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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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● (0945)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP)): Good morning. This is meeting number 90 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, on Thursday, June 13.

We're meeting pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) regarding a study on the economics of policing.

We have our witnesses this morning via video conference.

From the Thunder Bay Police Service, we have Chief John Paul Levesque. Good morning.

Chief John Paul Levesque (Chief of Police, Thunder Bay Police Service): Good morning.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): From the Smart Policing Initiative in University Park, Illinois, we have Professor James Coldren, who is the project director. Good morning.

Professor James R. Coldren (Project Director, Smart Policing Initiative): Good morning.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): We will begin, as usual, with 10-minute statements from each of our witnesses before we go to the first round of questions.

We'll begin this morning with Chief Levesque. Please go ahead.

Chief John Paul Levesque: Mr. Chair, and members of the committee, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

I'm assuming I was asked to appear before you to give a perspective on policing in northern Ontario, with Thunder Bay being the largest municipality in northwestern Ontario. Certainly, we have some different challenges in policing the area.

One of the primary objectives for us in northwestern Ontario specifically in policing is to develop strong and positive relations within our first nations and aboriginal communities. It is a daunting task. It is sometimes incident driven, where an incident will occur, setting us back. It's one step forward and two steps back when something occurs that is not always a positive spin on relations with aboriginal people.

Particularly here in Thunder Bay, our fastest growing demographic is the aboriginal population, specifically people between the ages of 15 and 35. While the rest of the population is aging here in Thunder Bay, the demographic with respect to aboriginals is a younger set.

As northern communities and reserves go, we tend to go. If they're having difficulties in the northern communities, we tend to see the same difficulties here in the bigger city of Thunder Bay. Certainly it is a daunting task for first nations policing to keep up. I know they have difficulty recruiting and retaining people. I know that the recent funding discrepancies have not helped in that endeavour.

One thing I want to get out was the absolute importance not just to the northern communities but to the surrounding communities of adequate funding for first nations policing.

The other thing I want to mention is that as we see more people migrate into Thunder Bay and other communities from the northern communities, we should be seeing funding from the federal level in helping us deal with aboriginal issues. Our population here in Thunder Bay is approximately 25% aboriginal and we do have a lot of interactions with aboriginals. Having said that, we have what's called an aboriginal liaison unit, which only has two officers in it. We could use at least double that, if not more.

There needs to be a recognition that socio-economic situations drive crime and disorder. I'm not speaking solely for Thunder Bay, but certainly it is an issue here. Mental health, addictions, poverty, homelessness, all those drive up crime rates and send us on an array of calls that we consider disorder calls.

Very quickly I will give you a stat from last year. The Thunder Bay police made almost 3,000 arrests of intoxicated persons. That's well above the national average and certainly puts us as number one per capita in Ontario.

Another issue that we deal with not just in Thunder Bay but in northwestern Ontario is domestic violence. We recently did some research on what we do and how we do it, what types of calls we go to, to try to develop a new deployment model. What we saw was that a great deal of our calls—I mentioned the intoxicated persons we have to deal with—are domestic violence calls. We deal with almost 3,000 calls for domestic violence a year in a city of 117,000 people. Again, that is well above the national average and number one in the province of Ontario.

There's no new money. My police services board made it very clear that there's no new money. We had to create a unit by collapsing another unit, so we're using the domestic violence unit to take over from the front-line officers when they get a domestic violence call. We're hoping that will free up officers to do more proactive policing at the uniform level.

Calls dealing with violence, drugs, organized crime, and child exploitation are examples of what the police should be concentrating on, and again, not just here in Thunder Bay but provincially and nationally. However, we're left dealing with many issues that are not core functions of policing, as I mentioned, the disorder issues, mental health issues, things of that nature.

Our resources are being eaten up in many different ways. On the rise are things like elder abuse, youth crime, child pornography and child exploitation, computer crimes and identity theft.

● (0950)

I have to mention that the loss of funding through the PORF, the police officer recruitment fund, didn't help in this endeavour. We lost two officers when we lost that funding.

There's a provincial strategy here in Ontario on child exploitation and child pornography. There needs to be a strategy at the national level to prevent and combat those types of crimes. Certainly, serious discussions on civilianization, privatization, and two-tiered policing need to occur. As an example, we have to do court security and prisoner transportation here in Thunder Bay, so we use seven first-class constables, who make $83,000 a year, and five special constables, who make approximately $70,000 a year. That's pretty high-priced help for guarding prisoners and transporting them from the district jail to the courthouse.

