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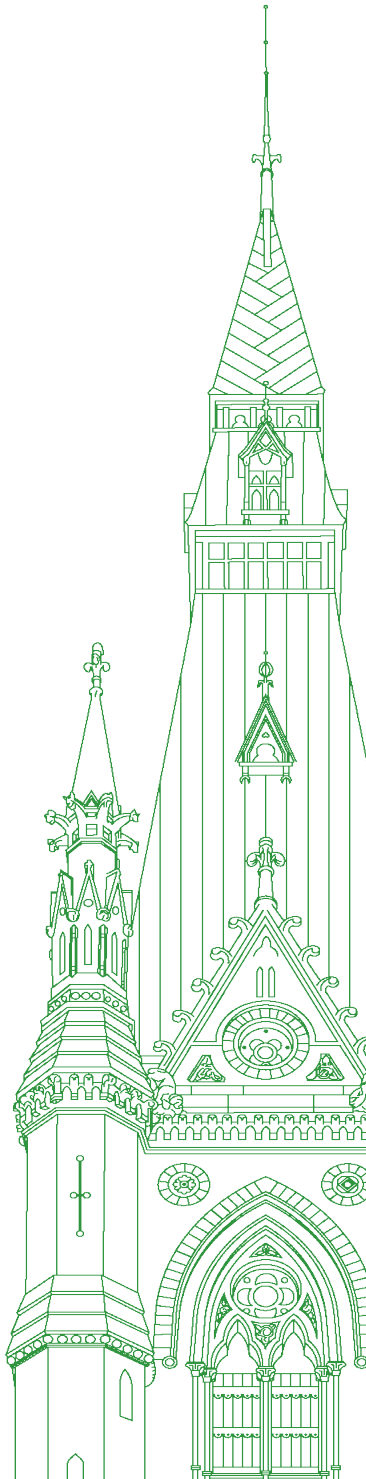

Chair: The Honourable John McKay

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

Friday, July 24, 2020

● (1400)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): We will open meeting number 11.

We have as our first panel of witnesses Dr. Myrna Lashley, Fabrice Vil, and the Quebec Native Women association with Viviane Michel and Léa Serier.

Let me just open this with Dr. Lashley for seven minutes.

You will have to take yourself off mute. This is the big challenge of us all, muting and unmuting. Once we've solved this, we can launch something to the moon.

Ms. Myrna Lashley (As an Individual): Good afternoon, Chair, committee members and fellow panellists.

I am very honoured to have been asked to address you and, in this manner, continue to serve my adoptive country.

In 1829, based on nine guiding principles, Sir Robert Peel created the first modern and professional police force. The seventh principle is based on the understanding that, since the police are taken from members of society, the population is, in fact, policing itself. In Peel's words, "the police are the public and the public are the police".

It has been recognized, both academically and anecdotally, that systemic racism and discrimination are part of society, with roots embedded in 17th century colonialism. This type of racism and discrimination is based on the premise of white supremacy, which is manifested in practices and policies that award unearned privileges to white people based on their pigmentation, while automatically denying those same privileges to black people, indigenous people and people of colour, commonly referred to as BIPOC.

Since the police are a subset of the population, it follows that any issues found in said population will be found within the police. Given this, it does not make sense that the discussion of whether systemic racism and discrimination are to be found within police is still ongoing: The police are the public, and the public are the police.

Peel's second, third and fourth principles address the need for the police to remember that not only do they require the support, consent and co-operation of citizens to operate effectively, but that physical force must only be employed when all else fails. The application of this mindset is advantageous to both police and citizens. It forces all police to use methods of mediation, de-escalation and other humanistic approaches before resorting to force, and it sends a message to citizens that interactions with police do not always have to be adversarial but can and should be based on mutual respect and co-operation.

In other words, the police are not soldiers at war with citizens, and citizens are not guerrilla fighters trying to outwit the enemy. The police must not represent a force with which citizens must reckon. They must instead represent a service that is being proffered. However, since power resides in the police, and trust between police and citizens is questionable, the police will have to take the lead in instituting change and demonstrating good will. It will have to start through honest introspection, openness and acceptance, both institutionally and personally.

This will mean coming to terms with what Sara Ahmed refers to as "whiteness" which, it should be pointed out, is not about persons but about an ideology that has entrapped all of us by favouring a hegemony that favours one group absolutely and harms all others by trying to force them into that hegemonic mould and punishing them for something they cannot possibly attain.

Let us work together to dismantle whiteness and hold fast to our humanity, and, in so doing, never forget the Peelian principle that the police are the public and the public are the police.

Thank you very much for hearing me.

● (1405)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Lashley.

I wish that colleagues would take note of the economy of speech by Dr. Lashley, and then we can get through all of our questioning.

Our next witness is Fabrice Vil.

Welcome, sir. You have seven minutes. The translators have asked that you bring the microphone closer to your mouth only because we have not been able to run a sound test on you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fabrice Vil (As an Individual): Thank you.

Please note that I'll be making my opening statement in French, but I would be happy to answer any questions in English or French.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): There's no translation, Chair.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're not getting translation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fabrice Vil: As I said, I'd be happy to answer questions in English or French.

[*English*]

The Chair: It's fine.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fabrice Vil: I'd like to begin by thanking the committee for inviting me to speak to you today.

My apologies for breaking with decorum. I'm in the great outdoors, in an infirmary, in fact. It's the only place I've been able to get a good enough Internet connection to join you today. That said, I am able to participate in the meeting.

I don't have any speaking notes with me, but I could forward some to the clerk later, to make sure you're able to understand everything I'm saying.

What I'll be covering is fairly limited. I don't claim to know everything there is to know about systemic racism in policing. I realize what a privilege it is to appear before you today on this issue. Through its invitation, the committee has entrusted me with a duty, and I hope to fulfill it.

The first thing I'd like to make clear is this. Although racism can be viewed as a crime, it is much more akin to a multifactorial crisis, similar to climate change, for which, each and every one of us is responsible. The reason I bring it up is that, in common parlance, people are accused of racism. They are put on trial, but racism….

Coming back to my analogy, I think climate change is an issue we can talk about without the usual judgements. Each and every one of us is responsible for addressing climate change, whether it be on an individual level, through composting, driving a car or flying, or on a public policy level. That is how we should consider the phenomenon that is racism, through the most inquisitive and exhaustive lens possible, beyond hate and deliberate acts. They are merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of how deep the issue runs. That is what we mean when we talk about systemic racism.

Systemic racism is no more present in police forces than it is anywhere else. It is, however, much more visible in policing because police officers have authority that other members of society do not, including the power to control people and use physical force. Police forces have a unique impact on people's lives and their physical and mental well-being.

Now I'd like to tell you about an incident that happened on June 24, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day in Quebec.

Five young people whom I know—Nicholas, Melvin, Evans, Max and Sascha—belong to the collective *Bout du Monde*. Ricardo Lamour has been mentoring them for more than five years. Ricardo exposes them to spaces that shut black youth out, spaces that aren't accessible to them for a variety of reasons. Those spaces range from places in nature and museums to forums like this one. For the past seven years, Ricardo Lamour has mentored these young people. He encourages them to think about societal issues and problems.

The night of June 24, the five young people and Ricardo wanted to rent BIXI bikes—that's what they're called in Montreal, but they have different names in other cities. As is often the case, the codes to unlock the bikes didn't work. They were trying to get the problem fixed, when, in less than 10 minutes, not one, not two, but three police cruisers showed up. Ricardo and the young people were all taken in for questioning. The youth are still traumatized.

● (1410)

The incident is all the more serious given that Ricardo Lamour had already provided the young people with guidance on the matter, explaining how to behave should they ever find themselves in a similar situation. It's something no Canadian should ever have to experience. It does, however, give rise to an important question. How do we redefine the role of police? How do we turn an agency of enforcement and repression into an organization that truly serves our communities?

Unfortunately, that's not currently the case, whether in terms of the perception or the reality. In many respects, a police force is a body of repression. We need only think of the reason the RCMP was formed in the first place and the relationship with indigenous populations. When we recognize that from the outset, we understand that, regardless of goodwill, a police force is inherently a body of control with impacts on certain populations.

A number of factors come into play. For instance, the former Correctional Investigator of Canada, Howard Sapers, determined that, between 2003 and 2013, the indigenous inmate population rose by 46.4% and the black inmate population rose by 90%. In the face of that reality, we have to wonder about the measures that led us there.

Another important finding comes from sociologist Jason Carmichael. He determined that, in 2015, the size of the visible minority population was the leading determinant of the size of the police presence in large cities, regardless of the crime rate. That is yet another example of how these systems place tremendous importance on repression in relation to racization and indigenous identity, regardless of criminal activity.

I just need another 30 seconds to raise a few more points. A police force is a repression-centred body that could be transformed into an organization that serves the community. It's worth noting that Nicholas Gibbs, Alain Magloire and Pierre Coriolan, all black men who died, suffered from mental health issues. This raises crucial questions about how to better allocate funding so that police are not the ones responding in certain circumstances, but rather, community partners or, at the very least, police officers who are adequately trained.

The discussion around reducing police funding goes to the heart of that issue. Disarming the police is another measure worth considering. In the United Kingdom, police carry out routine interventions without weapons.

● (1415)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Vil, I have to cut you off there, unfortunately. You're well over time.

You've obviously studied the techniques of Mr. Harris for extending your period of time.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I'm sure your remarks can be worked into the question and answer period. I apologize for cutting you off. Unfortunately, we are stuck with a pretty tight timeline here.

Finally, we have Madame Michel, speaking on behalf of Quebec Native Women Inc.

