerging, and maybe it exists already, where the heads of police forces are not actually police officers? Then you run into another problem where the force may not respect the head of the police force. I think that happened at the RCMP to some extent. Anyway, I think that's a very interesting point that you made.

You mentioned that many countries have central cybercrime organizations. Could you elaborate on that? Are you saying essentially that we lack integration in the investigation of cybercrime in Canada?

Mr. Geoff Gruson: The simple answer is yes. The interesting point of the study we did with Interpol was to understand the fact that cybercrime is pan-national and very seldom can be dealt with in a national legislative environment. You're dealing with criminality that works globally, yet every single country is trying to develop its own unique solution, its own unique approach. I think that's one of those areas where it's really clear we have to integrate, collaborate, and understand the issue, and understand the solution to the response to that issue.

So the answer is yes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Even within Canada, there's—

Mr. Geoff Gruson: Even within Canada, province by province, we are looking at it differently. This really falls to a lack of leadership. If I were pointing fingers, which I never do.... We have to understand what the framework that Public Safety is creating for policing in the country. What is the framework for managing and conducting police in the country that should be created by Public Safety, and then cascade it down to the provinces and municipalities. That's lacking at this point in time.

● (0940)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: This national governance framework that you're talking about would have to be voluntary, because of the nature of the federation—

Mr. Geoff Gruson: Voluntary, but I think—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: —in the sense that you'd be establishing standards and you could say that this is the model you should follow.

Mr. Geoff Gruson: Exactly. You'd develop national standards, and the province would declare them as provincial standards, which would be great. Then municipalities would declare them as municipal standards, and that would be good. Really, they're benchmarks rather than standards. It's really saying that you don't go below this line when it comes to training, when it comes to management, when it comes to effective and efficient delivery of services. Get above that line, if you can.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: We've said throughout this study that what we need in Canada is some coordination and a kind of clearing point for studies on policing, costs of policing, methods of policing and so on, to establish benchmarks. But this is what you were doing.

Mr. Geoff Gruson: That's exactly what the Police Sector Council does, and has been doing for eight years.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But its funding has been cut.

Mr. Geoff Gruson: Yes. Unfortunately, these things happen in program areas.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, but we're talking about recreating this—

Mr. Geoff Gruson: I think it needs to be recreated, absolutely. We've put in place a shell organization with a shell board of directors, again from all the stakeholder groups, and we're looking for funding; we're looking for opportunities to continue the work.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's interesting.

Chief Knecht, you were mentioning unreported crime.

My understanding is that Statistics Canada actually has some way of measuring unreported crime. Is that correct? They have some way of estimating, I should say, unreported crime. Are you aware of that?

Chief Rod Knecht: Not specifically, but I think there have been surveys done. I'm aware of surveys done in Alberta to find out if someone who has been a victim of a crime has reported that crime. That's where I got my information from, as well as from talking to people. They're not bothering to report certain crimes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: In terms of saving the effort and of police not having to do tasks that could be done by others—we talk about mental health workers and so on—in some communities there are designated traffic police officers who are only allowed to give tickets, etc. This leads us to question in some way what the role of the police officer is. If you have a designated quasi-police officer giving out traffic tickets, if you have mental health workers responding to calls where somebody is in crisis, at some point one must wonder whether the police officer's role is to be more an investigative role, a detective role, and by this I mean involving upgrading of skills to deal with the more complex problems we have today. Is this where we're heading?

It seems to me that one of the benefits of having a police officer respond to something, from a citizen's point of view, is the idea that if force is required that person can take care of the situation.

The Chair: Mr. Scarpaleggia, your time is up, but I want the answer, so—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Absolutely.

The Chair: Mr. Gruson, I think the question was to you.

Mr. Geoff Gruson: Mr. Chair, I think the member has hit on exactly the issue. The problem is that the police are required to do a broad continuum of roles, everything from directing traffic in a construction zone—at $93,000 a year—to dealing with cybercrime, with multinational, multi-fraud complexities. The problem is we don't want the $93,000-a-year person doing traffic direction. We want the $93,000-a-year person spending their time on the serious issues that are impacting the economy and impacting Canadian citizens in their communities.

The back end of your point was that every once in a while that guy or girl who's doing construction is going to have to deal with an incident. The police are right there, and of course they are. The only point I would make is that if we have competent, trained, capable people performing the role that they're competent to do, we'll be a whole lot happier than if we have competent, trained, qualified people performing the roles that the others are there to do, and we'll have a differentiation of compensation based on the competencies.

● (0945)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Our time is up for this hour. We want to thank both Chief Knecht in Edmonton and also Mr. Gruson for appearing before us.

Our committee is going to very quickly go into some committee business. We aren't going in camera for it.

As you know, we'll be doing some travel in connection with the study we've undertaken. Basically what we need is the go-ahead on the weeks that are available for the travel. We've talked about this in subcommittee. We also talked a little bit about it last week, but we left it that we would make a decision, and I think it's time to make that decision.

I will just go through what we've discussed. Yesterday we circulated the suggestions—

Mr. Parm Gill: Do you want to say goodbye?

The Chair: I did say goodbye to our people here.

Thank you so much again for being here. Without suspending, we want to move into this next piece of business, so thank you.

The week after our break is the week of May 20 to May 25. The suggestion was that that would be the trip that would involve going into the United States and also to Prince Albert and Calgary. Are we all right with that? Are the other parties all right with that?

I see agreement. Are all in favour, just so we know?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Then the following week—that's the week you circulated, right?—between May 25 and June 1, would be the trip to the U.K. Are you all right with that one then?