Last, I'd like to mention that there needs to be legislation and capital investment to allow for more technologically driven enforcement of, for example, traffic laws. This would free up officers and add to the public coffers.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): Thank you very much, Chief Levesque.

Now we'll turn to Professor Coldren.

Prof. James R. Coldren: Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, I, too, would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning for a few moments on matters pertaining to the economics and search for efficiencies in policing.

I thought I might offer a few comments on my background and how I came to be involved in this work of policing. I'm a sociologist from the University of Chicago. I've been doing research, mostly evaluation research, in the criminal justice system for the past 30 years. Since about 1997, I've been involved in research and program development on community policing, strategic approaches to community safety, project-safe neighbourhoods here in the States, and now I'm working on what we call smart policing, which I'll get to in a minute.

In addition to my duties as a professor of criminal justice here at Governors State University, I'm currently the national director of training and technical assistance with CNA for the Bureau of Justice Assistance Smart Policing Initiative.

One of the movements that's under way in policing in the U.S. these days and probably elsewhere has to do with research and measurement. Despite several generations of progress and innovation in policing, precious little is known about what actually works in terms of police strategies and police tactics. There's a long history of what we would refer to as shallow analysis and weak research design in the assessment of police effectiveness. In the last 10 years we have seen some progress in these areas, but there is much more to be done.

I mention this because if we want to understand efficiencies, and if we want to understand the economics of policing, we have to measure things better, and we have to integrate good measurement into the culture of policing. For example, a study in the United States that was published in 2010 examined over 5,000 research reports on the effectiveness of police tactics. This study found that of those over 5,000 reports, only 11 of them had sufficient methodological rigour to warrant confidence in their findings. That was a very surprising result to me. How can we make decisions about efficiencies if we don't know with confidence which police approaches have the effects that have been intended?

I've been involved for the past four years in an approach to policing in the United States called smart policing. Smart policing is kind of a funny name. It's not the opposite of dumb policing. We think it represents a natural evolution in policing that relies heavily on scientific research methods. Simply put, smart policing encourages police agencies to collaborate with researchers in several key areas: crime problem analysis; development of a response; the development of solutions and interventions; monitoring and assessment of those interventions, which we typically call process evaluation, with real time feedback to the police agency on how things are going; outcome and impact evaluation; and very importantly, examining the issue of external validity. If a police tactic or strategy is implemented in one area and researched thoroughly and found to be effective, we have to ask ourselves whether it would translate to any other jurisdiction.

More specifically, police agencies that adopt a smart policing approach engage in one or more of the following approaches through a strategic planning process. One is the deep analysis of crime and public order and quality-of-life problems in their jurisdiction, which often involves the collection and analysis of new data. There's the development of place and offender-based prevention and intervention initiatives. I think more recently we are starting to see place and offender based strategies together. Also, there are improvements and enhancements in crime analysis and intelligence analysis, and rapid delivery of the results of that analysis to patrol, as well as technological enhancements of various kinds.

● (0955)

There are focused efforts at not only developing these new approaches but integrating them into the agency so that they are sustainable.

With respect to collaboration and outreach, I think we have coined a phrase on smart policing. We call it “in reach”. This means if you're introducing innovations into a police agency, you have to communicate and collaborate as much with individuals within your agency as you do with people outside of your agency.

I can also say that if you look at what's going on in smart policing, few of these practices in and of themselves are new or innovative. It's the engagement of the researcher that's different. It's the focus on the elevation of crime and intelligence analysis in the agency that's different. It's the utilization of technology to get better information to cops on the street that's different. It's the assessment of impact using rigorous research design that is different.

I'm not sure how my time is, but I could talk for a few minutes about a couple of applications of smart policing if there's time for it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): You have about three minutes remaining.

Prof. James R. Coldren: Okay, let me mention one. This has been fairly well documented by a researcher from Harvard University. Maybe you've come across him. His name is Anthony Braga. He is the research partner for the Smart Policing Initiative in Boston. He engaged in an analysis of crime in what he calls “micro places” in Boston. He identified over 8,000 street segments in Boston and he was able to collect 30 years' worth of violent crime data sorted and analyzed at these different micro places.

He was able to identify with some precision where the hotspots were in Boston, and it wasn't just the hotspots; it was very small geographic areas that had been hot for the better part of 30 years consistently. The stability of these troublesome areas, these hotspots, was incredible. They developed a safe street team approach, kind of a problem-oriented approach to policing in these hotspots. He studied them extensively. One of the more interesting things he found in studying them is when left to their devices, the safe street teams who developed problem-oriented approaches to these problems were more likely to develop kind of social engagement approaches, and not necessarily traditional police suppression approaches. They were very successful through a comparative analysis in reducing street robberies and violent street crimes by about 17%.