You have seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel (President, Quebec Native Women Inc.): [*Witness spoke in Innu as follows:*]

Kuei! Tshipushukatitunau, utshimatuk, tshishe-utshimasssituk. Tshinashkumitinau e uishamiat ninan ute innu-ishkueuat ka mamuitut ute Uepishtikuiau-assit.

[*Witness provided the following translation:*]

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, members of the committee, elected officials and members of Parliament. Thank you for including Quebec Native Women Inc. in this discussion.

[*Translation*]

Keeping my presentation to seven minutes will be challenging, so I'm going to read it very quickly.

Racism is a historical process that relies on social constructs based on prejudices against certain individuals or groups of individuals. Racism becomes systemic when the institutions tied to a social construct or a state reproduce discriminatory behaviour towards certain individuals or groups of individuals in society on the basis of race or, in our case, indigenous identity. By reproducing this behaviour, the institutions normalize and embody discrimination.

Systemic racism against first nations, Inuit and Métis populations is inextricably linked to colonialism, which perpetuated views, a way of thinking and preconceived notions about indigenous people, generally, without distinguishing between different peoples and nations, and about indigenous women, specifically.

Colonialism and its racist and patriarchal ideas gave rise to many types of systemic discrimination against indigenous peoples, and especially, indigenous women. The agents of colonialism imposed patriarchal social constructs, mainly through policies and legislation such as the Indian Act. Along with those social constructs, another concept was imposed: the superiority of the culture and economic system of the colonizers and the inferiority of the culture and economic system of indigenous peoples and, by extension, the inferiority of indigenous peoples, themselves.

Although colonialism impacted both men and women, the effects were not the same. Colonization was a gendered process that produced insidious stereotypes about indigenous women, objectifying them. This has resulted in indigenous women being doubly discriminated against; in addition to racism, they endure sexism. These stereotypes are rooted in the European vision of the indigenous woman as either a wild and shameless person, a prostitute, a bad mother or an ugly person incapable of feeling or morality.

These characteristics, which were deemed deviant, were the justification for numerous policies, the most significant being the Indian Act, a law that discriminates against women by perpetuating pre-Confederation stereotypes of indigenous women. The law upholds the idea that the indigenous identity of women and their descendants is less worthy than that of men and their descendants.

The fact that these policies, which include the Indian Act, reflect Canada's official views has allowed sexism and racism to become internalized, so much so that the stereotypes are virtually immune to social influences that could challenge or weaken them. Precisely because the country's policies uphold these stereotypes, they justify and perpetuate the oppression of indigenous women, who are not viewed as equal in relation to the rest of society.

Colonialism, systemic racism and sexism contribute to the marginalization of indigenous women, within both their communities and colonial society. Consequently, this marginalization has made indigenous women vulnerable to both emotional and physical violence, and put them at risk of being killed. They are subjected to violence in disproportionate numbers on a systemic basis. The prejudices embodied in government policies are present throughout state institutions, particularly the police, as well as colonial society and indigenous communities, and as such, provide the justification for acts of aggression. Racism and sexism against indigenous women are present in police forces and can be seen in the abuse of discretionary authority, discrimination and assault involving indigenous women.

Under international human rights law and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the state has an obligation and a responsibility to ensure that police protect the members of the public, especially indigenous women, and that public protection measures are in place.

What do you do, then, when agents of the state contribute to your lack of safety? When a police officer assaults an indigenous woman, the responsibility is on the state to make sure it does not go unpunished. However, when arresting indigenous women, police not only have too much discretion, which all too often leads to the abuse of power and violence, but also, and more importantly, enjoy total impunity when they assault indigenous women.

The reports of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the Viens commission, as well as the briefs submitted by Quebec Native Women Inc. to an array of committees and commissions, contain numerous personal accounts attesting to police brutality. It ranges from excessive force and sexual abuse to inappropriate behaviour, disproportionate responses and threats.

● (1420)

Situations where men in positions of authority abuse their power to assault Aboriginal women are a tangible demonstration of the effect of systemic racism at its most extreme. As well, these testimonies point to police failures that affect Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women are more vulnerable to police inaction and failure to assist someone in danger than non-Aboriginal women, particularly in cases of sexual violence.

There are also reports of geographical cures and racial profiling leading, for example, to arrests deemed abusive and discriminatory. These abusive acts stem from police discretion and a sense of impunity because the justice system does not treat these women equally. Due to historical trauma and perceptions of state actors, aboriginal women are continually stigmatized and viewed by the justice system as women with substance use or other social problems. As a result, they are not seen as credible or worthy victims.

The security protection system is ineffective and deficient when it comes to aboriginal women. I point to the case of this first nations woman in need of medical assistance and intervention, who found herself in front of 17 police officers with a dog squad after dialling 911, and the murder of Chantel Moore, who was found killed by the police officer who was conducting a welfare check.

The relationship of aboriginal girls and women with police forces is central to the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal girls and women. Inadequate police behaviour and responses must be taken into account in understanding this phenomenon. Families of missing or murdered persons do not trust the police because of their indifference, incompetence or misconduct towards them.

Indeed, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has collected many testimonies exposing the stereotypes that are attached to the disappearance of aboriginal women and girls. Many parents have testified before the National Inquiry about the services they received when they wanted to report their teenage daughter's—

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Michel, can you wind up your remarks? I apologize for interrupting you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: I'll conclude my remarks.

Do we have any recommendations? Well, yes, we do, but we do so with a lot of skepticism. There are structural changes that need to be made. There needs to be an action plan and concrete measures to address systemic racism and violence as well as police impunity against aboriginal women, using an intersectional approach that takes into account all of the types of discrimination faced by aboriginal women and the fact that these types of discrimination reinforce each other and that takes into account aboriginal women in particular.

This approach includes training and educating the police and the judicial system to the realities of aboriginal women.

● (1425)

[*English*]

The Chair: I apologize again. These are extremely profound issues.

I just note, for the sake of the witnesses, that, when you don't complete what you wanted to say, any written work that you have can be sent to the clerk of the committee, and it forms part of the record of the committee, so it's not lost.

With that, I'm going to start our six-minute round. It's Mr. Paul-Hus for six minutes, Mr. Fergus, Madame Michaud and Mr. Harris.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Chair, Mr. Vidal will speak first.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, we'll have Mr. Vidal.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anandasangaree said this morning that a number of the people sitting on this committee today are members of INAN. Over the last several months, we've been doing a study on the government's response to COVID-19, and one of the things we've talked about is the supports for indigenous people who do not live on reserves, those who live in urban centres. We've done a bunch of discussion around the work of the National Association of Friendship Centres and some other groups that serve urban indigenous populations.

In that context, my question is for Madame Michel.

Would you agree that, in the context of that percentage of indigenous people living off reserve in urban centres, declaring first nation policing as an essential service may not represent the needs of that population as well as it would for some of the people who live out in the reserve settings?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: Are you speaking to me?

[*English*]

The Chair: Is it for Madame Michel?

Mr. Gary Vidal: Yes, it is.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: Look, I totally agree, but we still need to improve the judicial system. Police forces play a key role in racial profiling, in arresting people, in abusing their authority.

The police are doing things that are truly unacceptable. For example, in Montreal, after a long negotiation with a counsellor on site, a woman in psychological distress finally agreed to call an ambulance because she was in the midst of a suicidal crisis. So we called 911. However, 17 police officers and the dog squad were sent. That is crazy! That is really crazy! It was a woman in psychological distress; it was not a woman threatening to kill someone. I think this situation is really a concrete example of racism, discrimination and racial profiling.

There is much to be done to improve the police system, especially in cases like this. The Armony report says that in big cities, aboriginal women are stopped 11 times more often than white women. For no reason, just because they have the profile of aboriginal women. Is that not systemic discrimination and racism? It is blatant.

We can train these people, but I think that if we do not want to be a good police officer and protect citizens, we have to do something else for a living. Our aboriginal women need protection. Our women need to be safe, to be able to walk around in safety, which is not the case, all around, whether inside or outside.

I think Mr. Picard is going to talk to you about the differences between aboriginal police officers and city police officers, because there's a big gap in funding. So I'm not going to talk about that; rather, I'm going to talk about the impact this has on aboriginal women.

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Vidal: Thank you, Madame Michel.

I'm going to follow up with another question for you. I think there's a great difference as well between the needs of indigenous women in very large centres and those in some of the small and medium-sized communities throughout Quebec, and also Canada. Sometimes we forget the realities of some of the smaller urban centres. Again, they don't fall in that on-reserve category, but they're not in the large cities either.

Would you speak to some of the solutions that you maybe would suggest for people who live in those small and medium-sized communities as well?

● (1430)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: I'd be happy to tell you about it. You may know that at Quebec Native Women, we do a lot of public education. For example, the word "reserve" has not been around for decades; we now talk about the "community," and I am simply telling you this to give you this wonderful lesson. It is a community.

Within the communities, there is obviously a great deal to be done. In cases of conjugal violence, for example, we are very much being asked to denounce it. One of the problems we can encounter in cases of conjugal violence or family violence is that there are times when the aboriginal police officer is the aggressor's brother. We all know each other in a community. You can see where that can lead us.

We don't have a lot of police officers. I know Mr. Picard will tell you all about it. At the same time, the ties of kinship and acquaintance are very strong. Everybody knows each other, and sometimes, the victim doesn't even want to file a complaint because the police officer is the brother of her attacker, of her husband and so on. These are difficulties that are found within communities. Moreover, in Quebec, we have 54 communities, and not all of them have their own aboriginal police force.

Recently, I saw a report from a Mohawk nation that had a Mohawk police force. According to that report, for years, there were no deaths, no killings committed by them in their community. I think that's a good example that shows—

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, we are going to have to leave it there again. It seems to fall to me to interrupt you, Madame Michel, which is not a favourite thing of mine to do.

