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Chair: Mr. John Williamson



Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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• (1535)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick South-west, CPC)): Good morning, everyone.

I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 116 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

[*English*]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room—and remotely, potentially, but I think everyone is here.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), the committee commences consideration of report 3 from reports 2 to 4 of the 2024 reports of the Auditor General of Canada, entitled “First Nations and Inuit Policing Program”, referred to the committee on Tuesday, March 19, 2024.

Before we begin, I would like to remind all members and other participants in the room of the following important preventive measures.

[*English*]

You'll notice we have a different set-up today. To prevent disruptive and potentially harmful audio feedback incidents that can cause injuries, all in-person participants are reminded to keep their earpieces away from all microphones at all times.

[*Translation*]

As indicated in the communiqué the chair sent to all members on Monday, April 29, 2024, the following measures have been taken to help prevent acoustic incidents.

All the earpieces have been replaced by a model that significantly reduces the likelihood of an acoustic incident. The new earpieces are black, while the old earpieces were grey.

Please use only the approved black earpieces. By default, all earpieces unused at the start of a meeting will be disconnected.

[*English*]

When you are not using your earpiece, please place it face down on the middle of the sticker for this purpose, which you will find on the table, as indicated.

Please consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents.

The room layout has been adjusted to increase the distance between microphones and reduce the chance of feedback from an ambient earpiece.

The witnesses are all spread out, as are members. I'm going to speak to the Liaison Committee about adding some room for witnesses and members, going forward. For now, we're going to have to work through this process. These measures are in place so we can conduct our business without harming the interpreters and to ensure their safety and health are safeguarded at all times.

[*Translation*]

I thank you all for your consideration.

A reminder that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

[*English*]

I would like to welcome our witnesses.

From the Office of the Auditor General, we have Karen Hogan, Auditor General of Canada; Jo Ann Schwartz, principal; and Mélanie Joannis, director.

From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Shawn Tupper, deputy minister; and Chris Moran, assistant deputy minister, indigenous affairs branch.

From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Bryan Larkin, deputy commissioner, specialized policing services; and Warren Brown, assistant commissioner, indigenous and support services.

It's nice to see you all here today.

Each organization will be given a maximum of five minutes for their remarks. After that, we'll proceed to rounds of questions. There will be votes and possibly bells early. I will look for consent on whether we want to proceed in our allotted time, but I will do that when the bells begin.

Without further ado, Ms. Hogan, you have the floor for up to five minutes.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karen Hogan (Auditor General of Canada, Office of the Auditor General): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the committee for this opportunity to discuss our report on the first nations and Inuit policing program, which was tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2024.

I would like to acknowledge that this hearing is taking place on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. This area is also known as Ottawa. I express my gratitude and respect to all indigenous peoples who have contributed to shaping and safeguarding the beautiful lands they call home throughout Canada.

Joining me today are Jo Ann Schwartz, the principal who was responsible for the audit, and Mélanie Joannis, the director who led the audit team.

The first nations and Inuit policing program was created in 1991. We last audited this program in 2014, 10 years ago, and again this time, we found critical shortcomings in how it is being managed. Public Safety Canada is the lead in managing and overseeing the program. We found that the department did not work in partnership with indigenous communities to provide equitable access to policing services that were tailored to their needs.

Through the program's community tripartite agreements, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, delivers dedicated policing services that supplement the ones from the province or territory. We found that the RCMP did not work in partnership with indigenous communities to provide proactive policing services.

[English]

While funding has significantly increased over the last 10 years, we found that \$13 million of funds earmarked for the 2022-23 fiscal year went unspent. As of October 2023, Public Safety Canada anticipated that over \$45 million of program funds would be left undisbursed at the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year. This is concerning in the context of a program intended to support the safety of indigenous communities.

Public Safety Canada did not have an approach to allocate funds equitably to communities. The department told us that it relied on the provinces' or territories' readiness to fund their share of the program and on past funding received by communities to determine the amounts allocated.

Over the past five years, the RCMP has been unable to fully staff the positions funded under the community tripartite agreements, CTAs. This leaves first nations and Inuit communities without the level of proactive and community-focused policing services that they should receive.

Lastly, neither Public Safety Canada nor the RCMP could identify whether requirements set out in policing agreements were being met and whether the program was achieving its intended results. It is important to monitor and analyze data not only to meet the communities' security and safety needs, but also to support the self-determination of communities.

Given that this program has not been updated since 1996 and long-standing issues persist, Public Safety Canada must work with first nations and Inuit communities, provinces and territories, as well as the RCMP, to find a way to more effectively provide proactive and culturally appropriate policing services.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my opening remarks. We'll be pleased to answer any questions the committee members may have.

Thank you.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Auditor General.

We move now to Mr. Tupper from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

It's over to you for five minutes, please.

Thank you.

Mr. Shawn Tupper (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Mr. Chair and committee members, thank you for inviting me and my assistant deputy minister, Chris Moran, to appear before you today here on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

[Translation]

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the Auditor General of Canada's performance audit report on the first nations and Inuit policing program.

Since 1991, the program has provided cost-matched funding to support access to dedicated, culturally responsive policing services in first nations and Inuit communities.

This program supports 36 self-administered police services, which provide community policing in over 155 first nation and Inuit communities.

[English]

Through the community tripartite stream, the program also provides funding to support an enhanced level of policing in communities that are served by the RCMP. This cross-matching approach supports investments in an area of provincial/territorial jurisdiction, and Public Safety Canada is committed to improving the program in collaboration with provinces and territories of jurisdiction and with first nations and Inuit communities.

In response to the Auditor General's performance audit report, Public Safety has developed a preliminary action plan to address the report's recommendations. We are calling it "preliminary" because of the importance of engaging with first nations and Inuit partners and the provinces and territories to do this work.

That said, the department has already started taking action to address the Auditor General's recommendations. The department has recently aligned the delivery of programs, indigenous policing and community safety policy and engagement considerations into a single branch to create more efficient coherent program delivery and to improve the integration of policy on indigenous issues within the Public Safety mandate.

[Translation]

While there is much to do, having a clear line of accountability will help to ensure that it gets done.

This branch is working with provinces and territories and first nations and Inuit communities to identify improvements to program governance with a view to delivering its cost-matched funding faster.

[English]

In parallel, indigenous-led regional and national engagement sessions have been held over the winter on proposed legislative options to advance the minister's mandate to co-develop federal legislation to recognize first nations police services as essential services. The government also reiterated its commitment to this initiative in budget 2024. The engagement sessions build on ongoing collaboration that Public Safety Canada has fostered with first nations and subject matter experts, such as the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association and the First Nations Police Governance Council, as well as provincial and territorial representatives.

Public Safety is also revisiting the program management relationship with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to more readily consider and integrate official availability in program management decisions, and the RCMP are continuing to work with communities to improve cultural awareness practices as they reaffirm their commitment to keeping indigenous communities safe, including through the first nations and Inuit policing program.

[Translation]

Through all these initiatives, collaboration is key.

Public Safety Canada will continue to work closely with first nations and Inuit partners, law enforcement agencies and provinces and territories.

• (1545)

[English]

The provinces and territories are responsible for making decisions on the level of policing needs in their jurisdictions. Consistent with this, they drive decisions on investment priorities for this program by providing 48% of the funding, which the federal government then meets with the remaining 52% within its funding allocation.

This approach presents challenges. Public Safety is aware of the opportunity and is undertaking the necessary work to improve program governance and in turn, delivery and outcome.

The audit report will inform this shared work, help strengthen our ability to overcome challenges and ensure the continued success of the FNIPP

I know that commitment to reconciliation is top of mind in every step we take on this shared path with our indigenous partners.

[Translation]

This work directly affects the safety and security of the indigenous communities who rely on these services.