I can just tell you from the work that we've done up there that in the case of Boston, you have a researcher who is embedded in the police organization, who has the ears of the police commissioner, as well as the sergeants, lieutenants, and captains. He does analysis on how things are going in the streets of Boston, and they change their tactics and their approaches based on the analysis that Dr. Braga provides them. That's an example of smart policing.

● (1000)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): Thank you very much, Professor Coldren.

We will now proceed to our first round of questions. There will be seven minutes for questions and answers. We'll start with the government side with Mr. Leef.

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

Thank you to both of our witnesses, and welcome today.

Chief Levesque, we've heard a lot in committee from police forces across the country. One of the things that does come up, of course, is the continuing pressure on police budgets and the outstanding request for more resources, both financial and human. The one thing that's been a fairly consistent theme, which you touched on yet again today, was that police are responding to a lot of non-core policing things and have become, over the years, the agency of preferred choice, not necessarily the last or the best. A number of the agencies have been recognizing, despite their wishes for additional financial support, that this may not be the answer in terms of delivering the best policing models.

I know from my policing background in native northern communities in Yukon Territory we would have said that if we doubled our police numbers, we would be able to tackle this issue, but truth be told, when there are mental health, drug addiction and domestic violence issues, there are social challenges that need to be dealt with elsewhere before a police agency is involved.

I don't think you touched on it much in your address, but what's the Thunder Bay police force doing with regard to engaging in an integrated approach with mental health services, with community group social services? You mentioned homelessness and poverty. How do you feel your agency is working on that front? What kind of work is Thunder Bay doing to engage those groups to work with them so that, for example, you don't have officers who aren't mental health experts dealing with mental health issues, and you don't have officers who aren't drug and alcohol addictions experts dealing with common clients all of the time from a purely police perspective?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, off the top of my head I can think of two initiatives right away.

As the Thunder Bay Police Service, we belong to the Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council in which 30-plus agencies are involved, mental health, health, addiction services, all those types of things.

The professor touched on research. That committee is run by a doctor. She has a Ph.D. in research and she helps us out with those types of things. That's one thing.

The other side, the addiction part of it, is big for us. I can give you an example. The needle exchange program here in Thunder Bay in 2011 gave out 660,000 needles but only collected 220,000, so we're getting calls to pick up dirty needles all the time. That's not a police function.

The other side of that is that a managed alcohol program started up recently. I mentioned earlier that we make 3,000 arrests for intoxication every year. Probably 50 people make up about 80% of those 3,000 arrests. The managed alcohol program is a 15-bed facility that is trying to get the worst of the alcohol-addicted people into this program and managing their alcohol, thereby freeing up our resources as a police service.

● (1005)

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you for that.

You mentioned the needle exchange program. I'm fairly familiar with that type of program in our territory. I don't know if they pitched it the same way in Thunder Bay as they did in the north, but it was basically promoted in the community as a safe needle exchange program. Their branding was one-for-one needle exchange, which gave the community the perception that before a needle was handed out, a needle was returned by a drug user.

Is that the same way it's sold in Thunder Bay? Obviously, you've indicated that so many are going out but not so many are coming back. Can you touch on that?

Is there a way the government can be involved at different levels, or is there a different education path we need to take to make that one-for-one notion a reality instead of only being a thought? It's not, obviously, only a waste of police officers' time, but it's a serious community safety issue to have needles lying around in the communities.

Chief John Paul Levesque: Mr. Chair, I'm sorry I missed the first part of the question. I probably missed the first five seconds of it, but I think I got the gist of it.

I refer to it as a needle exchange program here in Thunder Bay. Clearly it's not. When you're giving out over 600,000 and only collecting 200,000, it's not an exchange program. It's certainly not a one-for-one exchange. Superior Points which runs the program doesn't refer to it as an exchange program. Certainly, a policy that says it's one-for-one, as opposed to handing out to an individual a box of 20 at a time and not getting any back, would be a big help to us.

Mr. Ryan Leef: You mentioned that your officers are doing court transfers and prisoner transport. Are there available models or other agencies in Thunder Bay, for example the RCMP, engaged in a program to have the correctional staff do that? Of course, that would be hinging on whether or not there are correctional staff available, but can you outsource that particular responsibility at all?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, there are two issues with that.