Mr. Vidal's time is up.

We are now on to Madame Damoff for six minutes, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for appearing today. I'm not going to have time to ask all of you questions, but I'm going to start with Quebec Native Women.

Indigenous women face unique challenges when it comes to policing. There is a lack of resources. Indigenous women are the fastest-growing prison population in Canada. It's appalling. There is a lack of resources for them. Sometimes police are not necessarily the right ones to be responding to calls. I'm wondering if you could provide the committee, in writing, your recommendations for concrete actions we could take on that.

My specific question is this. Earlier, we had the head of the complaints commission from the RCMP appear. I'm wondering if the indigenous women who you serve file complaints against the RCMP, and if not, why not?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: That's a relevant question, thank you.

In terms of the recommendations, we sent you the document I read earlier. In addition, we are going to send you the two briefs we have tabled, that is, the brief we tabled to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and the brief we tabled to the Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Quebec. Both briefs are accompanied by recommendations. The failing justice system really is Quebec Native Women's hobby horse.

Ms. Damoff, as far as the RCMP is concerned, given everything we're going through, we have a great lack of confidence in the justice system.

As an aboriginal organization, our challenge is to find a way to enable our women to regain confidence in the justice system after all we have been through.

We are going to talk about what happened in 2015 and police brutality in Val-d'Or. Indeed, we are going to talk about the missing and murdered aboriginal women.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madame Michel, I'm sorry to interrupt you. I have limited time.

Do they file complaints, though? If they're not filing complaints, why are they not filing complaints?

● (1435)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: They don't file complaints because they're afraid. It's the battle between David and Goliath. They're dealing with a big machine and a long process to file a complaint.

As an organization, we have just filed a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission regarding the woman in square Cabot and the 17 police officers. As an organization that defends women, we have the right to file a complaint against the police officers who acted in this way, which is unacceptable.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Madame Michel.

We heard earlier that there were only 76 complaints that had to do with racism, and I suspect it's because the complaints aren't filed, as opposed to there not being more issues involved.

Mr. Vil, first I want to commend you for your work. Joel Lightbound, the parliamentary secretary for public safety, who couldn't join us today, has spoken very highly of the work you do.

One of the things that concern me is that in Canada it costs $100,000 a year to incarcerate an offender. That doesn't even include the other costs involved in the criminal justice system, policing and the court costs. We've put an awful lot of money into the back end, when someone reaches the criminal justice system, but very little money into the preventative work, like the work that you do in the community.

I'm just wondering if you can speak to the importance of that front-end investment and whether we should be putting more money into proactive programs to divert youth from coming into contact with the criminal justice system, versus spending all of this money once they come into contact with the criminal justice system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fabrice Vil: Thank you for your question.

I'm going to talk briefly about part of my work. I founded an organization called "Pour 3 Points." It trains coaches who work with young people, particularly young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who, in Montreal, are largely racialized youth.

First of all, I think it is indeed relevant to go beyond the justice system to look more broadly at how our public policies translate into programs and invest in our communities to prevent, as you mentioned, young people from coming into contact with the justice system. So it seems obvious to me that we need to invest in community health and education, whether at the provincial or federal level.

However, beyond that, we must ask ourselves how to reallocate funds that are invested in police forces to serve other services. We hear a lot of talk about cutting police funding. This is not an aberration. Indeed, every year, at the municipal, provincial and federal levels, our budgets in education, transportation and all other areas are called into question. Yet they never question the funding allocated to the police. In Montreal alone, if I am not mistaken, the SPVM's budget has increased significantly and represents $665 million annually, or 11% of the City of Montreal's budget.

That said, aboriginal women in Montreal are questioned 11 times more often than white women. Ms. Michel can correct me if I'm wrong. So we have to ask ourselves why we are giving public funds to allow the police to intervene. That is where we have to ask ourselves whether we can reallocate these funds to community workers so they can intervene when there is a problem.

Right now, there is a debate about body cameras. In fact, the cameras have shown that they have no effect on the level of violence in interventions. We're still going to invest money in—

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to.... I seem to be having to cut people off, which I really find frustrating. It's the end of Madame Damoff's time. Again, I apologize.

With that, I'm going to ask Madame Michaud for her six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

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

I thank all the witnesses for their testimony.

I'm going to address Mr. Vil, whom I want to congratulate for the work he is doing with "Pour 3 Points" and in *Briser le code*, which was directed by Nicolas Houde-Sauvé. I think there's a lot of work being done in the community right now, at least in Quebec.

So I'm going to give you the opportunity to finish what you were saying, Mr. Vil. In fact, you're talking about racism in a way that differs from what we've been hearing since the beginning of our proceedings. You're talking about a multifactorial crisis for which we are all responsible, which I think is important.

In fact, a lot of it comes back to the fact that more training needs to be done with police officers, or at least better training.

In your opinion, how should the issue of racism be addressed in police training?

● (1440)

Mr. Fabrice Vil: First of all, thank you for your kind words and for giving me the opportunity to add to what I was saying.

In fact, we are adding solutions that require larger budgets, when they are not effective. To answer the question I was asked, reinvestment in community workers, in the fight against drug addiction and in urban planning will, in my opinion, make it possible to do prevention.

Now, there's a lot of talk now about training on unconscious bias, among other things. This training is, to some extent, relevant, but, given the repressive impact of the police, I think we need to go a little further, as Ms. Michel was saying. We cannot rely solely on training. So I will not get involved as a police training expert. However, in the United Kingdom, for example, police officers who conduct street checks do not carry weapons. Could we explore this possibility in Canada and reserve weapons for emergency response units, which, where warranted, will carry a weapon? That would have prevented the deaths of people like Nicholas Gibbs, Pierre Coriolan or Alain Magloire, who were killed at close range with a rifle or other weapons, such as clubs.

Disarming the police in this context seems important to me. I have already had a conversation with a police officer about this. He told me that we need to understand the stress a police officer feels when he is holding a gun and feels threatened. Well, if he's too stressed, let's take his gun away from him. I think we have to consider that elsewhere in the world, people have found other ways of interacting, and that's where I think we need to go beyond training. How could the funding allocated to the police be allocated to other types of interventions? That's where I think we really have something important to do.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: What you're saying is very interesting. You are the first to mention this since the beginning of our study. Thank you.

I know you're doing a job—

Mr. Fabrice Vil: I'm sorry to interrupt you.

I'll mention one thing. All I'm doing right now is raising the issue with you. I hope other people will. Many people advocate for reduced police funding. Sometimes, these people are perceived as not being sufficiently credible to testify before you, even though the substance of what they're saying is essential.

I'll stop here.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

You are doing important work, especially with young people. I will try to pass it on even more via social media, because I can then reach out to another generation. I think that's important.

In specific terms, what would you say to a young white male, in a privileged situation, let's say, seeking to join the police force and who might end up finding himself in a position of power or authority where he could abuse it?

Mr. Fabrice Vil: Your question deals with the extent of systemic racism, which goes beyond the police forces. It is not for me today to tell white children who want to become police officers what to do. It is up to elementary and secondary school educators to teach young people what racism is, to tell them about Canada's colonial history, and to ensure that the concept of racism becomes an issue taught in our communities. It is also up to our institutions to ensure that our media stop broadcasting information that conveys racist prejudices. If I had to pass a message on to white children today, I would have nothing to say to them.

My message is for their parents, who are people in positions of power, and to people like you, for example, judges, teachers and hospital staff. What are those people doing to ensure that systems are created and public policies are put in place to make sure that discrimination stops?

Today, Ms. Michel said that the Indian Act is fundamentally racist. How many times does she have to say that? This is not the first time she has said it. When are you, yes, you, going to repeal this act?

Children are the result of what you, collectively, are giving them. The question remains: with what power will we confront racism issues?

● (1445)

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, I'm going to have to intervene once again.

I'm sorry, Madame Michaud, but your time is up.

With that, we have Mr. Harris for six minutes, please.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

My first question is for Madame Michel.

You mentioned in your response to a question the situation in Val-d'Or that led to the CERP inquiry. In a letter to Minister Marc Miller in June, this is referenced and talked about, abuses in Val-d'Or, including by police officers, including sexual abuses, intimidation, excessive force and something called "starlight tours".

I've heard that expression used before in western Canada in relation to police officers bringing an inebriated indigenous person outside of the town and leaving them, regardless of the weather. Is that referring to the same thing or is that something else? I had not heard of it happening outside of this particular situation in Saskatoon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be pleased to comment on that.

In 2015, Anishinabe women, that is to say Algonquin women in the Val-d'Or region, made some major allegations. They spoke out against police brutality, which includes sexual assault, physical force and the "starlight tour," as you called it.

The "geographical cure," as we call it, is the arrest of indigenous women who are intoxicated. They take them miles away in the middle of winter and let them walk back. That is the "geographical cure." They do it just like that, perhaps for fun. I don't know.

So those women spoke out in 2015. Thirty-seven cases were opened. However, following our request for investigations, out of those 37 cases entrusted to the independent investigations office (BEI), only two were pursued.

Those two files involved an indigenous police officer who worked in the far north and a non-indigneous police officer who has now committed suicide. However, there was no investigation into the other police officers, who were from the Sûreté du Québec. That means that no case was ever investigated.

Is that right? I am asking the question.

On May 3, in Montreal, a woman in psychological distress cried out for help. There was a long negotiation with an indigenous street worker, and she finally agreed to call 911 to ask for an ambulance. Instead of an ambulance, 17 police officers arrived with the canine unit.