All in favour?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): What's the date, Chair?

The Chair: The dates are May 25 to June 1.

Although we want our constituency time, we would be flying, depending on the number of people we get, on a Sunday night. That's kind of where we're at.

Ms. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): That's for the U. K. one?

The Chair: Yes.

So you would fly Sunday or maybe even before that. It might end up being Sunday afternoon.

I know a number of you have come to me and said you want your Saturday night event and you want to be able to stick around for that.

I see agreement there. All right.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's carried.

We'll invite our next guests to come to the table.

Good morning, everyone. We call this meeting back to order. We are continuing our study of the economics of policing in Canada.

On this panel we are going to hear first from Tammy Thompson, program coordinator of the START program. There was some paperwork circulated yesterday or last week, and you've received it again here today.

As well, from the Government of Manitoba, we have Walter Tielman. He is the area director of the Department of Justice, Interlake Region, for community and youth corrections.

Also, hopefully appearing by teleconference, from the Government of Saskatchewan—although we don't have them yet—will be Christine Tell, Minister of Corrections and Policing, and Dale McFee, Deputy Minister of Corrections and Policing.

Our committee wants to thank you for appearing here. Some had the advantage of sitting in on the first hour and hearing from Chief Knecht and Mr. Gruson.

We still don't have Regina. They're going to have to come in when we receive them, but perhaps we'll begin, starting with Ms. Thompson.

● (0950)

Ms. Tammy Thompson (Program Coordinator, START Program): Thank you very much.

Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning to discuss the START program and our multi-disciplinary approach to working with at-risk youth and how it relates to your study of the economics of policing.

Eleven years ago, our community in Manitoba decided to work together to benefit the youth and their families who were the largest consumers of policing, child and family services, and probation services, while also showing significant school-based issues. These agencies decided to pinpoint the youth and their families, who had involvement with the agencies, yet didn't seem to be showing any significant improvement for it.

Their collaboration became the Selkirk Team for At-Risk Teens, or START program, and they were quickly joined by mental and public health services and addiction services. To date, this collaboration has resulted in over 1,800 case conferences on behalf of at-risk youth aged 11 to 18, with the goal of identifying, planning for, intervening, and assisting at-risk youth to become productive members of our community.

The key to the START model is the involvement of the youth and their family as part of the multi-agency team, and their ability to openly share and address what the real issues are. Understanding the reason behind the behaviour is necessary to creating a successful plan that provides a customized network of supports for the youth and increases their chance of success, while decreasing the burden on social service and policing agencies. Accountability is a big part of this model for the youth, the family, and the agencies. START also provides a longer-term approach—six months to years—depending on the intensity of the situation, as we have found that stabilizing a crisis is important, but it's not enough to build the required skills to prevent the next crisis from happening.

Many communities come together in multi-agency collaborations that eventually falter or are not productive, as all members of the group have another full-time job to do and it becomes onerous to maintain effectiveness, especially without consent to share information. The START model has a coordinator whose responsibility it is to set and chair the case conferences for the youth, to ensure that the youth and family feel heard and are engaging in the process, to advocate for the youth, and to follow up on plans created to ensure follow-through and ultimately a better chance at success, all shared with consent. This format works very well in smaller communities where there are fewer resources, or where workers are covering many areas, as the coordinator is able to ensure they are informed of any concerns or issues that arise with the client, even if they're not scheduled to see them for another few weeks.

The START coordinator is located in the RCMP detachment, making it easy for members to make client referrals of youth who are generating multiple calls for service and for the coordinator to share pertinent information with police when the need arises. We have been able to consistently show decreases in calls to RCMP after a youth is referred to START. Courts in our area have recognized the benefit of START and made participation in the program a part of their dispositions, and we frequently provide information to crown attorneys and justice committees to assist them in making more informed decisions. Additionally, START maintains a file that holds all the necessary information provided by each agency for each youth, a very necessary tool for situations where having all the facts at hand can assist any agency to make a more appropriate decision on how to intervene.

Our recent evaluation, funded by National Crime Prevention Services, has findings that are very favourable toward the program and speak to an increased inter-agency collaboration and achieving positive client outcomes for the vast majority of our clients, even with the continual increase in the number of client referrals each year and the risk level of the clients we work with. The program model has spread to three other communities in Manitoba and functions equally well with different demographics.

The START program is managed and funded by the involved community agencies and all three levels of government. Unfortunately, this year, our largest funder, Service Canada, is no longer providing funding to START or any of the other communities utilizing the model, leaving us with a shortfall that may be insurmountable unless we find another federal source of funding. This lack of funding also creates difficulties for other areas that are looking to duplicate this model in their communities but cannot get support at all levels of government.

It has been repeatedly said that law enforcement has become the front line for all social issues, and this will not change unless we offer a solution to coordinate the resources from all agencies to address the reasons behind the behaviours.

I have a quote in my office by Walter Barbee that says, “If you've told a child a thousand times and he still does not understand, then it's not the child who is the slow learner.”

● (0955)

If police are being called to the same home for the same reasons, and this happens often, then we haven't addressed the real issue and we need to look at the situation differently. That's what START does.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Thompson.

We'll continue with Mr. Tielman.

Mr. Walter Tielman (Area Director, Department of Justice, Interlake Region, Community and Youth Correction, Government of Manitoba): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning.

Members of the committee, Mr. Chair, it is truly an honour and a privilege to appear before you today. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the START program and its approach to working with our community's highest-risk youth and families.