[English]

By implementing the auditor's report's recommended improvements and fostering collaboration, we aim to create a safer environment, build stronger relationships with indigenous communities and ensure that their unique needs are met.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Finally, from the RCMP, we have Mr. Larkin.

You have the floor for about five minutes, please.

[Translation]

Deputy Commissioner Bryan Larkin (Deputy Commissioner, Specialized Policing Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of Commissioner Mike Duheme, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the Auditor General's 2024 report on the first nations and Inuit policing program.

[English]

Mr. Chairman, I am joined here today by Assistant Commissioner Warren Brown, who oversees our indigenous policing in our community engagement program as a part of our contract for indigenous policing here at national headquarters in Ottawa.

All Canadians have the right to receive culturally responsive and respectful police services. Indigenous communities and reconciliation are one of the RCMP's key strategic priorities, the primary goal of which is to contribute to the health and safety of a prosperous indigenous community.

Under the FNIPP, the RCMP works with external partners, including Public Safety Canada, to coordinate efforts to contribute to the safety of these communities by providing professional, dedicated and responsive services to first nations and Inuit peoples. The RCMP is committed to addressing systemic racism and discrimination while remaining dedicated to strengthening trust with our first nations communities, our Inuit communities and the Métis peoples, as well as within communities and with employees.

The RCMP is focused on making decisions and on developing policies, programs, practices and training that are informed by evidence, that are responsive to community needs and that are culturally appropriate. Changes have been informed and guided through increased engagement with indigenous leaders, consultative groups, elders and youth, as well as in collaboration with government department partners, such as Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Women and Gender Equality Canada, the Department of Justice and Public Safety Canada.

The FNIPP, for example, enhances community policing services, supports culturally responsive policing within the first nations and Inuit communities that we serve, and recognizes input from indigenous communities on the policing services received. The RCMP are service providers under the FNIPP through the community tripartite agreements contracted to provide policing services to a first nation or Inuit community.

In March of this year, the RCMP welcomed the Office of the Auditor General's report on the FNIPP. We believe that by implementing the Auditor General's recommendations, the RCMP can help improve the delivery of police services under this program. We want to be clear that the RCMP agrees with and supports the recommendations of the OAG report and will commit to working with all stakeholders and all partners to address the issues raised and to contribute to a significantly strong action plan. The action plan will respect the jurisdiction of provinces and territories over operational policing, reconfirming the role of the federal government as the financial contributor, and will respond to audit recommendations to improve the strategic focus and the measurable impact of the program.

Beyond the program, though, the RCMP continues to work with communities to make cultural awareness part of the process for all new RCMP regular members who are joining this program and joining our organization. We are also prioritizing their participation and inclusion in localized cultural events. Building strong relations with indigenous communities is extremely important to the RCMP. In the spirit of reconciliation, we look to continue to establish and enhance trust within the communities we serve.

In addition to the FNIPP, the RCMP has implemented the first nations, Inuit and Métis recruitment strategy, which was launched in 2023. We've advanced efforts to share with regular members information related to various indigenous communities. We are supporting regular members and reporting on their participation in various activities and communities and on reconciliation efforts for information and awareness sharing.

We continue to work with all communities to make cultural awareness a part of the community onboarding process for our police officers. The RCMP will continue to work with communities to enhance their safety and to build and strengthen relationships that are based on mutual respect and trust and that have the interest of the communities at their heart.

Once again, I want to reaffirm that we accept the OAG recommendations and we look forward to working with all of our partners to advance and strengthen the communities we serve. Again, thank you, on behalf of Commissioner Duheme, for inviting us to appear before you today. We look forward to the questions.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you all very much.

We will begin our first round of questions. The first four members will have six minutes each.

Mr. Melillo, you are beginning for us. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to join your committee as a guest today.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here.

Auditor General, it is good to see you again. I know you were at the indigenous affairs committee yesterday. We're keeping you busy this week. We appreciate all of your time and efforts on these important issues. I will start with you. Thank you for answering questions yesterday and for being present.

In the report, you found that Public Safety was not monitoring the policing program's effectiveness and was not analyzing the information that was being provided by first nations and Inuit police services. I believe there was a similar finding for the RCMP.

I wonder if you could speak to that, how that has played out and how that has been impacting the services being provided.

Ms. Karen Hogan: I'll take a first crack at it, and see if Jo Ann or Mélanie might want to add something.

What we were looking for was whether they knew they were, first, meeting the requirements of the agreements. What we found was that, in most cases, the RCMP was unable to tell us whether a police officer had spent 100% of their time dedicated to the community, as they were supposed to. In the detachments that we looked at, only 38% could tell us they were really dedicating their time to a culturally appropriate approach to policing services.

When it came to Public Safety, I would outline a few things. The first is that it wasn't monitoring how the RCMP was spending those funds, and it wasn't really gathering data on the effectiveness. It was gathering response rates and so on, which is really the traditional way to look at policing—how many calls you answered and so on—versus whether they were actually in the community, building trust and different relationships.

Do either of you want to add anything to that?

Mrs. Jo Ann Schwartz (Principal, Office of the Auditor General): One other element that we could mention for both entities is we found a lack of monitoring related to gender-diverse people or women in terms of looking to see if the information they were collecting showed any trends or changes they need to make to the services they were providing.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

I won't repeat what we talked about yesterday, but I want to build on it because you highlighted a number of issues, Auditor General.

The overarching thing we come back to is moving toward self-administered agreements and moving to a place where first nations and Inuit policing services are recognized as essential, which is where we want to be and need to be. Public Safety officials mentioned that it is something they have been working on. I will come to you in a minute here, but the former minister for public safety mentioned in September 2022, I believe, that the legislation would be just around the corner. That's a pretty wide corner, because we are a couple of years out and we still don't have that legislation being brought forward.

Can you speak to that gap that exists, and how it can be fixed by declaring or recognizing these services as essential and moving toward self-administered agreements?

Ms. Karen Hogan: I'm sorry. I'm not going to comment on the speed at which bills or legislation moves through Parliament. I'll leave that to all parliamentarians to adjust as they see fit.

However, when it comes to deciding that services should be essential, it comes with recognizing that you need to understand the full demand for those services. Right now, one of the findings in our audit report was that Public Safety doesn't know that full demand, whether it be that there isn't an application process to know how many other communities might want it or what the full need is....

Right now, it's about using the funds available to beef up services under existing agreements. We didn't see much expansion. We saw a small expansion into the north, but not much, and no community moving from a tripartite agreement to a self-administered agreement. While one did move right after the end of our audit period, that's very little progress for the additional funding that was put into the program with the purpose of expanding it.

Defining it as "essential" needs to come with knowing what that means. What will that mean for the federal government to fund this appropriately?

• (1555)

Mr. Eric Melillo: Absolutely.

Very quickly, with my remaining time, I'll go to Public Safety now.

Of course, as we just spoke about, it's been many years, and this legislation recognizing the essential nature of this work isn't there. That's a concern for a number of people, especially in my region. I'm in a Treaty 3 area, where police services are operating without any agreement whatsoever.

There's also the case that \$45 million of program funds is estimated to have been left on the table, just because of the clause of these tripartite agreements. Of course, that's not an acceptable excuse for people who need these essential services.

If I can, I'll ask Public Safety what is being done to rectify that to ensure that the dollars allocated are able to be spent. What's being done to expedite the process of moving that essential legislation?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: With respect to the legislation, it is taking longer than we might have anticipated, but doing it in a co-developed way—making sure we have a process that is acceptable to our indigenous partners and agreeing on the mandate in terms of how we develop that legislation—has not been an easy task. We find ourselves in a position now, with the provinces and territories, where there's a general understanding of the intent of the essential services legislation, but we have varied voices within the indigenous community. We have been engaged with the AFN since the beginning of our efforts and have been travelling the country to engage with communities and leadership within the policing community.

It is simply the struggle of co-developing legislation in a way we are not typically asked to do, so it's taking longer.