Are those not concrete examples of systemic discrimination and racism? I believe they are.

We also talk about racial profiling, because when you call 911, you have to describe who is asking for help. In this case, with an intoxicated indigenous woman who was in psychological distress, the police came.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you. I appreciate that. I read about the issue regarding the 17 police officers showing up in Montreal as well, and I note that you're unhappy with the results of the CERP study.

Can I ask you and perhaps Professor Lashley to answer this? One of the recommendations, the calls for justice, of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls talks about the establishment of indigenous civilian organizations to provide oversight on policing across jurisdictions.

Can you tell us how you would see that happening, Madame Michel, and perhaps Professor Lashley, if there's time? How would that oversight take place, and in what practical way?

● (1450)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: Clearly, when a call is made for psychological distress, the police should not respond. Social services, social workers should have been the ones helping that woman. Why call the police? It was not an assault.

Action must also be taken with regard to the police, given everything that has been reported. The so-called disciplinary measures are not being applied to the police. Actually, the state, that is the government, does not want to get involved in union wars. It is better to close the file fairly quickly because it does not want to start negotiations.

Let's ask ourselves the question. Will brutal police intervention have to be tolerated for longer still?

There are specific values in policing, such as providing security, keeping the peace and protecting citizens in general, which includes all people from all different backgrounds.

For their part, police officers should work on their professional ethics and their code of conduct, which should be more strictly enforced, especially if there are abuses involving brutality. To that end, disciplinary measures should be applied, which is not the case today. The door is therefore left open for those people to exercise their power.

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, that runs out Mr. Harris's six minutes. I'm rather hoping that Professor Lashley will be able to weave an answer in at some other point.

With that, we're going to our three-minute round. Mr. Uppal, you have three minutes, please.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for your testimony and for adding to our study.

I'll start with Dr. Lashley.

Do you feel that there is enough collaboration between the federal and provincial governments on mental health support?

Ms. Myrna Lashley: Thank you very much for the question.

I think it could be better, but I am encouraged that both levels of government are starting to recognize the importance of mental health.

Where I have difficulty is that I don't think the mental health difficulties experienced by people who are undergoing the trauma of racism are clearly understood. Racism is bad for your health. It's bad for your health because people end up with hypertension, coronary vascular disease and tremendous mental health difficulties. The pressure of having to constantly maintain the facade of being okay in order to function within a society where the system—not the people, but the system—is built to be against people of colour is very wearying. Frantz Fanon refers to it as wearing a mask just to get through the day. I don't think that's clearly understood.

Yes, on the surface, there is co-operation, possibly not much as there should be, but people need to understand what the importance of racism is and what it does to the psyche and the physical well-being of the individual.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Thank you.

We hear a lot when the incidents happen, and you hear it on the news, but what is the prevalence of suicides in the cases of police interventions? Have you looked into that?

Ms. Myrna Lashley: No, I haven't. I've looked at other aspects of police interventions and police-citizen relationship, but I haven't looked at the incidence of suicide.

What I can tell you is that high anxiety levels and no way to cope with them, as well as things like fear and depression, which is one of the outgrowths of racism, can result in suicidal ideation and suicidal events. However, I do not know and cannot answer your question directly. I do not have the answer.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Another part of.... On the collection of data on racial discrimination in the police, is there a challenge in gathering data from all these separate police departments working separately? What can we do to address this?

● (1455)

Ms. Myrna Lashley: I can tell you what happened to me when I wrote my report in 2015 for the SPVM. I had difficulty getting the data. There was almost an attitude of "we can't give her this". I could not enter into their system without their permission, so I was given the data that they allowed me to have. The Armory report, which came out in October—I had one that came out in November—was able to get access to more data, but even they did not get access to all the data.

This comes back to a question that was asked before about civilian oversight. If you had civilian oversight, which would mean a combination of police plus civilians from different communities, I think you would have a better chance of having access to the data. Right now the data is—

The Chair: I'm so sorry—

Ms. Myrna Lashley: Sorry, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: I have to keep cutting people off because we have the tyranny of time.

Mr. Fergus, you have three minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses at the meeting today for their passionate testimony. I think it's a real privilege for the members of this committee to have such knowledgeable people here.

Ms. Michel, Mr. Vil, I will now ask Ms. Lashley a few questions, but if I get some fairly short answers, I'll be able to ask more.

Ms. Lashley, you pointed out that police forces are made up of members of society and, quoting Sir Robert Peel, you said that, therefore, the police are the public, and the public are the police.

Based on your experience with the Montreal police (SPVM), would you tell me whether police training is a significant part of the answer or whether there is something much deeper?

[*English*]

Ms. Myrna Lashley: It's something much deeper than that. I don't think we need more training. Honestly, I don't think training is going to change anything. We've done a lot of that. As you may know, I was at John Abbott College. I was the chair of that department. I was the vice-chair of the board of the École nationale de police, and we trained them.

It's not training. We need institutional change; that's what we need. The training is there, but if you put people into a system where the ethos is that it's an us-against-them mentality, the training doesn't matter because they get hooked into that system. They have to work with those people who believe there's a warrior perspective going on. Therefore, I don't think training is the issue. I think we need a fundamental change.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Ms. Lashley.

Mr. Vil, you and Ms. Michel gave two examples of extreme responses to calls that did not require so many police officers. Can you give us two quick and detailed recommendations to help us address the issue of systemic racism?

[*English*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, you're going to have to do that in six seconds. I'm not sure how to handle this, because I hate to have to cut off my good friend.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Chair, I would then ask Mr. Vil to write his reply. We can't make up answers. It has to be said or written by the witness.

Mr. Vil, could you provide your answer to the clerk so we can take it into account in our report?

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Fergus. Thank you for your co-operation.

Mr. Morrison, you have three minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: I will be sure to send you the answer in writing.

Disciplinary measures for police would effectively prevent police brutality, systemic racism, racial profiling and stop and search. Disciplinary action is necessary—

● (1500)

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Michel, in order to be able to speak, it has to be through the committee chair. We have quaint traditions around here.

Mr. Morrison, please.

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks also to all the witnesses today. It has been really informative.

Dr. Lashley, I really liked your introduction with Peel. It's amazing that, 200 years later, we're still talking about that style of policing with community involvement.

My question to you was actually brought up by MP Fergus. I just want to know what you think we could do in short-term initiatives to address systemic racism today.

Ms. Myrna Lashley: Short-term, we have to get police chiefs on board. They have to set the way the rest of the system is going to work. It has to be a top-down approach. They have to get back to understanding that they are, in fact, the public, that they are not warriors.

I think that's a short-term thing. They have to pull them all together, and pull them back to understanding what Peel's principles were, why they are important and why they still apply today. I don't think there's any magic bullet. This is hard work that has to be done.

Mr. Rob Morrison: I agree. Thank you very much.

Dr. Lashley, I have another question similar to that. It seems that with all the different witnesses we've had, we've come across this: It's hiring the right people for law enforcement, for policing, and diversity and hiring in the different cultures, people who understand and want to be involved with the community.

Do you have any recommendations for us to move forward with, not only for the RCMP but for policing all across Canada, which includes our very rural areas as well?

Ms. Myrna Lashley: It's important that they be asked why they want to go into policing. If you cannot ascertain that they're going into policing to proffer a service, they shouldn't be police. If they're going into policing so that they can be in an adversarial position with the public, these are not good police, by definition. The police are the public, and the public are the police.

Someone brought up earlier the fact that if you look at what's going on throughout Europe, especially if you look at the United Kingdom, only in Northern Ireland do you see police carrying weapons, yet they have the same people and they solve the same problems. They have murders, theft, everything.

Mr. Chair, I'm almost finished.

If you look at Kansas, Kansas has actually sent police over to Scotland to learn how to do exactly what you just asked me.

Mr. Rob Morrison: Thank you so much.

The Chair: I was actually not signalling the end of your time. I had to scratch the back of my neck.

Ms. Myrna Lashley: This is like being at an auction: It's a bid.

The Chair: That's right: Twitch the eyebrow.

Ms. Myrna Lashley: There you go, sir.

The Chair: Madame Damoff, you have three minutes.

Madame Damoff has disappeared.

You're on mute, Pam.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It's Madame Khera who's next.

The Chair: Oh. Well, my notes have Madame Damoff, but I'm perfectly happy to have Madame Khera for three minutes.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Pam.

First and foremost, thank you to all the witnesses for the testimony. Your testimonies are extremely significant in addressing these very important and complex issues as we're looking at addressing systemic racism in policing.

Perhaps I'll continue the earlier conversation that Dr. Lashley was having on race-based data. We know that race-based data collection within policing could be extremely helpful for improving public accountability and informing police policies and practices, such as the use of force.

I'm sure you know that our government recently announced that Stats Canada will now begin to collect race-based data on victims of crime and people accused of crime. We know this is important, but can you perhaps talk a bit about the considerations we need to look at in how we use that data so that it isn't used to further reinforce racist stereotypes? How do we balance that?

● (1505)

Ms. Myrna Lashley: Thank you very much for your question.

That is indeed the issue: How do you use the data? If this data falls into nefarious hands, it can be used to further the cause of racism. You have to establish your parameters very carefully; you have to set your criteria very carefully. You also have to convince the population, especially the population on whom this is focused, that they are not going to be disadvantaged by this.

Before you release it, make sure you do focus groups as to how this will come across, how it will be used. That's very important; otherwise, you'll end up defeating your cause.

Ms. Kamal Khera: Thank you.

How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have just 45 seconds.

Ms. Kamal Khera: Okay. Perhaps I will let Mr. Fabrice Vil answer my friend Greg's question from earlier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fabrice Vil: Thank you for the opportunity.