START began as a response to a need to develop processes for various agencies in the city of Selkirk to communicate and plan effectively with its highest-risk youth and families. Agencies were already meeting and discussing cases in a well-meaning but often haphazard and uncoordinated fashion.

The various agencies also were not objective in how or why they would share information with each other. Sometimes information would be shared and sometimes it wouldn't be. This often depended on the motivation of various staff and their time availability to communicate and coordinate meetings with staff from other agencies.

There also often isn't a mandate that makes the sharing of information and case collaboration mandatory. In fact, there are often confidentiality barriers to sharing information with other agencies.

Case management policies often suggest that inter-agency collaboration is the preferred way to do your work effectively, but the degree to which different staff and different agencies actually do this is left up to the individual staff or individual program manager. Therefore, due to time and workload issues, which are significant, staff are often focused on meeting their individual agency mandate and not looking at youth, family, and larger community needs.

START addresses this with the help of a coordinator, who arranges and coordinates START or multi-agency case conferences. START has formalized this information exchange process and created a multi-agency management process to deal with the highest-risk youth and their families.

The impact of START has been very positive, as the silos of information in various departments have been broken down. The result has been the application of various departmental mandates and operating procedures toward a common set of goals and case plan with the youth and family.

START has changed the way my staff do their work. An example of this is that previous to START, my staff would sit in their offices, and virtually the only contact they would have with other agency staff in our communities was over the telephone or via the computer, largely due to time. They would carry out their duties and fulfill their mandate, often independently of other agencies' knowledge and/or involvement. Now all of my staff regularly attend START case conferences with other agency staff at various locations in the communities, and the START agencies all work toward a common set of goals that are case management-directed. This approach ensures that agencies are fulfilling their case management obligation to that particular youth and family.

Agency staff also explain what services they did or didn't provide to the START case conference from one meeting to the next, thereby enhancing service accountability. Also, if there are identified gaps in service, the START case management team strategizes on ways to meet the gap.

The impact of START has been to keep kids in school longer, improve family functioning, and hold youth accountable for their behaviour.

The impact of START has been significant. One of my staff said: “START is an invaluable resource to the community and to families struggling to stabilize their children. START can also bring resources to the table that are needed and not previously identified.”

Sergeant Mark Morehouse of the Stonewall RCMP detachment said that in the first year of the START model operating in that community, calls dealing with youth that were made to the detachment dropped by roughly 50%.

Our provincial justice funding support of three START model programs in Manitoba is a total of $21,000, which is a small investment compared with the benefit these services provide to the highest-risk youth, families, and communities.

The impact of START is also long term and preventative in nature by giving and guiding youth and families towards positive, pro-social choices.

Research has shown that multi-agency case management approaches are effective, and START has also shown this to be so. Our yearly evaluations have confirmed this, and our most recent evaluation, funded by National Crime Prevention Services, has shown that what we are doing is effective in the short term and preventative in the long run. This evaluation has also given us direction for enhancements and improvements, which we'll use to guide us in the future.

I personally believe that START and similar multi-agency case management programs are the way of the future for governments and agencies in meeting society's needs with its most troubled families.

● (1000)

I don't believe we can afford to do otherwise.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have someone in Regina joining us through video conference. Can you hear me?

Hon. Christine Tell (Minister, Corrections and Policing, Government of Saskatchewan): Yes, we can.

Can you hear us?

The Chair: You're coming through loud and clear.

We don't have the picture yet. But we didn't invite you to the committee to see what you look like; we want to hear what you have to say.

Perhaps we'll move directly to your comments. I'm not sure if I've already introduced you. With us is Ms. Christine Tell, Minister of Corrections and Policing.

Is the deputy minister, Mr. McFee, with you?

Mr. Dale McFee (Deputy Minister, Corrections and Policing, Government of Saskatchewan): Yes, I'm here.

The Chair: All right. It seems like only last week, or the week before, that we last spoke with you. It's good to have both of you here this morning.

We'll go to your opening statements.

Hon. Christine Tell: Good morning. Thank you, committee, for allowing us the opportunity to present this morning.

It is my pleasure to be able to present to this committee Saskatchewan's groundbreaking work related to community safety and new views of policing.

At the same time that overall crime rates are dropping, as most of you are aware, Saskatchewan leads the nation in many categories of crime. This is not the kind of trendsetting that I or my cabinet colleagues would like to be known for.

Similar statistics have led to a call to action. In Saskatchewan, government, communities, and individuals are taking a good, hard look at the realities of the numbers, in both the volume of crime and the costs incurred to combat it.

We know that finding capacity in an increasingly demanding policing environment has become a challenge for jurisdictions across North America. At the same time, the costs of administering police services, or for that matter the criminal justice system, are on the rise. The crimes, and the criminals who commit them, are becoming more sophisticated and more complex. This is all adding up to a situation that is becoming untenable.

Saskatchewan's deputy minister of corrections and policing, Dale McFee, has spoken to you previously about the incredible work that's being done in communities across the province to build a foundation for community safety and wellness. As he's pointed out, it began with Prince Albert's community mobilization initiative to reduce crime in that city.

From a larger perspective, the Hub and COR models being used in Prince Albert, and replicated in communities across the province, is a testament to how we as Saskatchewan residents got our reputation for innovating. We have taken a germ of an idea and turned it into a movement that gains momentum every day. Of course we're very pleased with this.

In his last representation to you, Dale McFee told you that reports out of Prince Albert show, as a result of the Hub and COR models, that the violent crime rate for that city dropped 11.8% in the first year and 31.9% in year two.