With respect to money left on the table, we are a program that flows funds against expenses. We find ourselves, at the end of fiscal years, in situations where not all the money identified for spending has been spent. Therefore, the money doesn't flow. That's to ensure it is not going out the door and being used in other ways and in other programs.

We are stuck in a situation where a province may choose not to match the funds, so we can't flow the funds. It may be, as we have seen in recent years, simply a labour market choice—the RCMP are unable to fully staff their vacant positions as a result of labour market challenges. Consequently, the money doesn't get spent.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That is the time.

Mr. Chen, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the Auditor General and the witnesses who are here before this committee today.

I understand that, through this program, not all provinces have a provincial police force. What sorts of challenges are presented when we are trying to ensure there is a community tripartite agreement under this specific program in provinces where there is no provincial police force?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: The CTAs result from the fact that we have the RCMP in all provinces and territories, save for Ontario and Quebec. In Ontario and Quebec, because we can make different arrangements directly with the communities under their legislation, you see the predominance of the self-administered agreements there. It's simply the design of how the law works in those jurisdictions and the advantage, at times, of having the RCMP in place in other jurisdictions.

Technically, all provinces have provincial police services available to them through the contract that we enter into with the provinces and territories that don't have their own provincial police service. Indeed, there are police on the ground who would be considered "provincial police" and that is done through the contract we have.

• (1600)

Mr. Shaun Chen: Fantastic.

I understand that the number of RCMP officer positions has increased under this community tripartite agreement, in terms of positions available, but the number of positions filled has been rather consistent over the past few years.

Can you share with this committee what some of the challenges are—besides the remoteness of the locations of these positions—in attracting and recruiting talented people to fill these jobs?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: As Deputy Minister Tupper alluded to, one of the challenges in the last couple of years has been the labour market, although we're seeing significant change, so we do anticipate a much more positive outlook as we look at 2024 and beyond.

It's no secret that, across the country, the RCMP has been dealing with recruitment and vacancy issues in all areas: provincial policing, municipal policing, federal policing and specialized policing. We currently sit at a national rate of about 15% vacancy. However, I can tell you that this has been one of Commissioner Duheme's national priorities. Hence, to assist with this, we've actually recently created a senior leadership role that is solely focused on national recruiting, on onboarding and on making our process much more seamless, a much more proactive base, attracting...from coast to coast to coast and with a significant lens around reflecting the communities we serve. We're seeing significant change in our recruiting numbers. Although we are losing more through attrition than we are actually recruiting right now—largely based on the fact that we did lose...that depot was closed for a period of time throughout the pandemic—and are playing catch-up, I'm pleased to announce that this year we anticipate 40 full troops of 32 regular members. We anticipate, in the next fiscal year, to increase that to 50 troops, and of course, we're exploring other, different ways of bringing direct-entry members into our organization, experienced police officers.

From an indigenous perspective, though, one of the challenges that we're dealing with, obviously, is the fact that we do have some remote areas, so we're looking at different opportunities, different servicing models, to support those communities. We're also proud to announce that this is the 30th year of our indigenous pre-cadet process, where we welcome indigenous young persons in our organization to get an understanding of what depot looks like, what training looks like. We've also added this year, the first-ever in a long time, indigenous troops, so 32 indigenous members of the RCMP participating in a complete troop, and we hope to continue to advance that. We've launched a recruiting strategy that is focused around indigenous....

Assistant Commissioner Brown, I'll turn to you for some of the other challenges around things other than just remoteness.

Mr. Warren Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Indigenous and Support Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just for a little perspective, the RCMP polices in 146 community tripartite agreements; that's 443 regular members. We have 30 positions vacant right now. Those are our latest statistics. That's an approximately 11% vacancy pattern compared to the deputy commissioner's 15% reference to our contract policing overall. I'm not saying that's fantastic, but that's positive in that we're not going the other way.

We also police 22% of Canada's population, which is 75% of our land mass. There are 647 detachments, and 556 of those detachments police in indigenous communities: 489 first nations, 36 Inuit communities and 31 Métis settlements. No two indigenous communities are the same. Some are more remote. There are different cultures and different practices, and there are different levels of engagement.

I would say that this is a really good opportunity, thanks to the Auditor General's report, to give us a foundation of what gaps we have and how to move forward more positively with Public Safety Canada.

Mr. Shaun Chen: Thank you.

I note that the Auditor General identified 61 funded positions that remain vacant, so it does sound like things are going in the right direction.

I have a final question for the Auditor General. The first nations and Inuit policing program was created in 1991 and was last updated in 1996. Through your work in auditing other comparable programs in the federal government.... Is it common that we have a program based on a policy from 1996?

• (1605)

Ms. Karen Hogan: I have to tell you that I think it depends. The right answer is, really, that it depends. We highlighted this as something that needs to be looked at because when we audited this program the first time in 2014, that was one of the concerns raised then: that there were constraints because of the 1991 policy that had been updated in 1996, and that it was still constraining.

We made a recommendation in 2014 to fix your policy. That's something that you can easily do, and we find that this is still a position given to us from Public Safety. It really is time, if it's restrictive, to fix it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Lemire, welcome. You have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all committee members for having me.

In Quebec, all agreements with first nations and Inuit are self-administered policing service agreements, whereby first nations or Inuit communities manage their own police service in accordance with provincial laws and regulations.

Ms. Hogan, welcome back. Thank you for being with us.

You mentioned in your report that the department was unable to determine how much additional program funding it had allocated to the agreements or the amount of funding that remained to be allocated.

How is that possible in 2024?

Ms. Karen Hogan: I am concerned about this, because additional funds were allocated for whatever reason, and the department isn't able to demonstrate to us that they were used for the intended purpose.

The focus was on improving existing services rather than expanding the program. In addition, their information technology systems did not contain the necessary details to show us how the funds were used. The problem really stems from gaps in their own data and their information technology systems.

As needed, Ms. Joannis can give you more details on that.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Tupper from Public Safety Canada.

I'm going to quote something from the same passage: "Public Safety Canada officials told us the department lacked modernized information technology systems to efficiently monitor and track program spending."

Can you explain to me how Public Safety Canada usually tracks this funding?

How do you manage the funds entrusted to you?

[*English*]

Mr. Shawn Tupper: With respect to the program, I think that at the time this particular infusion of funds came in, decisions were made jointly with the provinces and territories to allocate that money against where we thought the highest priorities were. In that instance, I think decisions were made that were intended to invest in the program to stabilize it and grow it in terms of its current footprint.

There was only a small opportunity to grow the program. That was a joint decision with the provinces and territories. It goes against what the government had identified in terms of its intent, but it was the simple challenge that we had in terms of the amount of money we had against the kind of investment we could make. We chose to stabilize the program as opposed to grow it and keep it thin and perhaps unstable across the board.

I won't defend my IT system in the department. The department, over time, has not made the investments it needs to make, and those are oftentimes expensive investments. We have simply not been able to sustain an IT system that allows us to do the kind of data analytics that we need to do. This is something that I am looking at now and trying to figure out ways so that I can find the cash to make that kind of investment. That's a department-wide challenge that I have.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you for that.

Yesterday, the Auditor General said the following:

At the moment, the RCMP does not sign the agreements. It is therefore important to ensure that the RCMP is aware of the agreements that will be reached, as well as the needs of first nations. The RCMP will then be better able to fill positions and secure the funding needed to provide equitable services. This is consistent with our findings in all areas related to services provided to indigenous communities, whether it be drinking water, housing or policing. We really have to make sure that the communities are at the negotiating table. That is essential.

My question is for the representatives of both Public Safety Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

When was the last time you met to discuss this?

What role do you allow first nations and Inuit communities to play in developing your action plans?

• (1610)

[*English*]

Mr. Shawn Tupper: I think we can do better between the two organizations in aligning the work we do and identifying the kinds of resource demands we have.