In my opinion, some of the things said today answer part of the question. I'm also going to send you some documentation.

Having said that, three things come to mind. First, as much as possible, we must take away the police's power to do lethal physical harm. If an officer does not need a firearm, they should not carry one, even for stops and searches. The rules governing stop and search are unclear. The Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec recommends doing away with stop and search practices in Quebec. Some jurisdictions have done so. Things are unclear in the rest of Canada.

Second, funds must be reinvested elsewhere. I have already brought that up.

Third, we need to ensure that the police play a community role, as citizens.

I can send some documentation about it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Madame Michaud, you have one and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I believe Mr. Vil's comments earlier resonated with you, Ms. Michel. I saw you nodding your head. Thank you for being here.

We were just talking about public policy, our role as elected officials, and this Indian Act, which is thoroughly racist. It's been more than a year since the MMIWG report was released, and no action plan has been put forward yet. The government is still using COVID-19 as an excuse, even though it had several months beforehand to work on it and present it.

I think we could go on and on about the problems, the repercussions, the sources of systemic racism, why it exists in our society. It's time for concrete action. So, what do you expect from the government at this time, concretely, in the action plan for indigenous women and for all victims of racism? What do you expect from the federal government?

[*English*]

The Chair: Answer very briefly, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: Mr. Chair, is it my turn to speak?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes. You have about a minute.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Viviane Michel: On June 3, 2019, the report on the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) was submitted. After the report came out, Minister Bennettcontacted us on June 13, 2019. Several indigenous women's organizations—which are very representative—including Quebec Native Women, met with Ms. Bennett in the Senate. We recommended that we begin developing a national action plan. In other words, we recommended that each province could already begin formulating a provincial action plan and we could meet once a year to summarize the work done by the 10 Canadian provinces.

That was June 13, 2019, and it is now July 2020. It's not because of COVID-19. It has been a year. There are gaps in the federal government's commitments and it is just too slow—

● (1510)

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there. Madame Michaud is well past her time.

A minute and a half goes to Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

There are lots of questions that I could ask all three, but I'd like to give Professor Lashley an opportunity to answer my last question.

Is there a practical way that you can talk about so that indigenous women, indigenous people, could have some oversight of police jurisdictions, as recommended by the report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls?

Ms. Myrna Lashley: Thank you very much, sir.

I think it's important that the people who are victims have input into what's going on in their lives. It does not make sense to me that there is none, that things are being done to them and they're just supposed to passively accept it. I think they should be on committees. I think there should be an oversight committee that is run by citizens and the police. The police must speak with citizens; the police must confer. They must come up with strategies together, strategies that are accepted by the women and accepted by the police.

It comes back to the seventh principle, which is that the police are the public and the public are the police. They have to work together, or this will never get done. It will always be adversarial.

Yes, there's a big role for native women to play in this, absolutely.

The Chair: That's a very good note on which to end this discussion.

I thank each of the witnesses for their contribution. I apologize once again for cutting you off from time to time, but, as I said, we are under the tyranny of time here.

With that, I am going to suspend, but first I have a suggestion for colleagues. As you know, it is Friday afternoon. We have staffing issues with respect to where we are here in the House of Commons. I'm suggesting that on the next round of questions I take a minute off everybody in order to try to do some justice to the staff.

Unless I'm meeting with wild objections and Mr. Harris is threatening an invasion from Newfoundland, I think that's what I'm going to do.

With that, we're suspended.

● (1510)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1515)

The Chair: In our final panel of witnesses today, we have Brian Sauvé from the National Police Federation, Ruth Goba from the Black Legal Action Centre, and Dwayne Zacharie from the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association.

With no particular order in mind, we're just going to go with the order that's in the notice of meeting. Mr. Sauvé is first.

You have seven minutes. Just so I don't have to keep interrupting you, I'll just give you a signal around five minutes, and then around six minutes. That will give you some indication to try to wind up your remarks. Therefore, please keep an eye on the screen.

With that, I'll ask Mr. Sauvé to lead with seven minutes, please.

Mr. Brian Sauvé (President, National Police Federation): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, and thank you for inviting me to appear today. My name is Brian Sauvé. I am the president of the National Police Federation. The NPF is the certified bargaining agent representing close to 20,000 front-line members of the RCMP across Canada and internationally.

I would first like to acknowledge that I am speaking to you today from the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people, which includes the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh nations.

I want to start by affirming that the NPF and its membership recognize and decry racism, discrimination and bias in Canada and globally. We believe ongoing conversations, peaceful protests and education are an important expression of our shared desire and commitment to change. Racism is a very serious issue that must be addressed constructively and consistently.

Our members enter policing because they want to make a positive difference in the communities they serve. They participate in anti-drug initiatives, youth education against gangs, anti-bullying programs. They volunteer to coach sports teams and raise funds and supplies for local food banks and shelters, among other initiatives.

Our members have also all signed contracts with Canadians to protect their lives and their rights, even at the expense of their own. I want to recognize all members of the RCMP and thank them for their continued dedicated service to Canadians.

We support and protect every Canadian's right to be treated fairly and equally. In return, we ask for respect and fairness for our members, who put their lives on the line every day.

We are hearing more cases of members who are being yelled at, confronted, spat on and assaulted while on duty. This is unacceptable. All Canadians should be free from harassment and assault, including those on the front line.

Systemic racism is an issue across the country in all institutions. It is not just a policing issue. I feel that policing is being unfairly spotlighted in an important greater conversation, as police routinely address the issues experienced by our most vulnerable citizens when all other systems have failed.

Increasingly, police officers are asked to carry too heavy a load due to dwindling resources and growing demand. Canadians and our members want to see more funding for front-line services that help alleviate pressures on vulnerable Canadians and, by extension, the police. All governments must do more to ensure that all communities have the front-line public safety and social services needed to help Canadians lead happy, healthy lives.

For too long, our members have been called on to fill the gaps in the absence of properly funded mental health and social services, while at the same time RCMP detachments are underfunded across the country. Our members are consistently told to do more with less, when they are already overworked, overstressed, under-rested and underpaid.

Between June 17 and June 22 of this year, Pollara Strategic Insights conducted a survey for NPF of over 2,000 Canadians, which shows that 82% of Canadians agree that properly funding social services would significantly help alleviate thousands of potentially dangerous interactions between police and citizens every day. In that same survey, 78% agreed that both policing and social services need to be adequately funded.

Let me repeat that, because I think it is important. Canadians support their local RCMP and do not want to see police budgets defunded. They want properly funded social services alongside police budgets that allow the RCMP to focus on community safety.

There are many success stories across Canada when governments provide necessary funding to support mental health and police partnerships. For example, police and crisis teams composed of an RCMP officer and a registered psychiatric nurse respond to mental health calls together to intervene, assess and support people having mental health crises. These teams have successfully provided much-needed support within communities, and municipalities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba announced continued funding for PACTs just last week.

As the role of RCMP members continues to expand, so do training and oversight requirements. Policing in Canada is one of the most heavily regulated professions. The NPF supports this oversight and believes that all complaints against members of the RCMP need to be investigated fully, fairly and transparently, and resolved in a timely and effective manner. This includes rare cases regarding use of force. Our members are highly trained in de-escalation and appropriate use of force to address potentially dangerous situations.

● (1520)

The RCMP's own numbers show that use of force is exceedingly rare, with an average of nearly three million calls of service annually and less than one-tenth of one percent resulting in any use of force. This demonstrates how seriously our members take de-escalation efforts to peacefully resolve potentially volatile situations and avoid use of force.

The National Police Federation supports efforts by all levels of government to consider ways to better deliver policing services in Canada. We welcome any opportunity to provide our input and expertise. However, we cannot judge the provision of police services only in the tense and brief moments when RCMP members are forced to respond to difficult situations.

I would also like to add that when elected officials offer negative anti-police comments publicly or offer unguarded opinions on specific police cases in the news, it is not only unfair and irresponsible, but it often contributes to sensationalized media coverage that negatively impacts public safety. It destabilizes community trust and confidence in the overwhelmingly excellent work our members do.

I will end by saying that we must all work together to open ongoing lines of communication, to listen to one another and ultimately find common ground and solutions that will ensure that all Canadians feel equally and adequately protected by the law.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, President Sauvé.

Ruth Goba, executive director of Black Legal Action Centre, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Ruth Goba (Executive Director, Black Legal Action Centre): Thank you very much.

First, I acknowledge that I am on the ancestral territories of the Ojibway, the Anishinaabe, and in particular the Mississaugas of the Credit. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada treaties. I am grateful to be here today.

The Black Legal Action Centre is a not-for-profit corporation incorporated under the laws of Ontario. We are a specialty community legal clinic. We opened our doors to the public in March 2019. We are funded by Legal Aid Ontario, and we are governed by an independent volunteer community board of directors.

Our mandate is to combat individual and systemic anti-black racism across the province of Ontario. We achieve our mandate by providing free legal services to low- and no-income black Ontarians who are facing anti-black racism in housing, employment, education, social assistance, human rights, policing and corrections. We engage in systemic advocacy through test-case litigation, law reform and community development. We also provide summary legal advice, free services and legal education.

BLAC appreciates the opportunity to share our perspective on systemic racism in police services in Canada. SECU has a broad mandate, and we are asking you to consider these submissions within the context of that mandate.

Through our work, BLAC regularly hears from members of the black community who are victims of horrific police violence and white supremacy. We all see it in the media. Anti-black racism is real, and we know very tangibly how it impacts and devastates the black community. Notwithstanding this, and notwithstanding the myriad reports from domestic and international bodies, the denial of the existence of anti-black racism continues, most recently from the commissioner of the RCMP.