First, by law we're legislated to provide court security, not so much prisoner transportation. But as the police agency, we must provide security for the courthouse, as it's in our municipality.

The other part of that is that civilianization or privatization is very tough with police association collective agreements. It's very difficult to bring in part-time policing or other civilian agencies, or to contract out, with the strong language we see in our collective agreements.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): Be very brief, Mr. Leef, please.

Mr. Ryan Leef: If I don't have much time then, I don't have any more questions.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your time this morning.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): We'll now turn to the opposition for seven minutes.

Mr. Rafferty.

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

I have a question for Professor Coldren.

Regarding the Smart Policing Initiative, you talked about Boston and the targeted work and measurement that has gone on there. With the way tactics have changed in Boston, would you have any idea whether there is any way to have measured financial savings in that particular case?

Prof. James R. Coldren: That's a very good question.

If I would mention one of the challenges we have in smart policing and policing research generally, it's the cost-benefit piece. Boston has not conducted, or at least has not published to my knowledge, the cost-benefit analysis of that part of their work.

We know of several studies that have been done and if the committee hasn't come across them, then I would be happy to provide them. There have been several studies done on the cost of policing and the cost of criminal justice processing for different types of crime. I actually made a few notes about that and these costs range greatly.

One study estimated the cost of a murder at $1.4 million, and another study estimated the cost of a murder at $8.6 million. The implication is if you reduce your homicide rate by 10%, you're potentially introducing $10 million, $20 million, $30 million in savings. But this methodology is not quite refined yet. It's hard these days to put a good confident cost figure on these crime reductions.

● (1010)

Mr. John Rafferty: Chief Levesque, I want to ask a quick question about the managed alcohol program. It's relatively new; I know exactly when it started because the building is right across from my office. It is a fairly small facility.

Could you say, or is it too early or impossible to tell, whether or not that has reduced the number of calls you're getting to that part of town?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Unfortunately, I'm unable to answer that question, Mr. Chair. It's early in the program, as Mr. Rafferty pointed out. A comprehensive study is ongoing and the results of that will be released in December.

Mr. John Rafferty: You talked about the domestic violence unit and folding others into that unit. Am I correct in making the assumption that it's not just officers who are in that unit, that perhaps officers travel with mental health professionals, or people who are particularly skilled at dealing with domestic violence? In other words, could you perhaps expand a little bit on the unit?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, there are no civilians in the unit. There are five detective constables and one sergeant running the unit. We do engage civilians and other agencies for training and things of that nature. Outside of victim assistance workers who will show up at calls, they don't ride with our people. I guess the answer to the question is no.

The domestic violence unit was set up, as I mentioned, to free up front-line officers. For a domestic violence call here in Ontario where there are charges laid, it takes anywhere from four to six hours to complete all the paperwork, so you have two uniformed officers tied up for that length of time. What we're trying to do is have the uniformed officers get through the emergent part of the call, that is, get things calmed down, get things settled down, get people separated. Then this unit would step in and do all the follow-up work, thereby freeing up the officers to do, as I said, more proactive policing and be more visible on the street.

Mr. John Rafferty: I wonder if you could make some more comments about the budgetary pressures you face and the reasons for them. I know that police services right across Canada, municipal services in particular, are being pressured by mayors and councils, and ratepayers, to not continually year after year ask for a percentage increase. I wonder if you could make a few more comments about that, or just expand on your comments.

Chief John Paul Levesque: Here in Ontario it's interesting for chiefs of police because the police associations bargain their contracts with the police services board. The police services board will settle the contract and chiefs are left to deal with it. As an example, last year our officers received the 3% raise increase and, along with a benefit increase, it worked out to 3.5%. The direction from the board was to come in as close to zero in a budget increase as I could. Well, 90% of our budget is wages and benefits, so without cutting jobs, it was near impossible to come in at zero. I was actually fairly pleased that we were able to come in at 3.5%, which is a very bare-bones budget.

We need to find efficiencies, and I understand that. There's no new money; it's been made very clear. Things like this domestic violence unit are one of the ways we're hoping to free up resources, so maybe we're not paying as much overtime for certain calls.

We're tied up at the hospital quite frequently for hours on end waiting for a prisoner to be seen by a doctor. It's those types of things. We're in negotiations with the hospital here locally to try to free up our officers from those types of things.