As the minister responsible for corrections and policing, I can tell you how proud we are to be recognized nationally and internationally for this work. As a member of a government whose jurisdiction is seeing dramatic growth in our population and economy, I can tell you there is excitement in the air. Our belief is that our potential is limitless. But I can also tell you it's a bit worrisome. It's worrisome because we know we have to have the appropriate foundations for ensuring that this growth is sustainable, and that any potential consequences related to growth, like the implications of burgeoning job markets, infrastructure deficits, and increased crime, are mitigated.

In fact, just a few months ago, Premier Brad Wall introduced the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth. This plan contemplates an articulate, thoughtful approach to continued growth backstopped by appropriate resources for maintaining the stability of necessary economic and social foundations. These foundations include safe, healthy communities. This is where the Saskatchewan government's Building Partnerships to Reduce Crime approach comes in. Government support through funding, technical resources, and innovative services, supplied by my ministry, provides communities that want to create their own community safety and wellness mechanisms with the means to do so.

By its nature, the Hub, as a community mobilization process, engages representatives of the criminal justice system, police, and probation officers. It requires the involvement of representatives from social services, health, and education agencies. To be relevant, the Hub needs to take a cradle-to-grave approach, addressing the needs of at-risk individuals from the time their risky behaviour first becomes known until they “age out” of the system.

Experts have recognized that the entry point for individuals to engage in anti-social behaviour is around the age of 12. This risk continues until around the age of 24. It follows that the province's recently announced child and family agenda, aimed at creating strong, healthy families who can benefit from Saskatchewan's growth, has taken into account this piece when creating its goals.

● (1005)

If we can get to these young people early with the appropriate levels of literacy, mental and physical health, and family and community supports, we can deflect many of the negative influences that result in lost potential from our youth.

Of course, this discussion is all about reducing the cost of policing to governments at all levels. There is more that we're doing in Saskatchewan, and I'd like to talk about this.

As a result of our work on building partnerships to reduce crime, we are looking at the human resources our ministries are providing as a continuum of support. The question is, what do I really mean by that? Representatives of the criminal justice system cannot work in isolation from health or social services when we know that around 30% of the individuals arrested for committing what might be termed “petty crimes” have mental health issues. We can't be successful in rehabilitating offenders if we know that they can't get jobs because they can't read. We need to include our education experts in the mix.

I would like to think that we're taking a holistic view of how we're organizing government around tackling these social issues. Resulting strategies need to be client centred. The old paradigm of delivering programs to fit the needs of a bureaucratic structure is just not on anymore. We need to look at how citizens are best served and organize our administrative structures around those needs.

For the next few minutes I'd like to turn our discussion to other ways the province is seeking out ways to mitigate increasing and rising policing costs. One of the solutions we're currently examining is an expansion of our existing model, special constables, beyond their current limited application. Right now, in Saskatchewan special constables are trained to provide law enforcement in first nations communities only. The advantage here is that individuals of first nations descent who are trained as special constables for their home communities are familiar with their own culture and social norms and know the people they are working with. In the same vein, appointing special constables in other communities to enforce local bylaws or to take on lower-risk community policing duties frees up sworn police officers to do the heavy lifting with the high-risk crime and criminals. Extending that concept further across the criminal justice system, correctional officials are also looking at a similar model for how low-risk offenders are being supervised in the community. By using the special constable model as it relates to probation officers, other resources are freed up to provide closer supervision on offenders who are posing a greater risk to commit crimes that are obviously more serious or more violent.

The point here is that by encouraging these innovative applications of what might be seen as old ideas, Saskatchewan is creating new practices that are already anchored in success. In aiming to chalk up additional successes we need to ensure that we are collecting the most accurate and appropriate evidence. Saskatchewan is embarking on partnerships with members of academia in the social sciences to create a centre of excellence for community safety. Dale McFee will have the details on that pursuit. Let me say that such a facility, whether it be bricks and mortar or the interconnectedness that our Internet brings, will create the ability to attach to academic and forensic evidence to up our game in building and measuring community safety models.

I can tell you that Dale has the support of Saskatchewan's provincial government as he pursues the actions and initiatives he has designated as priorities for him and his team. I am hoping that in turn my government can count on you for your support so that we can extend the reach of Saskatchewan's solutions to reducing crime rates and their accompanying social and economic costs.

Thank you.

● (1010)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Minister McFee, did you have a statement as well?

Mr. Dale McFee: No. I'm just here if there are any questions.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

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

Ms. Bergen, please. You have seven minutes.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you to all the guests for being here today.

We certainly are hearing a very similar message, whether it's from Calgary, Halifax, or Toronto, and then today from rural communities like Selkirk and Stonewall, about this Hub and COR approach, or a multi-agency approach.

What we as a committee want to find out is how is it actually helping to save resources and making sure that policing is done in a more efficient manner, and I think we're hearing that in terms of prevention and reduced calls, etc.

I want to focus on the START program. When I met with Tammy and Walter initially, during the break week a few weeks ago, I was excited because it was a rural example. We haven't heard a lot of examples of rural communities being able to do this. It's also a little different because it appears that it's not police driven as much as it's driven by the actual program, and then bringing in different organizations.