The existence of systemic anti-black racism in Canadian society should not be a matter of dispute. This has to be the starting point for any genuine investigation into systemic racism in policing, if public safety and trust are to be attained. There is unequivocal evidence of the fact that black and indigenous people are disproportionately impacted by police violence. The fact is that the police in this country, the Northwest Mounted Police, the force that preceded the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, were created to control and intimidate indigenous people, and later, black people. Accordingly, we urge members of this committee, police forces across the country and others in positions of power to unequivocally acknowledge the existing persistent structural inequalities and history of racism in this country.

The ugly truth is that Canada was built on racism and discrimination. The theft of land and the genocide of indigenous people, the denial of the right to vote for women, the exploitation and enslavement of black people to enrich others, the abuse and murder of Chinese people to build railroads, the internment of Japanese Canadians, the turning away of Jews trying to escape Nazism, the persecution of members of the LGBTQ2S+ community—these are but some of the examples that reveal Canada's history of violence, racism and exclusion.

In furtherance of the global call to end police violence perpetrated against black people and in furtherance of our mandate to combat anti-black racism, BLAC has made the following demands. We've made these demands elsewhere and we repeat them to this committee.

Develop a nationwide mandatory policy on collection of data disaggregated by race, colour, ethnic background, national origin and other identities, to determine where racial disparities exist for African Canadians so as to address them accordingly.

Demilitarize the police. The use and deployment of specialized police units and their direct operational relationship to the Canadian military during protests disproportionately brutalize racialized people, criminalize dissent and undermine democracy. Evidence from the United States reveals that there is a direct correlation between the militarization of police and increasing civilian deaths.

Overhaul police oversight. While this speaks to Ontario, I would say that we are calling for this, in the context of this committee, across the country. In Ontario, we have called for the immediate implementation of the report of the independent police oversight review and the repeal of the comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act. Independent civilian police oversight bodies must be accountable to all members of the communities they serve.

We need a clear and public commitment to zero deaths by police services across the country; an immediate reallocation of resources away from police budgets and into public health, housing, transit, children's services, mental health resources, schools, employment, community centres and other social service budgets; complete transparency of police budgets across the country; and a reallocation of resources, funding and responsibility away from police and toward community-based models of safety, support and prevention to ensure that those who are best equipped to deal with the majority of calls for assistance will not show up to people's homes and neighbourhoods with uniforms, guns and tasers.

● (1525)

I ask you to imagine, if the professionals who respond to crises in our communities were mental service providers, gender-based violence advocates and social workers, what the outcome would be.

In Ontario, we recently had the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet. I ask you what, in that case, the outcome would have been if a mental health service provider, properly trained in de-escalation, had shown up to assist her mother when she called the police, rather than six police officers with badges and guns. I submit to you that the outcome would have been quite different and that Regis Korchinski-Paquet would likely be alive today.

While this committee is looking at policing specifically, I note that the last point is related to your mandate to review corrections and correctional facilities. I urge you to develop a national corrections strategy to address and correct the disproportionately high rates of African Canadians in the correctional system and ensure anti-discriminatory and culturally specific services for African Canadian offenders.

The need for broader systemic change is critical. We are at a new juncture in history that requires us to depart from old ways of thinking and build a more inclusive, non-oppressive system for all. Black Canadians, indigenous people and other racialized communities can no longer endure the injustice of a structure and a culture of policing rooted in a history of violence and racism.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

● (1530)

The Chair: Thank you. You were at seven minutes right on.

Ms. Ruth Goba: Was I?

The Chair: Yes. My goodness.

Ms. Ruth Golda: That's impressive. I didn't get to time it.

The Chair: I should get you to train our other witnesses; then I wouldn't have to be interrupting people all the time.

President Zacharie, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie (President, First Nations Chiefs of Police Association): Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Dwayne Zacharie. I'm the president of the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association. I'm also chief peacekeeper of the Kahnawake Peacekeepers, just outside of Montreal, on the south shore.

I'd like to start by recognizing the territory that I'm broadcasting from this afternoon. It's the territory of Kahnawà:ke.

The FNCPA comprises 36 self-administered police services across the country. It's made up of 21 services in Quebec, nine in Ontario, one in Manitoba, one in Saskatchewan, three in Alberta and one in British Columbia.

First nation communities across Canada come to the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association asking for change. They're looking for change in their communities. They're looking for policing services that are commensurate with the needs of their communities, services that are effective and that reflect cultural, social, intrinsic diversity. They're looking for accountability.

The First Nations Chiefs of Police Association strives to provide that to these communities, not only the 36 that we represent, but other first nation communities across the country. The mandate of the FNCPA is to serve first nation police services and first nation territories across Canada by facilitating the highest level of professionalism and accountability in police services, all in a manner that reflects the unique cultures, status, social circumstances, traditions and aspirations of first nations people.

In the situation we find ourselves in now, the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association is asking for change. We're looking for equality of police services across the country. We're looking for communities to have equality as well. We're asking for the government to recognize first nation policing as an essential service, no longer as a program, so that no longer do we have to continually justify our existence.

We want parity with other policing services, what I guess you'd call “regular” policing services. We're looking for full and adequate staffing. We're looking for people to look at us and say that first nation policing is on par with other police services. From an FNCPA perspective, we want people to recognize us as the experts in first nation policing.

We live and we work in the communities we serve. For decades, self-administered first nation policing services in this country have been chronically underfunded. First nation officers have been forced to work in conditions that no other officers in any other service have had to work in. Despite all of that, despite the underfunding, despite the lack of good working conditions, first nation police officers have continually provided excellent services to the communities they represent.

The severe underfunding of indigenous policing creates issues across the country. Policing across this country should be uniform, in the sense that everyone is equally safe and secure, not just certain parts of the population. Every day, first nation police services work on building trust in their communities. My feeling is that police services have lost the trust of the public at large, and without trust it's very difficult for policing services to work well and provide those services without the cloud that we're under at this moment.

The FNCPA was extremely happy to hear Minister Blair say that first nation policing services should be made an essential service, that recognition has been long in coming and that we've been overlooked for too long. In a sense, first nation policing has been treated with a benign neglect. The time for change is now.

It's sad to say that most times we end up in these situations and having these discussions when there's a tragedy. But here we are; we need to make a change. Most first nation communities in this country do not have a service that's representative of who they are. Most first nations communities end up with a policing service that's provided to them, and that service doesn't necessarily recognize the needs of the community. It's more of a situation in which the policing service says, “Here's the service; here's what you get.”

● (1535)

In our situation in first nation policing, we work with the community. We provide a service that's commensurate with the needs of the community. In the situation I'm in, all of our officers are from this community. They're invested. They've been working here and living here their entire lives.

We need to make changes. We need to have an opportunity to work with our communities and the communities at large.

I understand that certain aspects of indigenous policing and the model that we use may not be transferrable to conventional policing, but there are definitely aspects of first nation policing models that would work in certain communities. I think now is the time to discuss it. For years and years, for decades, first nation policing has had to be creative about providing services to the communities, and I think that, by and large, we've been extremely successful at that.

We need to work together. We need to be accountable to the communities we work in. We need to try to provide the services that the communities require from us.

The FNCPA participated in this process today because we wanted to offer a hand. We wanted to be part of the solution, going forward. It's time now to work together. We have to develop a partnership. We have to go forward and be positive about things and get to a good place. We have to listen to people in the communities, and from that we'll be able to provide services that the communities need. We don't have to tell them what they need; we have to listen.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, President Zacharie.

With that, we're going to go to five-minute rounds. The first questioner is Mr. Paul-Hus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Sauvé and Mr. Zacharie, thank you for your testimony. I'd like to say that, personally, I support police forces 100%, be it the RCMP or Canada's provincial and municipal police forces, or police forces on indigenous reserves.

I have talked to a number of police officers lately, and the vast majority of officers in Canada are people doing their job who want to ensure order and safety for all Canadians and everyone who lives here, regardless of race. Of course, there are exceptions, but it's important to point out that the vast majority of police officers are honourable people who want to do their job. I thank them for that.

The fact remains that, obviously, we have problems. We've got problems and we need to find solutions. I remember my days in the military. I worked on various operations with police officers and I found that it was not always easy to intervene. Intervention was very risky for various reasons. For example, I remember one time when I was in Labrador. There was an indigenous reserve nearby and the military was warned to stay away because it was dangerous.

In these situations, people try to understand why it's risky to intervene on a reserve when they simply want to ensure everyone's safety.

Nowadays, we talk of intervention cameras that could provide answers about intervention, that is, whether the police officer or the intercepted individual is to blame for the various conflicts.

Mr. Sauvé, could you tell me what stage you are currently at in assessing whether or not to introduce cameras for police forces in Canada? I know that the city of Calgary has already implemented the system and that a lot of testing is being done. In the RCMP, for example, where are you at? Is this equipment that you should absolutely have?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Sauvé: Thank you for the question.

We've been on record at the National Police Federation, as I believe have the commissioner and the public safety minister, in support of body cameras for the front-line membership of the RCMP.

I think the challenge we're running into right now, as I mentioned earlier, is that our members have been told for years and years to do more with less. It's a resourcing issue, so in our discussions with Minister Blair and eventually through the finance committee, we will be proposing that you can't do this with internal funding. We have to find money for body cameras. Cameras cannot come at the expense of cops.

The challenge with body cameras is that, although they provide audio and video evidence of an interaction, they are not a panacea. The discussion we're having today really should be to figure out ways to avoid that interaction and ultimately come to a point, in policing in Canada, where we don't need to rely on body cameras or video evidence to determine who's at fault and what's at fault. Really, we should be talking about how we should support social services in Canada to work in partnership with police service agencies in order to have adequate social support networks for all Canadians.