● (1015)

Mr. John Rafferty: One of the other expenses we've heard about quite extensively from various police services is not just courthouse duty, but actually sitting in the courtroom for eight hours waiting for a case to come up, and then it's remanded or some other sort of situation. Often that's overtime for the police officer. How would you characterize that kind of expense is happening in Thunder Bay? Have you thought of some alternatives?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, we recently did a study on just what you are talking about, and 82% of our officers who attend court never testify. It's a bit of a shell game with defence lawyers. They'll come in and they'll see if all the officers who were called are there to testify. If they're all there, they'll plead out their client. Our officers here in Thunder Bay get an automatic four hours at time and a half, so six hours' pay just for showing up.

We—the deputy chief and I—recently met with the regional crown attorney to address this issue. We're hoping that the new courthouse, which has a lot of automation in it, is going to alleviate some of those issues. Certainly, scanning the files more closely and determining exactly which officers need to attend to testify and those who don't will help.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): Thank you very much.

We'll now turn to Mr. Gill for seven minutes.

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

I also want to thank our witnesses for taking the time to be with us today.

My question is for Chief Levesque. Chief, can you help us understand the makeup of your community? You mentioned you have about a 25% aboriginal community. Are there other community challenges that you face which you may want to talk about?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, of the challenges I cited in my opening remarks, the addictions issues and mental health issues are huge for us. We spend a lot of time dealing with people in situations. Somebody mentioned that the police are responding to all sorts of things, and we basically have become what we refer to as a social safety net. People don't know whom to call. They find a handful of dirty needles in a park, and the police are called.

We're doing all kinds of things we shouldn't be doing as a police service, and it's taking away from our ability to investigate serious things like child exploitation, violent crimes, and things of that nature.

I talked about the makeup of our city. I said the aboriginal community is the fastest growing demographic. I also mentioned that we have an aging population as well, so we're seeing a rather big increase in crimes against elderly people, fraud in particular. In some cases we're seeing some physical abuse through family members as well.

Mr. Parm Gill: What is the current population of Thunder Bay?

Chief John Paul Levesque: The current population of Thunder Bay is 117,000.

Mr. Parm Gill: Could you also tell us how many police officers and civilians you employ? What sort of overall budget numbers are we dealing with?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Yes. Through you, Mr. Chair, we had 224 sworn police officers. We lost our funding through PORF, so it's down to 222. We have another 93 civilians on top of that. We deal with a budget of approximately $38 million.

Mr. Parm Gill: Could you briefly give us a breakdown of your budget? What percentage is going toward salaries and other operations?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Mr. Chair, 90% of our budget is salaries, or wages and benefits. The other 10%, which is a very small portion and certainly is not discretionary...we're experiencing an increase in legal bills for discipline issues. We will have a large inquest getting under way shortly. That's going to cost a lot in legal fees.

The budget is being eaten up in a lot of different ways that it wasn't traditionally.

Mr. Parm Gill: Does your force currently have any sort of volunteer or auxiliary officer program?

● (1020)

Chief John Paul Levesque: We do not at this time. As part of the overall deployment study we recently did, we just started a new initiative called the zone watch program. It's a virtual neighbourhood policing program. The city will be broken into five areas. People who live in those areas or businesses in those areas can join the zone watch program. They get some training through us. The other side of that is, the same officers will be assigned to those areas for one to two years. We're hoping they will get to know the people and the businesses in the area. They will stay connected with these people in the zone watch program via our website.

Mr. Parm Gill: Chief, you mentioned in your remarks that you're having difficulty recruiting and retaining officers. Can you talk about the challenges?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Yes. Actually, that reference was to first nations policing. Nishnawbe Aski and Anishinabekare having all kinds of difficulties recruiting and retaining.

We are having some difficulties recruiting. We're not seeing nearly the numbers we used to. In particular, if you talk about a police service that's supposed to represent the community, 25% of our officers should be aboriginal. That's not the case. That's nowhere near the case.

As hard as we try to recruit, it's just not a profession that most aboriginal youth even consider.

Mr. Parm Gill: Chief, can you also tell us your thoughts on further developing a whole-of-community effort to share information among police, the judiciary, schools, mental health professionals, and others?

Chief John Paul Levesque: I'm sorry. If you're looking for....

I mentioned our Crime Prevention Council, where we have all kinds of partner agencies we deal with, children's aid societies, Dilico Anishinabek Family Care, community groups. We meet regularly. I'm not sure if that's what you're asking.

Is that the type of community involvement you're looking for?

Mr. Parm Gill: Yes.