Again, it is one of the struggles of going through these audits. I probably shouldn't say this, but I was around in a previous capacity for the last audit. It isn't a black-and-white situation. The reality for us is that we are entering into the domain of provincial jurisdiction. We do not make these decisions on our own.

The identification of resources and whatnot oftentimes is determined by the jurisdiction, which in this case is provincial or territorial, and we have to work in all jurisdictions with all of the entities that are involved. We need to do better, and certainly between our portfolios we have already taken steps, I think, to get ourselves better aligned to make sure that resource allocations are more transparent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

Indeed, the exercise is not easy, given the people around the table. Thank you for your transparency under the circumstances.

Obviously, I think policing is essential and the role of the police officer needs to be valued in our society. I also recognize the importance of indigenous policing. I am one of those who think it should be considered an essential service.

I would still like to ask you a question. Some money is paid out, but it's not always spent. So I get the impression that there is a lack of funding for public safety in general in Canada.

Is any money intended for indigenous communities being spent elsewhere as a result of situations that appear more urgent and more essential to you than developing services for first nations?

[*English*]

Mr. Shawn Tupper: I would say the program, if we had an application process, would be oversubscribed. I think we have a very clear sense that there is demand out there for the program. We do not have sufficient funding to cover all of the need in indigenous communities across the land—there's no question about that.

Part of the challenge of the “essential services” legislation is to try to demark how we evaluate and how we can determine what that demand is. It is a recognition that it is essential that the policing shouldn't be a grant and contribution program that is fluid over time as governments make decisions about where to put money or not. The whole point and intent of that legislation would be to establish that platform and create a secure planning cycle.

I think the other challenges that we have that the report identifies are the need to do longer planning cycles, to not have automatic renewals, to not wait too long to re-engage with communities, to make sure that we understand the needs that are there. Those are things that we will build into the program as we move forward, and our part is very much driven by the work we're doing with indigenous communities on the legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I now give the floor to Mr. Desjarlais.

[English]

Mr. Desjarlais, you have the floor for six minutes, please.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to preface my comments today with a very important note for any survivors of sexual assault in Canada who may be watching this, or for those who may be interested in topics related to the RCMP and the participation or acknowledgement of sexual assault across Canada, particularly of indigenous women. This is a content warning for much of my discussion here. I want to be very clear about that and support women and gender-diverse folks who are survivors of this. I will be prefacing my further questions in relation to sexual assault within the RCMP, and by the RCMP, with these comments.

I want to acknowledge, as well, that there is an immense history in Canada that pertains to the RCMP's involvement and direct participation in the project of colonizing North America.

I was privy to the Pope coming to Canada to apologize for the church's role in the horrific residential school system. My family received a note from then Prime Minister Stephen Harper for the horrendous treatment of children and an apology from the Government of Canada to survivors, including my grandmother.

One of the worst things Canada has ever done and a sin we have to acknowledge continuously—because it hasn't changed—is this system and how it continues to affect indigenous people today. The fact that the British Isles could send so many to Canada to attack so many other, innocent people.... There was the attack and humiliation of men—my ancestors—when the North-West Mounted Police was created. The toppling of the Red River Métis settlement and the destruction of Batoche were core mandates of the North-West Mounted Police. This is the founding mandate of the RCMP today.

This founding mandate was carried on continuously. Institutions like the church and the government continued to take children. After our men were beaten and wounded, the children were attacked. Finally, they took women, the life-givers and water-bearers of our

nation. Today the RCMP is still conducting...participating in violence against women.

Mr. Larkin, you speak about respect for indigenous people. It's continuously in the news, though. You don't have to look that far. RCMP are continuously engaged in this violence.

I'm going to quote from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry's final report, which was blunt in its assessment.

It said:

The RCMP have not proven to Canada that they are capable of holding themselves to account.

This is a policy failure of a government that is not interested in holding those who perpetrate violence accountable. The RCMP, by indigenous persons' own claims, can't hold themselves accountable. Who are we to turn to when we pick up the phone and realize the very same perpetrators of sexual violence are the RCMP? You can imagine my tremendous frustration with this. If it was your family—your mother, grandmother or daughter—imagine the pain. Imagine it for a moment, Mr. Larkin. Imagine the pain of an auntie having to succumb to this kind of violence.

As someone who hasn't particularly been involved in this work, I can't speak about this extreme violence. However, I know my colleague Leah Gazan, the member of Parliament for Winnipeg Centre, has done a tremendous job attempting to hold Canada accountable for the crisis that is murdered and missing indigenous women and girls.

She spoke to me of a case stemming from Manitoba. You may be familiar with it. It was in relation to RCMP Constable Kevin Theriault.

CBC said:

[He] took an intoxicated Aboriginal woman he had arrested out of a cell and drove her to his northern Manitoba home to “pursue a personal relationship,” according to RCMP adjudication documents obtained by CBC News.

Fellow officers teased and goaded him by text message to see “how far he would go,” and another constable observed flirting between Theriault and the woman, saying he “jokingly made a comment about having a threesome” with her.

The senior officer in the detachment first said “it wasn't right” for Theriault to take the woman out of custody but finally said: “You arrested her, you can do whatever the f—k you want to do.”

● (1615)

This isn't just today.

Maria Campbell was a remarkable Métis person and a survivor of the violence she had to witness during the clearing of the plains, which the RCMP participated in. She recounted a story in her book, *Halfbreed*, of being raped by an RCMP member at the age of 14. He dragged her into a bedroom of her own home. One of the RCMP members had come to hassle the family about alleged poaching.

The RCMP's sexual abuse of indigenous women and girls is an open secret that is well known by indigenous communities. This is a tremendous pain in our country today.

The Auditor General's report suggests, but I would say it needs to go much further.... It needs to recount, Madam Auditor General, the true history of the project that is the RCMP's core mandate. It must go beyond training. It must focus on accountability. It must focus on individuals being held to true account. Supervisors and commissioners cannot continue to be complacent in this violence.

Just recently, three days ago, there was the case of an RCMP officer being charged with child sexual exploitation in St. Paul, Alberta. When is this going to end?

When will the RCMP take seriously its history, account for that history and be accountable for the many lives it's affected and continues to affect today?

● (1620)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desjarlais.

We're beginning our next round.

Mr. Viersen, you have the floor for five minutes, please.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today, and thank the Auditor General for her report. We've been seeing a lot of her lately, and I appreciate all the work she does.

Over the last few years, we've seen a fairly dramatic increase in online child exploitation. Basically, any child with a connection to the Internet is at risk. In particular, we've had several boys who were exploited through video game chats commit suicide.

A year ago, I had the opportunity to visit the RCMP's national child exploitation crime centre. I got to see the work that Mr. Larkin does there.

Mr. Larkin, what's your department seeing? Are there any trends around this?

How does this interface with some of the child exploitation happening around first nations communities, but also with what's happening from Canada to other countries around the world?

I recently had the ambassador from the Philippines complimenting Canada on our co-operation with the Philippines, but she was also frustrated that we don't necessarily have the same presence in the Philippines, like some other countries do. We have one RCMP officer stationed in the Philippines, while other countries have a significant number of police officers because the exploitation happens across the border. Canada is the number four source country of perpetrators coming to the Philippines or exploiting from Canada to the Philippines.

I'm just wondering if we could get a picture of what's going on with that from your perspective.

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: In relation to online child exploitation impacting first nations communities—and anywhere in Canada, for that matter—we recognize that those who prey on the

most vulnerable do not discriminate. Our first nations communities are susceptible. A significant amount of work needs to be done in our first nations communities across the country, not only from an investigative perspective, but from a proactive, prevention and education perspective. There is significant work happening.

The national child exploitation crime centre is celebrating its 20th anniversary. It's an opportune time to look at the way we deploy and the work that we're doing in partnership with witness protection, looking at enhancing and strengthening that program.