At present, with body-worn cameras, the NPF has been engaged by the RCMP. COVID has been a bit of a challenge in having our first get-together to discuss the specifics of the rollout. For example, how do we comply with privacy? Can you turn it off when you go to the bathroom or receive a phone call from your significant other or your children? Are they on 24-7? It's those types of things.

Really, we're just looking at those details, but I expect it would be fairly quick.

● (1540)

The Chair: There's about a minute left.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Zacharie, I'm from Quebec and, currently, the indigenous communities have a very good relationship with Sûreté du Québec. To my knowledge, they have a good relationship and, generally speaking, things are going well.

If that is really true, could a working model be provided to other provinces or to the RCMP, for example, or am I mistaken?

[*English*]

The Chair: If you can answer that in 15 seconds, that would be helpful.

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie: Yes. Just based on your question, I think that relations between first nation police services and the Sûreté du Québec are going quite well. It's been an evolution. It wasn't always that way. We had to work really hard to get to where we are. With first nation communities, there's still a lot of work that has to be done. We're not close yet.

The services provided here in Quebec generally are by first nation police services, so in that regard we're in a better place. We have support service from the Sûreté du Québec for most of the first nation services.

Working in partnership, I think, is always the way to go. Definitely, there's a model that can be gleaned from all of this.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zacharie. That was a long 15 seconds.

Mr. Fergus, you have five minutes.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank you all for your presentations.

Before I ask my question to Ms. Goba, I feel obliged to say that I think it's entirely reasonable for us to question and examine and put the spotlight on police services and the question of systemic discrimination, for the simple reason that we give licence to our police services to use lethal force. As a black man who runs comparatively a 700% risk of suffering lethally from the use of force just because of the colour of my skin, it seems entirely normal that I would want to question this issue.

My question to you, Ms. Goba, is regarding disaggregated data. We've had a number of witnesses talk about the importance of disaggregated data. I was wondering, given your experience, whether you would be able to point us in the direction of any jurisdictions that have successfully used disaggregated data to take concrete actions that led to an improvement in terms of reducing the differentiation that leads to systemic discrimination.

● (1545)

Ms. Ruth Goba: In the States, data is collected.

I can point to an example, right here in Ontario, where the collection of disaggregated data allowed for the implementation of a system that I believe will assist with the elimination of inequity. The example is in education.

If you live in Ontario, maybe you have seen in the media recently all of the discussions around the Peel District School Board. One of the things the Peel District School Board did was collect disaggregated data on the impact of streaming on the students in the board. It showed atrocious disparity between white students, who were afforded the opportunity to enter into academic courses, and black students, who were streamed and disproportionately put in apprenticeships and other general-level courses.

Having that information allowed the ministry.... It provided evidence to show that it wasn't just anecdotal. It wasn't just black students and black parents saying, “You're being unfair.” It showed the disproportionality based on the numbers in the school. I think about 20% of the students who were streamed were black, when they comprised a much smaller portion of the entire student body.

We've seen it, as well, in the collection of health data in the United States around COVID-19. Where data is collected, you are able to understand where the disparity is, where the difference is, and you can fix it. That is why BLAC consistently calls for the collection of data, not just in policing but in education, where it's made a difference. It will make a difference, I think, in the Peel District School Board, as well as in health care and in employment. We call for data collection not just by the government, but by the private sector as well.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much.

I really do believe that you can't change what you can't measure.

Ms. Ruth Goba: Exactly.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I'm a firm believer in disaggregated data.

My next question is for Mr. Zacharie. Thank you very much for talking about the importance of first nations police services.

I was wondering if you could share with the committee some of the best practices that a first nations police service that was a member of your association.... Because we have limited time, perhaps there are one or two best practices that you would like the committee to hear about to make sure we can make that recommendation going forward.

The Chair: We're back to the impossible question, with 12 seconds left.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Oh, I'm terribly sorry.

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie: What I can say is that we do have some best practices, if you'd like to discuss them. Absolutely.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Would you be able to share that with the committee?

The Chair: Can you send them in to the committee?

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, that would be—

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Chair, if it would be useful, I will give my time, my two minutes, to Mr. Fergus so that this question could be answered.

The Chair: That's very generous on the part of Mr. Anandasangaree.

You have a further two minutes, then.

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie: I don't think I'll need the entire two minutes, only because I think that two minutes doesn't do it justice. I think it's probably better for me to submit something about the best practices and the way we go about our models.

Each first nation community is unique, and each first nation police service is developing a model based on the community it serves. No two first nation communities are identical. Even if they are similar, they have differences. I'm from a community called Kahnawake. It's a Mohawk community. About an hour away is Akwesasne. They're both Mohawk communities, but they're entirely different. The models that we use are different, but they're applicable in our territory.

In terms of our first nation policing, what we're really good at is being creative about the way we provide our services. Generally speaking, we're underfunded. We don't have resources, so we have to come up with creative ways to provide services to the communities we serve. In that regard, it's been a really big win for us and for everybody else, our funding partners included. Basically, you're getting policing for pennies on the dollar, in comparison.

When you talk about defunding police—I know that's been out there a lot—first nations policing is kind of the defunded model of policing. We don't have a lot to work with, but we go out there and do the best we can with the resources, and come up with creative ways of providing services to our people.

● (1550)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus and Mr. Anandasangaree.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you all for your testimony today.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the interpreters who do important work for us, the few who speak French at the committee meeting today.

Mr. Zacharie, you made a number of recommendations regarding indigenous policing, including more long-term funding, better coordination between police forces, better training for police cadets on the socio-cultural realities of indigenous communities and access to comprehensive training for indigenous officers.

We often talk of training for all types of police officers, but you feel that the training specifically provided to indigenous officers is lacking. Why do you say that?

[*English*]

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie: I feel that way because it seems like oftentimes we're treated as second-class citizens in the policing realm. There's not a lot of training that's necessarily available for first nation police departments. There's not a lot of advance training that's out there.

For example, in the province of Quebec, first nation policing is considered only a level 1. That's basic police services: You can answer the phone 24 hours a day, and that's it. There are so many first nation services in this province that provide so many other services that we've had to be creative in order to be able to provide that type of service.

Then again, when you look at it, the training institutions are providing training based on research they've done. What happens is that, when we send our officers and they end up coming back to the community, we have to make adjustments so that they're ready to provide the training that they've learned to our community.

For the Kahnawake Peacekeepers, we send all of our officers to the RCMP training academy: Depot Division in Saskatchewan. As far as I'm concerned, that's a great training institution and our officers are excellent, but before we put them out in our community, we also have our own field training program that adjusts the training that they've learned, so that way we're providing true community policing to our territory.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

People often say how important indigenous police services are. I agree, they are absolutely essential.

My question is a bit touchy. Earlier, I heard Ms. Michel from Quebec Native Women say that, in some situations, indigenous women who are victims of violence hesitate to file complaints because, in smaller communities, everyone knows everyone. The police officer may be a brother, a cousin or an uncle. So that makes them reluctant to file a complaint.

In such cases, how do they keep from falling into that trap and re-establish the bond of trust between the people and police officers?

[*English*]

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie: I believe that we have to make changes. I mentioned before, I think, that first nation communities should have their own first nation police service providing services to the community. Having said that, our model is not perfect and we need to make adjustments.

I believe that every first nation police service must work every day to develop trust in their community. You have to walk the walk. You can't just go out there and police based on what you want to do. You have to police based on what the community needs. Every day you have to build that trust.

I know that there is a reluctance sometimes. In that regard, that's where I think partnerships come into play. We have to be able to develop the partnerships with the services that we have in our community, and if we don't have the services, we have to ask ourselves why we don't have these services if they are a necessity.

There are a lot of areas where there are huge gaps, especially in first nation communities and especially when it comes to providing services. The gaps sometimes are immense. We have to figure out a way to bridge those gaps in order to provide the services that people in each of these territories need.

I'm a firm believer that without developing partnerships, it will be very difficult for us to go forward and make these changes that we're all talking about today. We have to be able to recognize that there's privilege in this country, and with that privilege comes power. People have to be willing to relinquish that power in order to make people more equal. In that regard, we'll start to provide people with more services and we'll be able to be more open at seeing what the needs are.

● (1555)

The Chair: We're going to have to stop it there, Madame Michaud.

Mr. Harris, you have five minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

I first have a question for Chief Zacharie. Of course, we're 30 years out in first nations policing and we're still talking about making it an essential service. We know it's been undervalued, underresourced institutionally and underfunded. I think we'll have some recommendations from this committee about that before it's all over.

Could I take advantage of your presence and your experience, both as chief and as the president of the organization? Is there a place for indigenous policing or first nations policing in urban areas? We have large populations in some areas, particularly out west, in Winnipeg, Edmonton and other places. Is there a model that would work in an urban area, either stand-alone or integrated with the local police force?

Has any thought been given to that? Obviously, it's a different type of community, but is that something that you see value in as well?

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie: Thank you for that question. It's a great question. It's one that I've been asked a number of times.

I believe that the first nation policing model is a model that can be adapted for different situations. Do I think that it's a stand-alone model necessarily in large urban areas? That would have to be evaluated.

I definitely think that many police services could stand to have an integrated unit that would work specifically in certain types of communities, and it would be very similar to the model that we use in first nation policing services. I think that developing the partnership between first nation policing and, for lack of a better term, mainstream policing would help to further that cause.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

I have one question that comes up occasionally. We're talking about making it an essential service. Is civilian oversight an issue, as we see in other police forces? Is that an issue for first nations policing as well?