Chief John Paul Levesque: Also, our officers are involved heavily, in communities and provincially, on different boards and committees. Our officers sit on more than 90 boards and committees both provincially and municipally.

Mr. Parm Gill: As a chief of police you must deal with a variety of problems balancing the needs and wants of the community against the resources available to do a job. I'm assuming you must be regularly called upon to make decisions that increase the efficiency also of your force and its operations.

I'm wondering whether you can describe to us some of the initiatives that you are currently undertaking or that you would like to see.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): We have time for just a very brief answer.

Chief John Paul Levesque: Mr. Chair, I mentioned a couple of initiatives. What we're trying to do is find efficiencies by not having our front-line officers tied up with things that are non-policing issues and are not core functions of policing.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): Thank you very much.

We'll now turn back to the opposition side, to Mr. Scarpaleggia for seven minutes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Chief Levesque, you mentioned at the outset that your core funding had been cut. Did I understand that correctly?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Yes, we had funding for two police officers, and it was cut at the end of March.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: What was that core funding? Was it the federal component, the police fund funding, or did your city cut funding to your force? Can you clarify what this funding was?

Chief John Paul Levesque: I'm sorry; I was referring to PORF, the police officers recruitment fund, not core funding.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Ah, okay.

You mentioned that it would be possible to get civilians to do such things as collect needles instead of having to send an officer to do that task. Is there anything that would stop your force from creating a special unit, a civilian unit, to do that kind of work?

You're sending officers, and you said it would be less expensive to send non-officers. Is there a reason that you can't, within your force, set up your own group of non-officers, of civilians, to do that work? Do you need special permission from the province to do so? What stops you from cutting costs that way now?

● (1025)

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, I don't see picking up dirty needles and used needles as a police function. I would never—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I understand that—

Chief John Paul Levesque: I would never entertain starting a unit that was solely civilian or otherwise that was responsible as the lead agency for doing that kind of work.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: What you're saying is that it's costing you money to do this. How would you go about getting out of that business, if you will? What do you need to do to ensure that this is not your responsibility?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Mr. Chair, what we're seeing is that the organization, Superior Points, that runs the needle exchange program here will do that type of work during the day. They're a civilian-based agency.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay, so it's being done.

Chief John Paul Levesque: It's the after hours situation in which people—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are you trying to address that issue? It seems to be in limbo: you don't want to do it, and you don't think it's right for you to be doing it, but there's no end in sight for your force's doing it.

Chief John Paul Levesque: Without funding to the organization to run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, I don't see it changing. We're a 24/7 operation and that's who gets the calls.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay, good.

You mentioned that child exploitation investigation should be moved from the local level to the national level. Did I understand that correctly?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Here in Ontario we have a provincial strategy for most types of crimes. There needs to be more of a national strategy on this, because it is not just provincial, municipal, national, it's international, and it's growing exponentially.

I met with the OPP head of that unit earlier this week, and the amount of child exploitation and child luring that's going on, even for me—I'm a 27-year veteran—is mind-boggling.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So right now you don't have access to federal resources, whether it be databases or technical assistance from the RCMP. You don't have access to that right now. Is that what you're saying?

If you're saying it needs to be moved up to a national level, does it mean you're not getting help at the national level, just the provincial level at this point?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, I have two officers who belong to our computer crime unit who are part of the provincial strategy on child exploitation and child luring. I wouldn't say we don't have the resources of the RCMP when required, but they are not part of the task force. Certainly here locally we have an excellent relationship with the RCMP and the Ontario Provincial Police, and we will request their resources quite often.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But they should be part of your local task force, essentially, is what you seem to be saying.

Chief John Paul Levesque: That would be a big help because they do have far more resources than we can ever come up with.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

Mr. Coldren, in terms of smart policing, how would you envisage this working?

Each police force would have a researcher. I won't say a team of researchers because then it gets expensive, but they would have someone who would try to quantify the costs of actions and the benefits that would flow from those actions.

What you seem to be saying is within a police force you would need a position dedicated to that kind of analysis, somebody who is, and I think you used the word “embedded”, if I'm not mistaken. Is that how you see this rolling out? Every police force in the country would have at least one person, and that person, being a researcher, would have access to the latest studies on policing, whether they had been done at a university, or at some kind of national, regional, or state think-tank. Is that what you're suggesting?

Prof. James R. Coldren: I think about this in several ways.

It's important to think about increasing and enhancing the analytic capacity of police agencies generally. Again, my experience is in the States primarily. The large majority of police agencies in the United States of America are actually small to medium-sized, and I don't think it would be practical for each individual agency to hire a Ph.D. trained researcher.