However, specifically speaking to the Philippines, as you are aware and have mentioned, we have deployed one officer to that country, who is a child exploitation subject matter expert. We actually just had a team from national headquarters from the program area travel to the Philippines to meet with Philippine authorities, police officials and government officials, as well as our member there, to do a review and evaluation of the program to see whether or not it requires enhancement.

We currently touch 73 countries around the world from a liaison perspective. Obviously, this is recognizing some of the different challenges.

The program review in relation to the Philippines to see whether or not we will adjust and/or redeploy or strengthen our commitment there is not complete. That is certainly on the radar as we continue to look at how we strengthen this.

Child exploitation remains a significant challenge and issue in our country that requires a significant amount of work to be done.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: In terms of human trafficking victims in this country, stakeholders have told me that around 4% of our population is indigenous, and yet of the victims they're helping—these are the ones we know of—about 50% are indigenous. Is there a particular focus from the RCMP on how we help these victims and how we bring these cases to resolution? What's your perspective on that?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: The national child exploitation centre does have a complete victim identification centre. Those officers are largely focused on identifying victims of the crime and tracking and locating those individuals. Clearly, it's an area that needs to be strengthened. Quite frankly, when you look at the under-reported crime of child exploitation as well as the volume, it becomes a significant challenge. There's much work to be done in that particular piece.

I'll ask Assistant Commissioner Warren Brown to talk about several initiatives that are specific to indigenous communities.

• (1625)

Mr. Warren Brown: A recent example I can provide is our engagement with some of the national indigenous organizations, including Inuit communities. Many of the Inuit communities have young adults and children who come down to larger hubs, some hubs that we do not police that have different police of jurisdiction, where there is concern about a high or disproportionate rate of human trafficking.

As Deputy Larkin mentioned, it's under-reported. The challenge is to identify and build trust and to strengthen those relationships to ensure that a higher accuracy of reporting is brought to our attention. From a national lens, we're responsible for policing 13 divisions in Canada. When we police 22% of the population, it's important that we engage with and improve partnerships with some of the bigger police organizations. That's an endeavour before us.

I appreciate your concern. It's certainly something that we're trying to get a better stance on.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Khalid, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing today.

Thank you, Auditor General, for this very important and timely report. It is important to highlight these issues.

I'll start with you, Deputy Minister Tupper, and ask you to talk a bit about how you manage the relationships between the RCMP and their contract policing with first nations in the various negotiation agreements that you enter, and then with the federal government in terms of providing resources.

Mr. Shawn Tupper: I think the basis of the relationship we have starts with our discussions at the federal, provincial and territorial level. We have a table that we construct with the provinces and territories that kind of leads the way in terms of our overall negotiations for the contract and for all the other aspects of the interactions that occur across orders of government in this regard. We have a very well-formulated, mature table that has a fairly steady cycle in which we engage on these issues. Indeed, I think in May I have my next round, where we will engage on these very issues. The Auditor General's report is a subject that will allow us to confront the need for better reporting in particular.

Part of our struggle is that provinces don't report to the federal government. We need to find a better collaborative way to pull together the data that is in the hands of provinces and territories and that is certainly in the hands of my department and in the hands of the RCMP. We need to construct, I think, the proper platforms that allow us to do the proper analytics that have been short over the lifetime of this program.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Can you outline for us which provinces you're having difficulty bringing to the table?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: I would say that we don't have any difficulty bringing provinces to the table. The provinces and territories

confront the same challenge we do at the federal government level—fiscal frameworks and the realities of priority-setting across an agenda at a provincial or territorial level. It's a bit cyclical in the sense that some provinces are more active in a given year than others simply by the choices they make. That is why we sometimes end up with money being left on the table. Provinces make choices about how they handle the priorities that they expend resources on.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: For this meeting that's happening in May, do you have a list of priorities you will be bringing in terms of building those partnerships?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: The number one priority will be to follow up on the recommendations that have been articulated for us, to present our management action plan and to see if we can scope in provincial activities to that action plan to make it more complete. I think first and foremost, frankly, it's to build the datasets that we simply need to do better on. We do want to talk to them about the essential service legislation. We want to make sure that we sustain their general approval or agreement in terms of the direction we're heading. They are concerned that we are striking legislation, or potentially will be striking legislation, in an area of exclusive provincial domain, so we need to make sure that, as we articulate that legislation, it is done in a way that applies to the federal government and does not impose on the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Speaking of provincial jurisdiction, I know that the RCMP, through contract policing, does significant work. In fact, the majority of their resources ends up going into contract policing, as opposed to federal policing, which is also part of their mandate. How do you support the RCMP and manage their work and how they interact with communities?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: Operationally, I don't support them at all, because they have a very strict and strong independence in terms of operational matters, in terms of how they conduct their business. A lot of their priorities that are at the provincial or territorial level are struck by the provincial and territorial governments, and that is between them.

Where I need to have a relationship with the RCMP on the contract is with respect to how the contract works and to the ability...when provinces identify a need for additional resources. They write to the RCMP and to us and identify those building blocks. There is a constant interaction of the three parties, but operationally that is left between the province and the RCMP.

• (1630)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Deputy Commissioner Larkin, how do you frame the relationship with first nations communities and also with Public Safety? How do you measure success? What is your measure of success as you operate in these communities?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: I'll start and then turn it over to Assistant Commissioner Brown to focus on the indigenous piece, because he's the national leader supporting that.

As Deputy Tupper alluded to, each of our provinces and territories where we're the police of jurisdiction—and/or municipalities—has a leadership team. We engage provincially with our Public Safety, Solicitor General and community safety colleagues to set priorities around the province.

We look at crime severity. We look at patterns and trends and some of the public disorder challenges that are ongoing, and that liaises.... We do have a national deputy commissioner, who supports a number of the provinces and territories. We also have a deputy commissioner in British Columbia and Alberta due to the large size of deployment of RCMP members in those provinces. Our priorities are set based at the localized level, whether that be provincial or municipal. Equally, that is also turned to the indigenous communities where we provide policing support. Again, there's that national function. One of the commissioner's priorities was to launch a full-time senior executive particularly around indigenous pieces.

Around your comments on success, we do have performance measurements—departmental results—that we look at. Those are divvied up across the country based on the area and whether we're the provincial police of jurisdiction or the municipal police service of jurisdiction, and/or we also have departmental results at the federal level within federal policing and specialized policing.

Specifically to indigenous, I'll turn to Assistant Commissioner Brown, as that falls within his responsibility.

The Chair: Mr. Brown, I'm going to have to interrupt you. We're well over our time, but I'm sure we'll come back to you.

[Translation]

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Moran and Mr. Tupper, in her report, the Auditor General talks about the lack of equity in funding, which was also expressed very eloquently to the committee yesterday.

Does that mean that some communities received less money than they should have received? Can we make up for past decisions if some communities don't have the capacity to provide a service? Ultimately, if core funding is always the same, more money should be invested in certain communities.

Have mechanisms been put in place to catch up?

[English]

Mr. Shawn Tupper: Mr. Chair, I'll ask Madam Moran.

Ms. Chris Moran (Assistant Deputy Minister, Indigenous Affairs Branch, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you.

With respect to those funding decisions—I think this is something the Auditor General spoke to when she mentioned the fact that some of our funding decisions are based on past funding decisions—the nature of the program provides funding to police officers, and that requires us to earmark that money in a year, and for all future years, because we know that police officer will be in place.

In terms of the equity piece, it's important for us to bear in mind that we are looking at cost-matching with the province. All of the services we have—the 36 police services in the self-administered stream—are expected to meet the standards that are in place in the jurisdiction where they are operating. They are all doing that, some of which are more difficult for them to make it work. As the deputy commissioner has mentioned, some of them are operating in very remote areas.