I was also impressed that there actually has been some research done. The University of Winnipeg did some research into the START program, if I'm correct. Could you tell us a little bit about those findings? Could you speak specifically to the findings in terms of reduced crime rates and how it relates to police work directly? What did the research tell you?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: The research really hit on all the areas that we've always felt we had success with. It was almost a justification for us in getting the evaluation. We knew we were doing a really good job at bringing the agencies together, getting people around the table and communicating, building more of a community base to deal with at-risk youth—ours is with youth. So it was to work with those youths together, as opposed to working within those silos.

We have a fantastic rate of getting kids who weren't in school back in school, which is definitely a huge factor in keeping them out of the criminal realm.

We saw great effects. Fully 100% of the police officers who were interviewed about our program said they strongly felt that the program had helped the relationship between the youth in our community, especially at-risk youth, and the RCMP, and that we had been able to reduce calls for service from the RCMP. There are so many findings.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Were the reduced calls for the RCMP an opinion, or was that actually a finding in the research?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: There were three different levels of research. One is looking over a database, one was interviews, and one was an anonymous survey. They compiled all of those together to come up with that conclusion.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Was there actually a number that the calls were reduced by, or was there a percentage?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: They didn't say specifically in that way. The one example we did have was out of Stonewall, which Walter has already quoted, about Sergeant Mark Morehouse stating that in their first year of running this model their incidents with youth had decreased by 50%.

Ms. Candice Bergen: By 50%?

● (1015)

Ms. Tammy Thompson: Yes.

Ms. Candice Bergen: I know you talked a little bit about the funding of it, and I think I mentioned to you that our government has invested $40 million into the national crime prevention strategy. As well, we've made permanent the Youth Gang Prevention Fund. I would suggest that you look at both of those programs, because there may be some opportunity with the work you do...I know you said there is a small deficiency; it's not a huge one, but it's definitely one that impacts what you do.

Our government has been very consistent and in fact proactive in support of national crime and crime prevention strategies, and we really support the type of thing you're doing, which is small, local, results oriented, and you actually can measure your results. So that's something you can count on our government to continue to support. I would encourage you to look into those programs.

I also thought it was interesting the other ways your programs are funded. Different agencies, including the school board, contribute funding.

Ms. Tammy Thompson: Absolutely.

Ms. Candice Bergen: Could you quickly tell us how that works? Then I want to ask the minister from Saskatchewan if their program works the same way, if the Hub and COR is sort of a multi-funded approach.

Ms. Thompson, would you mind telling us how your program is funded?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: Our program truly is a community program. We are run by a board that has all of the executive people within our community from each of the agencies on it, and each one of them, or the majority of them, are funders of the program as well.

Our main funders, besides previously being Service Canada and Justice, are now Children and Youth Opportunities, from the Province of Manitoba Child and Family Services; the school division in each of the areas, in our case the Lord Selkirk School Division; the City of Selkirk and the two surrounding RMs; and also in kind the RCMP detachment. They provide the office space and all of my equipment.

Ms. Candice Bergen: And you have security clearance with the RCMP, so you know when.... That's really your interaction with the police service?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: Yes.

Ms. Candice Bergen: That kind of reminds me of something Mr. McFee said the last time he was here, which stuck out for me and a few committee members. He said it's leadership, not ownership, and I think we know what you're telling us rings true.

Minister Tell, thank you so much for being here, and congratulations on all the good things that are happening in Saskatchewan.

Can you comment, from what you've heard Ms. Thompson talk about? It's a little more community-driven, and yet it seems to have some of the same results. Would you be able to compare and contrast the Hub and COR programs? Are we talking about the same things? Again, it's a different so-called ownership model.

Hon. Christine Tell: Yes, and there's no cost to the Hub in the various communities. It's just a bringing together of all these organizations—social services, health, and police. It's also run by a governance board, so you're right; you're talking about no one organization or entity owning this thing. The community truly does.

The province itself funds $450,000 for the COR. We have an executive director and two analysts. This is where all the research is coming from to support the various community entities. Each, whether it be social services or health, put in $25,000 per year to support the initiatives being driven out of the various communities and the Hub, and supporting obviously the centre of excellence or the COR in the big picture.

The Chair: We'll move into the next round of questioning.

Madame Michaud.

[*Translation*]

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

I first want to thank the witnesses for being here.

My first questions are for Ms. Thompson.

The START program, which you describe here, is extremely interesting. I was disappointed to learn that your funding had been reduced recently.

Were you given any explanations when the Service Canada funding was withdrawn?

[*English*]

Ms. Tammy Thompson: It is my understanding that the funding model that we were funded under, Skills Link, has shifted slightly. The area we were funded under no longer exists.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Can you give us further details?

[*English*]

What was the area you were funded under?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: It was Skills Link.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: And that was eliminated in its entirety.

What are the direct repercussions of that cutback on the program?

[*English*]

Ms. Tammy Thompson: The START program doesn't take a lot of money to run, quite frankly, and the loss of that amount of money really could mean the loss of the program in the long run.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Can you quantify the cut to the program?

[*English*]

Ms. Tammy Thompson: The Skills Link portion that we were provided with annually was $20,000, and that's just for START. Across the board, for all of the other programs that have been modelled after us in Manitoba, it would come out to $37,000.

● (1020)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: And what is the START program's operating budget, exactly?

[*English*]

Ms. Tammy Thompson: Each one of the models differs slightly, but, for instance, START—and our program is the largest—costs about $70,000 to run, cash in hand, and then in kind there's about another $20,000 that is added.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you for that information.

Can you tell us a bit more about the role of the RCMP in the program? What are its specific responsibilities, and what role does it play in the program?