There's an interesting interplay between a researcher—an academic or a trained researcher—and a crime analysis or intelligence analysis function in a police agency. In some cases, the analysis function in the agency is quite strong so the reliance on the researcher is not so great. In other cases, the crime analysis function in a police agency is actually quite weak, and then external assistance probably would be more needed.

I think it's the analytical capacity that's at issue here, and I would argue—I argue quite frequently—that police leaders should invest more in research and analytic capacity, and that will in fact produce efficiencies.

● (1030)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): Thank you very much, Professor Coldren.

[*Translation*]

We will now have a second round of five-minute questions. We will begin with Mr. Rousseau.

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

[*English*]

Gentlemen, welcome to both of you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Coldren, as I was listening to you, I realized that we are not doing enough to measure the effectiveness of our police forces, since it is not part of their culture.

I am going to preach for my own parish now. I studied labour relations, work organization and resource management. One of the big mistakes organizations make is often the lack of holistic analyses and approaches and, I would say as well, of resource planning. The management of resources is not only financial management, but also the management of material attributed to human resources. But there is not enough monitoring of that.

There are three questions I often ask myself in my capacity of manager. What are our human resources doing on the ground? Are they efficient and useful? Are they doing a good job?

I will leave you whatever time is left over to convince my colleagues. This study is ending and I think that my main conclusion is that resources are not being managed well, be they human or material or financial.

[*English*]

Prof. James R. Coldren: Thank you, sir. I would respond in two ways.

I tend to agree with you. I think the police leader and the police manager of today have to be quite adept at this approach, this type of analysis you're talking about, and I don't believe they're trained that way. I know when chiefs get to the executive level they get a fair amount of training and education in leadership and dynamic organizational approaches, but in the United States we don't see that being implemented fully across the country when they're working in their agencies. We do argue for this more holistic approach to the work of policing, this more holistic approach to analysis. As I said before, we think that will produce efficiencies.

I want to refer the committee to one study, and if you haven't come across this I'll be happy to provide it as well. It was done in 2010 and came from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. It looked at the rising cost of policing and identified several reasons for a 10-year to 15-year incremental increase in cost of policing.

Chief Levesque is right. One of the primary drivers of the cost of policing has been the increasing expectation that police do more things that are not necessarily directly related to order, maintenance, and public safety, and that's actually true. But I think that kind of begs the question, if you want to introduce new efficiencies into policing, you have to radically rethink what it is we're asking the police to do and how we're asking them to do it. This paper actually makes reference to what I think are several very interesting points in terms of how we get a return on our investment and what produces the greatest efficiencies.

For example, the authors of this paper point out that using technology to introduce efficiency—we call it here a force multiplier—actually tends to introduce incremental marginal efficiencies that are wiped out by the rising inflationary costs. So if you're going to radically introduce efficiencies into policing, you have to completely rethink what the roles of the police officer and the police agency are in society, and what you expect from them.

I don't think—

● (1035)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): Thank you, Professor Coldren. I'll have to stop you there.

We'll turn back to the government side, and Mr. Hawn.

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

Thank you to both witnesses for being here.

Chief Levesque, before I get to some questions, I want to ask if you could send that study you did on court costs in terms of police officer time and money and so on, to the committee. I believe you talked about how 82% of police time in the courthouse is wasted. Could you send any data on that to the committee?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, absolutely.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you so much.

We've heard a lot about reaction to crime, but I want to talk a little bit about prevention. As you said, your police force is 315 civilian and police right now. It was 317 before what was clearly identified as temporary funding under the PORF was stopped, as it was predicted to do. That's impacted you by less than 1%.

You have two officers assigned to your aboriginal liaison office. What percentage of crimes are committed by the 25% aboriginal population in Thunder Bay? Do you have numbers on that?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, I'm sorry I don't have those figures.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Would you say it's disproportionate to 25%?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, that's not something I'd want to be guessing about, so unless I had the numbers in front of me, I don't think it would be a good idea to guess.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I understand that. I'm a little surprised, given the high percentage of aboriginal population in Thunder Bay and given the experience we've had across the country—I can only speak for Edmonton and I don't have hard numbers—I know they are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. That's a pretty commonly accepted fact across the country.

Would it make sense to assign a couple more from your 222 uniformed police officers to that unit? You said that you'd like to double them. Would that pay some longer-term dividends in terms of reducing the...? You talked about how 50 people accounted for 80% of the intoxication arrests. Do you think that assigning more to that aboriginal liaison unit might pay some dividends down the road?