We continue to try to stabilize those self-administered police services. We continue to try to drive decisions that will ensure they have the funds they need to have stability and predictability and to strategically plan moving into the future.

They are struggling, at times, to recruit, like all police services, and we want to ensure that what we're doing is being there for them to ensure they're playing that role that we see they play in the policing ecosystem in community safety. That's part of the equity piece as well. It's the recognition by other police services as to the role they're playing and how they're operating interchangeably.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: According to the federal policy, the rule is quite strict. The federal government pays 52% of the bill and the province pays 48%.

What happens when a province can't increase its funding? Does it have an impact on equity between the various communities?

● (1635)

[English]

Mr. Shawn Tupper: That's an absolute limiting factor for us. We are obliged to follow provincial jurisdiction in that regard, so if the province is unable to match funding or chooses not to, we cannot act unilaterally in that respect.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now give the floor to the next speaker.

[English]

Mr. Desjarlais, you have the floor for two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My questions will be directed to the RCMP representatives.

Have either of you ever heard of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and two-spirit persons?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: Yes, I have.

Mr. Warren Brown: Yes, I have.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Which calls to justice have you responded to?

Mr. Larkin, you could start.

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: Actually, I'm going to turn it over to Assistant Commissioner Brown, who is the national lead.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I'm sorry, Mr. Larkin, but this is a national inquiry into the police, not just the indigenous unit that you can silo this into and say it's Mr. Brown's problem. Mr. Larkin, it's important. If you don't know, just say you don't know.

Mr. Larkin, have you read the national inquiry?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: Yes, I have.

I apologize for turning it over to Assistant Commissioner Brown. This is a priority for the RCMP commissioner. Obviously, Assistant Commissioner Brown can provide specifics. I don't have that information at my fingertips or have full knowledge of that; however—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Do you even know how many recommendations there are to the RCMP?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: I actually do not know the exact number of recommendations, but I can tell you the commissioner has created a reform and accountability directorate to track all of the various recommendations, because there have been numerous reports, numerous recommendations to the RCMP—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Do you know how disappointing that is to hear, Mr. Larkin, for indigenous people, particularly the families of murdered and missing indigenous people that you can't even name one of them? Can you name one of the recommendations?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: Again, I will have Assistant Commissioner Brown respond to your question.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: No, Mr. Larkin. I'm talking to you. Can you name one?

If you don't know, you can say you don't know.

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: I do not have that.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you.

Mr. Brown.

Mr. Warren Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Out of the 231 recommendations, it becomes very complex. Some are provided directly towards the RCMP; some are provided to our stakeholders, and some are provided in combination between us and others.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Do you know how many directly pertain to the RCMP?

Mr. Warren Brown: I can't provide an exact number, but I believe it would be around 30.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I believe you might be discussing the TRC or another report, but the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women has a specific chapter dedicated to the RCMP. It has 10. Could you name one of them?

Mr. Warren Brown: Yes, I can name one of them.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Which one are you working on, please?

Mr. Warren Brown: Mr. Chair, for your confidence, I'm not confused with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where there are 96 recommendations. A springboard from that is a direct quote from Justice Murray Sinclair, "We have to turn that 150 years of negativity into generations of positivity."

On that we have provided a guide for missing and murdered women, for victims of homicide, as well as a guidebook for missing women. We're presently having that translated into a number of different languages, including several indigenous languages across Canada. That's just one.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Public Safety said—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desjarlais. That is the time. We will come back to you certainly.

We will turn to Mr. Nater for five minutes, please.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through you, thank you to our witnesses for joining us this afternoon.

I'm going to begin with questions for Public Safety Canada. If I have time, I may have a couple for the Auditor General and the RCMP.

Mr. Tupper, in the Auditor General's report, there were some fairly critical comments directed towards Public Safety Canada, specifically around documentation in justifying where things were spent. One of the quotes from section 3.22 was this:

The department did not know how much of the additional program funding it had allocated to the specific self-administered police service agreements and community tripartite agreements, and it did not know what amount of funding remained to be allocated.

That's a pretty critical comment that Public Safety Canada couldn't figure out where the money went. It was justified here that you didn't have modernized information technology system. An Excel spreadsheet could have probably done the same thing. I say that somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but it's fairly concerning.

It goes on in section 3.24 about the review, saying that, "According to Public Safety Canada, the department last performed a review in 2018-19"—five or six years ago—"of RCMP expenditures to ensure that funds were used for the program. However, the department could not provide documentation of this review."

I want a comment from you on those two elements, to begin with.

First, comment on financial management and accountability. Where do these funds actually go? Can you give us any update on how Public Safety is tracking funds?

Second, have you found that review from 2018-19? Is there any documentation within the department of the 2018-19 review?

• (1640)

Mr. Shawn Tupper: With respect to your first question, I concede that our data system was and is inadequate in terms of our ability to produce accurate...and reports. Those are things that we have already started to undertake—and document our ability to track that money in a clearer way. Those are things that we will be able to invest in and start to build up.

I'm not going to make any excuse. I said earlier that I was in a different capacity within the department when the first review was done. I remember thinking, "How is it possible that we've gone since 1996 without updating the policy?" Now I'm shaking my head and saying, "How is it possible we went another 10 years and still haven't done it?"

That is work that we have under way now. That is work that we will resolve. That is work that I have as a challenge across my department, in terms of our ability to track data and make sure that we have the ability to access it and produce it in a timely way.

Chris, I don't know what the answer is in terms of whether we have now found the 2018 review.

Ms. Chris Moran: I cannot say that we have found it. We do know that it happened.

We know that we are taking the steps that emanated from that. Part of that is leading to better tracking, which paradoxically sometimes leads to greater surpluses because we know better what is happening on the ground.

Mr. Shawn Tupper: Mr. Chair, I will undertake to actually resolve the question once and for all. Whether or not I can find it....

We will go back and make a concerted effort to see if we can produce the report for the committee.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll look for that. I appreciate it.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Tupper, for that.

I do look forward to that and I do look forward to at some point getting some clear timelines on when these updates are going to happen within the department. It's concerning.

I've been on this committee for a relatively short period of time. The public safety portfolio—Public Safety Canada itself and also the CBSA—seems to have a real problem with documentation and tracking information. I'm not asking a question at this point. I'm just putting it out there that there is a real concern about where this portfolio is going in terms of documentation and justifying where things have happened.

I'm going to leave it there because I'm going to run out of time.

I want to turn to the RCMP.

There was a report from the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs from June 2021. The recommendation at the time was this:

That the Government of Canada recommend that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police conduct a thorough review of their hiring process and practices to recognize and address any systemic barriers that have had a negative impact on the hiring or selection of Indigenous officers. This review would also include recog-

nizing and addressing any systemic barriers which have led to a greater number of Indigenous officers choosing to leave the force.

That was June 2021. We're nearly three years later. What is the status on that recommendation?

Has the RCMP undertaken that review? What has come out of that?

Mr. Warren Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The RCMP's management advisory board has also provided similar information, which we received in the fall of 2023.

We also have the RCMP-indigenous, co-development, collaboration and accountability unit that was launched in 2021 to address some of those internal barriers to ensure that the indigenous employees in the RCMP are provided fair and equitable opportunity, but external outreach as well.

As I mentioned earlier, we've now hired a senior executive in the RCMP to oversee the first nations, indigenous, Métis and Inuit recruiting strategy. That strategy was up and running as of January of this year. As mentioned, we've seen some positive results already. We've already seen an increased number of indigenous applicants. We've hired our very first Inuit applicant in over 10 years. We're seeing cohorts. We've gone into indigenous communities, and we've heard time and time again that indigenous employees do much better when they are with other indigenous cadets and employees. We're seeing a benefit from that, so I think we've come a long way.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'll turn now to Ms. Yip.

You have the floor for five minutes, please.

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, all, for coming. This is a difficult topic.