[*English*]

Ms. Tammy Thompson: The RCMP are part of our steering committee. They share an equal spot on our board that determines how our program runs and how that goes ahead. I'm housed within the detachment, but I'm not a detachment employee. It's kind of a symbiotic relationship. They help me and I help them, all in the name of helping the clients we work with.

I'm able to assist them when they're dealing with my clients and they don't have a full picture of the information, and they're able to assist me when I have things that come up with my clients.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: In reading the documents you provided, I noted that the members of the RCMP who had taken part in the program had seen that there were direct benefits, and that some of these were due to their participation in the program.

[*English*]

Ms. Tammy Thompson: Yes, we have wonderful support from the RCMP.

I really can't put it any other way. We both realize that we assist each other. They're very supportive of us, not only financially but also in concept. They've been willing to go to bat for us. It's a program that once you see it running and see what's happening, and see the effect within the community, it's really hard not to want to do the most you can for it. We are not a large city, and we're operating in four smaller communities.

You walk down the street and you do see the differences. You see this kid who you always saw intoxicated or stoned on a street corner, and all of a sudden he's headed to school with his backpack. It really is an impact for us and we see that. Because of that, we're all extremely passionate about this program.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Our previous witnesses told us that it was extremely difficult to reduce the demand for police services that is being felt everywhere, and that this really puts enormous pressure on their operations.

In light of this, a program like yours is an excellent way of ensuring better cost management within police forces. It would prevent certain calls and reduce the demand for services.

[*English*]

Ms. Tammy Thompson: I would have to agree.

I've certainly had that expressed to me from members I work with within our detachment. They have seen a reduction in what they have to do. As I've said, we've compared those stats. We pulled the files on the clients we work with, made that mark when they were referred to the program, and are able to see that there are far fewer calls for service than previously.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you very much.

I would like to hear the comments of Minister Tell on that last statement, that such programs, somewhat like the HUB and COR models, allow for better cost management by reducing the demand for service.

[*English*]

Hon. Christine Tell: Yes, of course.

We're seeing those reductions in particular in Prince Albert. Prince Albert has a population of approximately 40,000 people, and, as Dale has said earlier, there's definitely a reduction in the calls for service and the reported crimes.

We have to be aware, though, and it's something I want to keep the committee aware of, that we police and put police officers in various communities based on population. I'm sure it's the same throughout Canada. Whether it will, over time, reduce the requirement for the number of police officers, I don't know. However, we'll definitely see a change in the engagement of police throughout the country, throughout our communities and our province. But they'll still be engaged and will still be required to police to a certain level.

● (1025)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Certainly.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

You have five seconds, so you're out.

Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Leef, please.

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

My first questions will be for Minister Tell.

Minister, I'm the member of Parliament for Yukon. We have an experience in the territory where the RCMP and Corrections work closely together for cellblock services and our correctional centre deals with all cellblock services.

Does that occur in the province of Saskatchewan or in the PA area? If so, what has been your experience?

From our perspective, there's a different degree of care that we're able to provide out of the correctional centre—separate from the actual centre itself, but a different level of care. Policing has difficulty in particular providing cellblock services for folks with mental health disabilities.

Can you give us your perspective on that?

Hon. Christine Tell: I'm going to turn it over to Dale. There are some nuances here. We definitely have some involvement with the RCMP with our correctional facilities.

I'll leave it with Dale here for a minute.

Mr. Dale McFee: It's a great question.

We do not have the integration that you guys have. We are looking at the entire system, including the transport of prisoners. There is a whole mechanism there around safety. It's obviously an area of high risk; I am sure we are all aware. One lawsuit costs millions, and it's all about the care of the individual or the client. It's something we are currently reviewing, including now that we have merged our adult and YO as one part of the ministry. It gives us a whole bunch more opportunities. What we really have is undercrowding in YO and overcrowding in adult, so we want to look at a facility's master plan to maximize this.

With that also comes prisoner transport, but it also looks at the handling and the overnight operations we do. A lot of police agencies have moved health people right into their cellblock, obviously to mitigate that risk, because a lot of these folks, upwards of 80% to 95%, have addictions issues. Obviously when you throw in addictions...it's about 30% mental health.

There are some real opportunities here, but it's a paradigm shift in thinking, just like everything else. It's a new way of approaching it, and it's really important for us that we're doing it based on evidence and focused on outcomes. That's why we're letting some of the experts in academia play a role in helping us flesh this out.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you for that.

For the folks from START, that was a good segue with regard to results-based decision-making. Of course, we are studying the economics of policing, and I think everybody on the committee is starting to hear a lot more that the early start, multi-agency, complete wraparound and client-centred services are the ones that are going to deliver the long-term best results for reduction of costs and reduction of crime rates. You certainly indicated you are very passionate about that program.

On the evidence-based front, have you compared your program to other programs? How does it stack up? If our agreement is to be client centred and the outcome is what's best for the client, then programs may come and go, and we have to be willing to let them go if they're not evidence-based to be the best ones.

Do you know of others comparing their programs to yours? Is there a willingness among the proponents and people who do great work on these programs to ebb and flow in and out of each other's programs, or to support one over the other? Does that occur?

Sometimes we see a competitive program environment. I certainly see that, if one wants to keep a program alive. We have that best picture in mind of client service, but we still want to keep our programs alive. So how do you operate with other programs with regard to comparing and contrasting what you do with them?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: Our evaluation does compare us to other wraparound programs in America, and we really held up very well against them.