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, I believe it would certainly help, if nothing else, in building relationships with the aboriginal community. The liaison officers don't do a lot of enforcement. They are truly liaison officers who do a lot of community work. I would take any funding anybody—the province, the federal government, the municipality—was prepared to give, and increase that unit, if I could. That's not going to happen.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I'd suggest to you, from my point of view—obviously, I don't live there and you do—that a little bit of extra effort, on the one hand, in the short term would pay dividends in the long term.

You talked about representation on various councils, and so on, with the social network, housing, mental health, and so on. Other police forces—Prince Albert comes to mind—have used a much more aggressive approach in putting not just police officers, but people involved in housing, mental health, addictions, education, and so on, on the ground, to intervene in those smaller percentages of people or families who are involved in a disproportionate way in the criminal justice system. Would something like that make sense to you?

● (1040)

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, I'm familiar with the Prince Albert model. I would agree that it is something we certainly would consider, and are considering. I can tell you our deputy chief here in Thunder Bay is a member of our local Crime Prevention Council. It is something he will be bringing to the next council meeting.

The reason for that is you have all the key players at the table. It's an easy place to bring it up and see what kind of input you get and see if there's any desire from the other agencies involved.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I would encourage you because from our experience with the committee and in visiting other places, the other agencies—I know I'm again speaking for Edmonton—are desirous of getting involved. I'd be surprised if it wasn't the same way in Thunder Bay.

Professor Coldren, you talked about "in reach". I think that is very important. You obviously have to get buy-in from folks who are out there doing the job. In your experience with that and working with various forces, were there any sort of aha moments, "Holy cow, I get that; it makes sense"?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): There will be time for just a very brief answer.

Prof. James R. Coldren: I think that's true. I'll give one example.

In Memphis, Tennessee, they were facing a pretty serious residential burglary problem. They did again what I would call one of these shallow analyses, and they figured out that the police districts with the highest residential burglary rates were the districts where most of the returning offenders from prison were going. It's a very common analysis in the States; it probably happens in Canada as well. They immediately fixed on a collaboration with parole and police to address this burglary problem. They hired a researcher from the University of Memphis who took a more careful look at the issue. What he found was a very strong link between truancy and residential burglary by youth.

In a very short amount of time there was this aha moment that they were going down the entirely wrong path because of their traditional reliance on the data that they normally use to analyze these problems. Once they did a little intelligence work and had some focus groups in the community, and did some collaborative work, they had a completely different understanding of the problem they were facing. They clearly took a very different approach.

Things like that happen quite frequently.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): Thanks, Professor Coldren.

[*Translation*]

I will now give the floor to Ms. Michaud, who has the last four minutes.

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

I would like to thank our two witnesses for their presentation.

My questions are for Mr. Levesque.

At a committee, it seems that it was highly recommended that you make more of an effort and try to apply different models, including the Prince Albert model. In your opinion, what would constrain you from fully implementing that model?

You already spoke of funding. If there is anything you have not said about that, you could do so now.

In short, what other things are preventing you from applying that model?

[*English*]

Chief John Paul Levesque: Through you, Mr. Chair, I'm sure it's not just our organization, but the limitations are the resources to put towards it, and the desire from other agencies. As one of the members suggested, and as you have seen, it is much desired in other communities. As I mentioned, it is something we will be bringing forward as a preventative concept to engage other community organizations to help us.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you.

A little earlier, in your presentation, you talked about the Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council, which brings together about thirty organizations in your region. They get together to discuss certain problems. Can you tell us a little more about what they are currently doing?

[*English*]

Chief John Paul Levesque: Mr. Chair, the group is the connection with all the agencies that we feel should be at the table. I used to be on the committee myself when I was the deputy chief.

It's that connectivity with the other organizations and discussing the issues we're seeing that are not just police issues, but issues with other social agencies, children's aid societies, and things of that nature. There's some policy work being done. There's work being done with community groups, such as beautifying areas and some crime prevention through.... Ergonomic development is being done. That's the kind of work we're seeing through that council.

● (1045)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison): Thank you very much.

Unfortunately, we're out of time for this morning. Our analysts will be in touch with Chief Levesque and Professor Coldren for some follow-up material. I would advise the committee that there may be some delay in distribution, as we presume the American material is available in English only and will have to be translated before it is distributed.

I'd like to thank both witnesses for a very interesting session this morning. We will be in touch with you.

The meeting is adjourned.