Mr. Tupper, could you please provide an update on engagement with Nunavut and Inuit communities regarding the program? Are there any conversations or negotiations happening to bring the program to these communities?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: Right now, the major part of our authorities are to focus on first nations communities—with specific regard to the development of the legislation—with the clear intent that we would follow up with Inuit communities to pursue a similar track with them.

In terms of the program development, I will turn to Ms. Moran to elaborate further.

Ms. Chris Moran: Thank you.

Nunavut has just acceded to the program for the first time since its inception, and we are in the midst of rolling out community tripartite agreements in collaboration with the territory, as well as with the communities there.

I will just note that the program itself works slightly differently in the territories due to the fact that communities are often integrated, so it does require a slightly different conversation.

The short answer to your question is that, yes, we are engaging now. We've been starting that conversation over the last few months. I would say that it will intensify probably in the next six months.

Ms. Jean Yip: I understand that in Nunavut there are roughly 25 communities. Is that what you mean by saying that it's a little different?

Ms. Chris Moran: I mean that this program is designed to operate on reserve, so in the territories where you have communities that are integrated or are not specifically a reserve, the program does operate differently.

We have community tripartite agreements that serve cities where people are integrated, and we're ensuring that there is a culturally responsive complement of officers available for Inuit people who are living in the city. We will ensure that the reporting is made public as we roll those out.

Ms. Jean Yip: Thank you.

Mr. Larkin, in your opening statement, you said, "The RCMP is committed to addressing systemic racism and discrimination while remaining dedicated to strengthening trust with...first nations...Inuit...and...Métis peoples...communities and...employees."

How is this being addressed? It seems like there's a difficult balance there.

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: There are a number of activities that are ongoing across the organization. We've actually reconstructed and rebuilt our professional responsibility office, which oversees our values and ethics. We'll obviously continue to enhance our complaints system, as well as our accountability system. That's included and tied to modernizing our training at depot, which ensures more than 40 hours of culturally sensitive training specific to indigenous communities.

Assistant Commissioner Brown can provide more information. However, before a recruit leaves depot, if they're being assigned to a first nations community, there is a training guide, as well as an understanding of where they're heading within our vast country and the very unique communities that we provide service to.

Equally, on the other side, we've been focused on accountability through enhancing our character-based leadership, our supervisory training and our executive development program so that leaders who come through the organization ensure that we actually change the course.

Again, we do recognize our historical role in colonization, and as we look to the future, we, the RCMP, obviously need to continue the work that we're doing to build trust. We want to recognize that.

There is a series of individual pieces. Reform and accountability is a new directorate that is taking the last decade of numerous recommendations around the RCMP, around enhancing and supporting and delivering better policing services to the citizens of Canada.... It is also focusing on culturally sensitive work, addressing internal systemic barriers. As Assistant Commissioner Brown indicated,

we've been revamping our recruitment process. There are numerous different pieces that are ongoing.

Warren, I don't know if you want to add anything to that response.

• (1650)

Mr. Warren Brown: Additionally, we have an anti-racism unit now embedded within our chief human resources office. Right now, we are looking at a pilot project nationally for race-based data collection. That's the perception of police officers when dealing with people they can encounter in the community.

We're hoping to learn from those experiences and become better.

Ms. Jean Yip: Is there any indigenous language training?

Mr. Warren Brown: That's a very good question, Mr. Chair.

Yes, we're looking at implementing recognition for those employees who endeavour to learn indigenous languages in communities. However, our tenure is often very short in some of the more remote locations.

We're looking to see if we can find a retention and attraction strategy for that. Certainly, it's what our indigenous communities want to see. We have some guidebooks with some plain language, some diagrams and whatnot.

We're looking at programs to fill that gap, but that's a recommendation we've also heard from the commissioner's indigenous advisory committees, so those programs are under way.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Beginning our third round is Mr. Desjarlais. I understand you're taking the official opposition's spot.

You have the floor for five minutes, please.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my Conservative colleagues for the opportunity to use their time.

A 2014 Public Safety Canada report acknowledged systemic violence when one service organization reported that an encounter with the police means arrest or rape.

Do you understand the gravity of the violence your institution has perpetrated and continues to perpetrate?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: Certainly. Yes, we understand the challenges and the history of our organization. Much of the work we're doing looks toward the future of enhancing that trust.

In short, yes, we do.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: We've heard these kinds of responses before.

I'm a young member of Parliament. I've been here three years. I've heard that statement time and time again. It becomes a question of when that will actually take place.

I find that institutions only respond to force. When it comes to why you won't do these things, it's, "Well, we'll look to the future." Who can't look to the future are those children—the little girls—who go missing, the women who are murdered and the people's families, who are left behind. They can't wait for that, Mr. Larkin.

The question becomes at what point we just call it quits and say the RCMP is corrupt and we need to start over. We have to seriously ask that question.

When it comes to institutions that fail us, we require a very serious and a very important review of the actual work the RCMP does. If the trust is so incredibly broken, Mr. Larkin—you've acknowledged that—at what point can a partner continue to beg for proper protection when you can't even guarantee...? Three days ago, one of your officers was charged with child exploitation.

Who holds you accountable, Mr. Larkin?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: First, there are a number of initiatives that are ongoing to address a series of recommendations that have—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I'm sorry. I have limited time.

Who holds the RCMP accountable?

D/Commr Bryan Larkin: The commissioner reports to the Minister of Public Safety.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much.

That's an important piece to it. The Minister of Public Safety is aware of this.

Deputy Minister, have you responded to or met with the Minister of Public Safety with regard to these serious concerns?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: The minister would deal more directly with the RCMP as part of that operational organization—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Have you advised that the RCMP should be held accountable for this?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: I have not.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you for your honesty. It's important that we have honest representation of this fact.

Will you commit to bringing up this serious matter with the minister? If it's the minister's job to hold the RCMP accountable, will you please inform him of this emergency?

Children can't wait. We can't wait for this moment and this future beautiful time. Countless victims are awaiting justice.

Will you commit to informing the minister that we need a process of immediate accountability and a process to inform justice, and a review of the RCMP's conduct from the top?

• (1655)

Mr. Shawn Tupper: I commit to raising these issues with my minister.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much.

I do want to move now to an issue related to funding.

Public Safety holds funds because they're attached to older funding models from first nations. Allowing provinces and territories to leave these funding models goes against the constitutional rights of first nations. Consultation with first nations is imperative.

How do we intend to fix this issue, Deputy Minister?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: For the past two years, we have been out engaging with communities.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Have you read the Constitution, in terms of jurisdiction? You've commented on jurisdiction several times. Have you read section 91 of the Constitution, regarding number 24 under the classes of subjects? ?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: Is that the section that defines federal responsibility towards Indian people and Indian lands?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Yes. Have you read that?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: Yes.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: So why is it that a federal government that has whole jurisdictional power over first nations reserves is using the excuse of a jurisdictional barrier by a province?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: It's not an excuse. The reality is that the administration of justice is a provincial responsibility. We cannot go into provincial territory and implement laws or construct organizations that are outside the bounds of provincial and territorial law. That is also defined in the Constitution. We work with the provinces, and that is why the 52—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Who suffers from this jurisdictional football passing?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: I don't believe that it's football passing.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Well, the courts have ruled several times actually. They have said that before.

Mr. Shawn Tupper: The reason we have a split in the funding that recognizes a 52% contribution from the federal government—

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: The AFN has said they've been stonewalled by your ministry.

Mr. Shawn Tupper: —is to acknowledge the work we do with the provinces and territories.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Will you meet with the AFN, Mr. Tupper? Will you meet with the AFN on the funding?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Desjarlais, we will be right back to you shortly. We are over our time.

Ms. Bradford, you have the floor for five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us today.

Mr. Larkin, we've dealt before with the shortage of RCMP officers and the difficulty with recruiting to remote areas. I was just wondering how much pay affects this. Can you elaborate on the pay rates for RCMP with respect to provincial forces or municipal forces? Might that be a factor?