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie: I think that first nation policing is one of the most accountable services out there. We have to be accountable to our community every single day. We have civilian oversight already. Here in Kahnawake, we've had civilian oversight for decades. The province is just coming online now with that type of thing. Yes, I think oversight is necessary, and I think we all have to start moving toward that.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

I have a question for Ruth Goba, with the Black Legal Action Centre.

You have a lot of experience as a human rights commissioner as well, and dealing with these issues. You talked about data. Of course, there's another type of data that comes up in these matters, and that has to do with racial profiling and carding. We heard complaints about that still being an issue in Halifax, from a witness yesterday.

Is that issue still alive in terms of police forces in Ontario, in particular? That's your jurisdiction. Is that something you're still concerned about?

The Chair: You're on mute.

Ms. Ruth Goba: I'm sorry; I keep putting it on mute so I don't disturb anybody.

The Chair: You're not alone.

Ms. Ruth Goba: Absolutely, it is still an issue. At BLAC, as I said, we serve the province and we receive calls from people across the province. We receive calls regularly from people who are experiencing or have experienced racial profiling by police.

Several years ago, when I was sitting as interim chief, the issue of carding was all over the news. There were different names for it: There was “carding”; there was “street check”. There was some legislative reform put in place by the then provincial government. What was unfortunate about it was that, while there was a lot of talk about it, and while there were reforms put in place, on the ground things did not change for the black community.

People were profiled before the terms “street check” and “carding” existed. They have been speaking about it for decades, and they continue to be profiled in the same way. The language doesn't actually change what's happening on the ground, so I would say to you, yes, it continues to be a problem experienced by our community.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

We'll now go to the two-minute round. We'll call it the lightning round, I suppose.

Mr. Morrison, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rob Morrison: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the three witnesses this afternoon.

My question will go to Brian Sauvé. Brian, there are a lot of reports about members of the RCMP raising concerns about a lack of resources, and it's actually getting to be a safety issue. I wonder if you can elaborate on the current situation. How can the NPF resolve some of these issues?

Mr. Brian Sauvé: Thank you, Mr. Morrison.

Resourcing has been a challenge in the RCMP for the last five years, if not longer, and I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that we really haven't adopted any police resource methodology. When our contracting partners are speaking about a community of 5,000 or 10,000 people, the RCMP won't necessarily have a number: “Service level 1, 2, 3, this is the number of cops that you have.”

If you add in the fact that we've been effectively in a wage freeze since 2017, and add in the Expenditure Restraint Act going back to 2010, we are not the most attractive police employer today. If I were a young guy looking at joining a police service, would I choose Toronto, where I don't have to move and I can have a sustainable family with a spouse who can have a full-time career, or would I choose the RCMP and make considerably less money and possibly have to move around the country?

I think we really need, first, to deal with the compensation issues, and second, to look at our resource methodology. How are we going to deploy our members, into what communities and at what resource levels, in order to sustain those members' careers, not overwork them, allow them to take time off and decompress and use time away from work?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Morrison. We're going to have to leave it there.

Mr. Anandasangaree, you were a generous MP and you're from Scarborough. Do you still want to ask a one-minute question?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses.

This is directed to Ruth Goba. I know that BLAC has established...doing great work. If there's one thing that the federal government could do, with respect to policing, to change the trajectory and the history, what would that be?

Ms. Ruth Goba: I think I would call on the federal government to ensure data collection. We really need to know exactly what's happening. There was a recent report from CBC—today, actually, or just this week—that looks at some of the data. It shows that, for the indigenous and black communities, the percentage of people killed by police across the country, for only those two communities, is significantly greater than their percentage of the population as a whole. For all other groups, that number is the reverse. I think we need to know exactly what's happening.

I also think that we need.... I know you asked me for one thing, but the demilitarization is also critical.

The Chair: He's also run one minute into about three. My goodness, that's the last time I'm going to give this guy an even break, even if he is from Scarborough.

With that, we'll move on to Mr. Vidal for two minutes, please.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I, too, want to recognize and thank all the witnesses for appearing today. Your testimony is valuable.

Mr. Sauvé, earlier today we had a witness who is a criminologist, Mr. Parent. He talked to us about an issue within the RCMP where they send recruits up into northern communities with very little training, maybe adding to that retention problem that you talked about a little bit earlier. A lot of RCMP members leave very quickly after being appointed; that was the testimony he gave.

There's also another barrier that I noticed in northern Saskatchewan that's created by sending young members into northern, rural and remote communities to gain so-called experience, when they have significant language and cultural differences that they have to overcome and they're there for a short time.

I'm wondering if I can get you to comment on that in the time that I have here.

● (1605)

Mr. Brian Sauvé: For sure. Thank you.

Obviously, we do send our young members who graduate from Depot all over Canada. Part of this conversation, and part of the conversation I should be having with the commissioner, is how we can improve the ability to deploy our resources to set those members up for success. Those who get into Depot and graduate from Depot are really the best of the best, and we need to ensure that they are being set up for success, within the RCMP and within the communities they go to.

How can we make that better? How can we do that better? We definitely have ongoing conversations about that. Our recruiting and our training modules are definitely something we're open to discussing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vidal. I'm sure that, with 30 seconds left, you're not going to be able to formulate another question.

Madame Damoff, you have two minutes.

Go ahead, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses.

Chief Zacharie, my question is for you. First, I note that you're chief peacekeeper. I think just the title on its own speaks a lot to the way you treat policing in your nation.

When it comes to the government establishing first nations policing as an essential service, you mentioned training. I'm going to give you this question. You won't have time to answer, but please send us what you can't answer in writing. Should there be consistent specialized training?

With regard to oversight, I know there's been an issue at Six Nations. Do you have any thoughts on how we provide oversight for first nations policing? How do we respect community differences as we establish it? Provinces are the only ones that can certify peace officers. I know there have been issues with bylaws on reserve, especially during COVID, and with enforcement. How can we take all of that into account as we establish first nations policing as an essential service?

The Chair: You have about one minute.

Mr. Dwayne Zacharie: That's a huge question. It's an excellent question.

I think, definitely, specialized training is probably in the cards for the future. I mean, let's be realistic about things. We have to make a huge change here in this country. We have to start providing services that our communities and our people need. We need to have big changes. Without developing the trust from the people we serve, we're not going to get anywhere. All of this stuff is tied into everything that we do every single day.

When I do make my submission, I'll be sure to have all of that stuff incorporated into the answer. Yes, there are huge, huge implications here. Specialized training, I feel, is definitely the way to go.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Damoff.

We have one minute for Madame Michaud, and then one minute for Mr. Harris.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Goba, I am going to give you the opportunity to complete your previous answer to my colleague Mr. Vidal's question in one minute.

After all these meetings, this work, we will be tabling a report in Parliament for the government. After we submit the report, what concrete steps do you expect the government to take to address systemic racism?

[*English*]

The Chair: That was directed to you, Ms. Goba.

Ms. Ruth Goba: Okay. I'm not getting any interpretation. I am sorry. I don't speak French. I'm not getting the interpretation.

The Chair: There's a little icon at the bottom of your screen with a world icon. It goes bilingual, English and French. If you open that, it should be on English. Then you'll get translation.

Ms. Ruth Goba: Oh, I see. Yes, okay.

I'm sorry. I didn't get the interpretation. I'm very sorry about that.

The Chair: Okay.

I'm sorry, Kristina. I'm not going to ask her to answer that question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: All right, that's okay.

[*English*]

Ms. Ruth Goba: I apologize.

The Chair: Well, that's all right.

The final question goes to Mr. Harris, for one minute.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

It's hard to ask a question and get it answered in a minute, but I do want to say to my friend Brian Sauvé that I appreciate his presence here today.

We understand that your members have a tough road ahead, particularly, as was discussed, when going into small rural communities, often with a two-person detachment. These are issues we are very concerned about, as we have talked about before. You said you had a concern about how independent assessments of use of force by other resources are done. I wonder if you could send us your thoughts on that. It was an important thing that you brought to our attention when we met.

I just want to thank you for appearing. I wish you and your organization well in your negotiations coming up.

● (1610)

Mr. Brian Sauvé: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Yes, we'll put something together for you, with respect to a number of topics discussed today, and get it in to the committee. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay, I want to thank colleagues and our witnesses for coming together.

The reason I'm rushing things along on a Friday afternoon, and we're already 15 minutes over time, is that in order to put this together, it takes an enormous number of resources, primarily people resources. There are people here who have worked heroically in order to be able to put these two days together. For those of you who get a chance to send them a note, I think that would be appropriate, and for those who want to send a virtual applause, you're more than welcome. I think that would be more than appropriate.

We just seem to be going from extraordinary panel to extraordinary panel to extraordinary panel, and this has been in that vein. I want to thank the witnesses for their presence here. Your contribution to this study is very impressive. It will be very useful, and it will be incorporated into our ultimate report and recommendations.

With that, I want to wish colleagues a good weekend and ask you to also take note that on Friday the subcommittee is meeting. That notice has gone out because of the efficiency of our clerk, so I look forward to virtually meeting with our subcommittee colleagues. We will then chart a path forward for the rest of this study.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Madame Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: We're not meeting for a week. I wonder if all the parties could give some thought to whether they have additional witnesses they want to submit, so that we don't delay any further. Perhaps we could be thinking about that now.

The Chair: The other thing I'd like you to think about is that I hate cutting people off, but it seems like all I do is cut people off. We may have to look at the time allocations and the panelling allocation as well.

If you could communicate those things to your relevant party person, I would appreciate it, and then we will have a very useful subcommittee meeting.

Again, thank you so much and have a good and safe weekend.