In comparison to other programs we may be competing with in our area, there really aren't any because we fill the gap. The whole reason START was created 11 years ago was that kids were falling through the cracks, and every agency saw that and knew we had to do something different. One of the things I always say about START is that we belong to everybody and nobody all at the same time. We were created to fill those gaps, and everybody focuses their attention on START. If an issue comes up in the community, our steering committee has all the heads of the community agencies on it. We bring it to that forum, and we discuss how we can change that. That's similar to the Hub and COR model as well.

● (1030)

Mr. Ryan Leef: There isn't a lot of duplication going on.

Ms. Tammy Thompson: No, not at all.

Mr. Ryan Leef: I don't think I have a lot of time. I am quickly going to ask about your experience with regard to your working right in the detachment. What has your experience been with information sharing and privacy issues?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: It's been very good. There are definitely boundaries around it, because the RCMP has a lot of confidential information; you work within the appropriate boundaries. We've never had an issue with that. In our 11 years of doing business inside or outside the detachment, we've never had a complaint about sharing information incorrectly.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Do you have any recommendations for the committee on legislative or operational decisions that could enhance those kinds of relationships for full wraparound services? You don't seem to experience any privacy issues, but are there any other operational or administrative issues that would be helpful for us to support that work?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: I think definitely having a top-down approach.... I feel like at START we are working from the bottom up. We are selling the program, and at least within our province we are trying to engage people—and we have been able to; we've been successful in that.

One of the things we do find is that because it isn't mandated at a higher level, you can have people from agencies who say they don't really believe in the model, so they don't want to participate in it. That creates a really big hole, basically, in trying to get things done.

I think that's a great advantage Saskatchewan has in how they're doing things. That would be fantastic for us. It's that, and the funding piece. For all the time that we spend looking and searching for funding, that's time away from doing the work with these youths, and that's really hard, especially when you're dedicated to what you do and you know you're making a difference. To take any time away from that for this purpose is hard.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to the end of the first round here with Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you very much.

I'm just curious. You had federal funding and it was under Skills Link. Could you just remind me what that funding was for? What kinds of activities did it fund, really?

Ms. Tammy Thompson: The client case management process, is how they termed it.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I see. So now there's no federal funding.

Ms. Tammy Thompson: No.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I've heard you say that one of the things that would be helpful for your program would be for agencies within Manitoba to mandate that they have to work with you. What can the federal government do to sustain you and encourage the replication of your model across your province and elsewhere in Canada? What can the federal government do?

It's a very interesting model. In fact, I think it mirrors what the Calgary police chief, Chief Hanson, talked about just the other day here. It's the same thing: kids are out of school, they have a bullying problem—they're the bully—or they may have a substance abuse problem. The services come together. They're back in school, and they're excelling in school. It's really almost a mirror image of what Chief Hanson was talking about.

What can the federal government do to help replicate or sustain even what exists, to help sustain this kind of approach across Canada?

● (1035)

Ms. Tammy Thompson: Besides the funding piece, which is big, I think we're looking at the support of the concept. I hear that. Obviously, there are other agencies that are practising much in the same way we are, that are selling this model as well as we are, but I think the acceptance of it is huge.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: A federal stamp of approval would be good.

Ms. Tammy Thompson: Yes, I think that would be really big. I think it would help people in communities move towards working in that direction.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Right.

Minister Tell, you mentioned I think at the beginning of your presentation that what's happening with the program in Prince Albert is just great, but the foundations are fragile. Am I quoting you properly? You said something about foundations being fragile—unless it was Ms. Thompson, but I think it was you, Minister.

Hon. Christine Tell: No, on the foundations, I don't know what part.... The foundations of what's going on in Prince Albert have indeed been replicated across the province. It's a formalized structure, community driven, with community priorities. The centre of excellence, or the COR, as it's referred to here, supports the innovative techniques, all of that type of research, based on evidence to ensure that our communities are getting what they specifically need. The structures are solid. Once they're formed—as I said, it's community driven—all agencies are in the game and part of this.

No, it's pretty solid. They're built in each community to replicate, depending on the needs of each individual community. It's designed. It's like a franchise and it's pretty solid.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Deputy Minister McFee, when he appeared, referred to it as a franchising model.

You seem to have created something in Saskatchewan, a kind of mechanism for sharing best practices, research, coordinating communities across Saskatchewan, to be aware of the best ways to approach public security issues, policing and so on.

Do we need that at the federal level as well? Would that not be replicating what you're doing provincially?

Hon. Christine Tell: Dale will respond to that one for you.

Mr. Dale McFee: It's a very good point.

When you look at the things we experienced going through this, getting it up and running—for over two years now—as I said earlier, it was the balance piece. The role of the federal government is actually very similar to that of the provincial government. We have championship. We have the premier. I think there's a role for championship at the federal government. We have a formalized structure. I think there's a role for the federal government in part of that structure. It's all based on evidence-based practices. That's stuff the NCPC could be supporting and playing a part in. It basically focuses on process, including the barriers to privacy.

One of the gentlemen asked a question on privacy. That was one of our biggest barriers. We did a lot of work on that privacy assessment. When acute elevated risks exist for individuals and families, it should be the norm that we're asking what we can do to help, rather than waiting for them to be in the system and hiding behind the fact that we don't share information. I think there is a real role the federal government can play in relation to that legislative piece.

Everybody respects privacy. I haven't seen that...not ever. But there are times when privacy becomes a barrier. I do not think privacy legislation was designed for when we have acute elevated risk for individuals and their families.

Again, the thing about where the federal government plays.... Some of the money, as mentioned, is through the Manitoba program. But this isn't a lot of money. In this whole thing these concepts are designed so that if everybody has a little piece, it's affordable. Then you tie it back into the whole policing concept: 75% of the work is not criminal in nature, 25% is criminal, and 5% lead to criminal charges.

If you take a lot of this stuff out of the system, in essence you free up time at the back end or downstream, so you can focus on the other stuff, such as organized crime, and maintain the balance. It's not one or the other. It's a reinvestment of resources into what you're actually trying to accomplish.

● (1040)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So you say one—

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Scarpaleggia. You're over time.

We'll move to Mr. Harris, please.

Welcome to the committee.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Sorenson. I appreciate the opportunity to ask a few questions.

I want to thank both groups of witnesses. You've demonstrated through your evidence that both in Saskatchewan and in Manitoba, particularly with a rural focus, much can be done. I guess I'll call them preliminary results, because if you're getting results like that after one or two years, it seems to me that you're on to something.

I particularly like Minister Tell's association of the issues of literacy, mental and physical health, and community supports, as a way to keep people from the justice system.

First of all, I noticed that in Selkirk, looking at your statistics here, that about half of your clientele were from the aboriginal community. I looked quickly and saw that the population of the Selkirk area is about 25% aboriginal, so you have a high representation. With the statistics you're receiving, it seems very positive, particularly when we look at the disturbing number of incarcerated aboriginal people, in western Canada, in particular, compared with the population.

Is this a model that might help to alleviate that? Do you see that as one of your outcomes from this kind of programming, that we can ensure there are better opportunities for aboriginal young people in particular to participate better in the community and in society?

This is directed to Mr. Tielman.

Mr. Walter Tielman: Yes, absolutely.

Preventative services are always beneficial and will prevent people from being incarcerated unnecessarily. If it's the aboriginal person we're working with, the wraparound program takes their needs into account when we serve them. Absolutely.

Mr. Jack Harris: The one figure I heard from you in terms of cost was a $21,000 figure. Was that for the provincial contribution to this program?

Mr. Walter Tielman: Yes, it's provincial. It used to be the Department of Justice; it's now Children and Youth Opportunities. There's been a switch of departments.

Mr. Jack Harris: We're talking about policing costs. I know that the cost of one RCMP officer is probably at least three times that cost, perhaps more than that.

Is it possible that there could be a direct relationship between the kind of programming you are talking about here and that Minister Tell is talking about in Saskatchewan, with the money—money isn't the only issue, of course, but the investment—that's put into these types of programs and the actual results in crime reduction and in service requirements reduction, so that policing costs can actually be lowered?

Mr. Walter Tielman: In my opinion, yes, absolutely, and the police would be allowed to focus on the more criminally oriented individuals in the community.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. McFee, the percentage of time police officers are spending on non-criminal matters seems startlingly high, but not surprising, I suppose.

Is that something, Mr. McFee or Minister Tell, that you look at as well as a potential cost reduction? I know you talked about it in terms of focusing on the more serious criminal activities. But with crime rates going down generally across the country, would you be able to look forward to an actual reduction in policing costs?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Dale McFee: Well, I think you're bang on.

First of all, it's a realignment, and at the end of the day you need to make sure you're doing everything, with a cradle-to-grave approach to intervention and prevention, and at the end of the day you also have to do the stuff downstream. The commonsensical approach is that if you take stuff out of the system....

In Prince Albert, not only is crime down, but prosecutions are down, social services intakes are down, and health room visits to the hospitals are down. Think of that and put dollars to it. We have the university studying it right now.

There's no question that this is the case.

Now you can use that money to reinvest in the areas we need to be in that we may not be getting into because of the volume that's jamming the system. Rather than design particular new ways, or different kinds of courts, such as domestic violence courts, or different things on the back end, the reality is that a lot of this stuff can be taken out at the front end, letting the system do what it was really designed for and work effectively, just by taking some of the flow away from it.

● (1045)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Payne, the clock on the wall is what I'm going by. It shows that you have about a minute or a minute and a half, if you want to make a comment or two.

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

I add my thanks to the witnesses for coming.

I have a couple of really quick questions for Tammy.

One is, how are the parents involved in this process? Also, regarding the confidentiality issues among the agencies, I'm not sure whether there are signed agreements concerning them or just how they work.

The Chair: Thank you. Those are good questions.

Ms. Tammy Thompson: We have a consent form, which is signed by the parents, to participate in the program, and it allows the sharing of information among all of the agencies that are at the table. This may mean that other agencies have to come to the table, which we determine after the fact, as participants in the concerns for youth. But they're all covered by the consent.

The parents are at the table, just like any other team member. I think that's one of the best things about the program. Sometimes it's a little scary for a parent who has only had bad interactions with Child and Family services or the RCMP—they tend to be the big two that everyone is scared of—to come to the table and understand that they're not there to be blamed, not there to have a finger pointed at their nose, not there to be told what to do, and that we're actually there to help. It's led by them, and they tell us.... They're much more open, and we learn way more this way.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

You—

The Chair: Your time is pretty well up now.

Mr. LaVar Payne: I was just going to ask Minister Tell one quick question.

The Chair: I think you'll have to wait for another day for that.

I want to thank all of our presenters today. It's always good to hear from Mr. McFee and Minister Tell. Keep up the good work in Saskatchewan, and also here.

Thank you very much for coming and instructing the committee on the START program and on your successes and perhaps your disappointments. Certainly we appreciate your input to our committee today.

Thank you, committee. Our time is up, so we are adjourned.