Mr. Warren Brown: Mr. Chair, I will answer if I may. I can't get into specifics regarding pay. I do know that the RCMP, since we've been unionized, is now more comparable to other police forces of similar type and size across Canada. Other police of jurisdictions and provincial areas have pay and benefits that I won't speak to.

I believe that our pay is now more in line with that of other police departments in Canada, and that has provided more opportunity for experienced police officers to join the RCMP. As well, with our robust and aggressive hiring practices, we've seen an increase in the number of people we have at depot, so I anticipate that we're on a positive path forward to addressing some of our vacancies.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Okay.

Can you elaborate on what the RCMP is doing specifically to increase public confidence and trust with our indigenous communities?

Mr. Warren Brown: We have a number of programs under way. Primarily the commissioner has his indigenous advisory committee, which includes representatives from each province and territory to provide the commissioner and me—I'm the chair of that committee—with direction on what types of programs they would like to see in their communities.

I think one gap the audit identified was that the RCMP was not a signatory to the CTAs, so I'm hoping that as we move forward in our management action plans we can provide more input and feedback from the communities on the type of policing they'd like to see. We have identified that, primarily under the FNIPP, CTAs are for enhanced policing. However, some of the communities, because we have built trust and confidence through those enhanced positions, would like to see those police officers take on more of a core duty and responsibility.

I think if we address some of those issues we'll be in a better place. The commanding officers, those who are in charge of each division, have their own advisory committees as well. We have reporting elements in place for the detachments to meet frequently with indigenous communities, and it's that consultation and the feedback from the communities that provide us with our direction.

• (1700)

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Okay.

Mr. Tupper, could you explain how you plan to bridge the gap between the two types of agreements? We keep referring to the different service deliveries where you have the two types of programs to ensure equal and equitable access and service delivery across all communities. You have the tripartite agreements and then you have the self-governing agreements.

I'm also interested to know how you can encourage more communities to adopt the self-governing model.

Mr. Shawn Tupper: First of all, we need to be out there working with communities and hear from them in terms of whether or not they want to adopt that model. That has to do with where they're located and the other resources that they have available to them.

Our goal over time, particularly if we succeed in getting the legislation in place, is to start to define that path forward in terms of transitioning communities into more independent policing arrangements. As I say, those will be choices that communities need to make. That is part of the work we're doing now. It's to ascertain what that demand will be.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: I also understand that the reason there are so many funds left over is that provinces or territories aren't stepping up and contributing their fair share. Could you elaborate as to which provinces and territories are not participating in the cost sharing?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: Again, it's not so much that they're not stepping up. They make different choices through the funding cycles. All the provinces and territories engage with us in this program. All of them invest in various ways in the program. They make choices about what priorities they make. That may be choosing between communities in terms of where they invest and where they don't invest. It may simply be choices they make in terms of whether they augment the funding available in their programs overall.

I want to be clear that provinces and territories are our partners in this program. We have a positive relationship with all the provinces and territories in this work. Community safety is an area of demand where more investment could be made. I also want to point out that it is not just policing that will be the issue in a lot of these communities. What we are doing through community safety planning, what we are doing in terms of crime prevention, what we are doing with respect to youth programming and gangs and drugs programming—all are elements of how we invest in communities, particularly indigenous communities, to try to change and bend the data we see in terms of crime rates.

All of those things work together and will, all together, define what our success is. It won't be just one investment through policing or any of those other programs I just mentioned.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That is the time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Larkin or Mr. Brown, I'd like to know if you are holding discussions with Public Safety Canada officials on how to recognize indigenous police services as essential services.

Can you tell the committee how that could be done and what it might look like?

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Brown: Thank you for that.

I would start off by saying, again, as Mr. Tupper referred to earlier, the provinces and territories are responsible for the tempo, if you will, and the priorities for policing in that specific area. Our primary concern as the RCMP is to ensure that in all communities public safety is the number one priority. We would endeavour to support whatever program would best suit the provinces and territories under our contract. We would be nimble. It's not a one-size-fits-all. As I said earlier, no two indigenous communities are the same. There are specific needs that some might have, and others might have other priorities. It becomes a little more complex.

Certainly, the RCMP are at the table to make sure that whatever service we provide, it best meets the communities' needs.

• (1705)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I'd like to hear more from you about the priorities for indigenous policing.

When was the last time you had a follow-up meeting on capacity development within indigenous communities?

Do you have regular discussions with Public Safety Canada officials?

Are any agreements about to be signed? The Auditor General's report is quite damning, and first nations communities want results on the ground.

Can we expect a changing of the guard?

[English]

Mr. Warren Brown: Thank you.

The Auditor General has identified that gap. It's a gap that, through our management action plan, we hope we can close.

I would, if I may, talk about our national reconciliation pathway, which might assist. As we renew our priorities and commitments for reconciliation, we continue to embrace the phrase “nothing about us without us”, ensuring the inclusion of first nations, Métis and Inuit voices, perspectives and advice, and new and innovative ways of working together. This includes efforts to decolonize policing and enforcement through engagement, applying an indigenous GBA+ lens and reviewing all policies, practices and procedures to ensure service delivery is culturally appropriate. As well, the RCMP will use a trauma-informed approach across all of the organization's functions to increase safety for indigenous women and girls.

I would summarize your question by saying that, when it is time to look at the renewal of CTAs, the RCMP would certainly like to be part of that conversation at the table.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

Mr. Desjarlais, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm following up on my last point in relation to funding.

Mr. Tupper, I don't believe your argument—that this is a provincial jurisdictional issue—will hold up in court. Jordan's principle is a good example. Not too long ago, another deputy minister said the exact same thing—that it's the provinces that are holding.... Luckily enough, indigenous people fought the government and now indigenous children have the opportunity to live in this country. Who suffers from this jurisdictional football passing? The answer to my question is that it's indigenous people. I'm confident that, should your analysis and advice to the government be challenged in a court, you'll lose the decision and indigenous people will, yet again, win—just like we do most cases at the Supreme Court when it comes to jurisdictional battles.

I suggest that the Ministry of Justice give you better advice as to what the constitutional promises and limits of Canada are, and their relationship to indigenous people. I fundamentally disagree that we should continue to suffer under a model that says jurisdiction has to take a front seat to the lives of indigenous people.

I now want to turn to the fact that indigenous police services have to fight tooth and nail for the minimum funding.

In early spring 2023, funding negotiations between the federal government and Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario fell through. On March 29, the Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario, which represents nine stand-alone indigenous services, filed a human rights complaint against Public Safety Canada, claiming that the underfunding and under-resourcing of indigenous police services amount to systemic racism. The funding agreements officially expired on March 31, 2023.

Are you aware of this, Mr. Tupper?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: I am indeed, yes.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Why are there different funding models and terms and conditions when it comes to indigenous versus non-indigenous policing models?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: I don't negotiate non-indigenous policing models.

You are correct. I am absolutely aware of the case before the courts now. We have tried, genuinely, to engage with the community. We have arrived at an impasse in terms of our understanding of the funding we have available and how we can close an agreement with that community. They have chosen to pursue a legal solution to that.

I appreciate your earlier comments, sir, with respect to where the courts may go. At this point in time, I can only comment that we will see how this gets resolved in the courts.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I want to note that the court ruled against you already on this.

Mr. Shawn Tupper: It is under appeal.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Why are you appealing it?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: It's because we disagree with the original court position.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Who suffers?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the difficulty of what—

• (1710)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Tupper, who suffers?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: It's the participants—the members of communities.

The Chair: Mr. Desjarlais, that is your time, I'm afraid.

I'm going now to Mr. Melillo.

You have the floor. I understand you're going to be splitting your time with Mr. Nater. Would you like me to split you halfway, or are you going to turn it over to him?

Mr. Eric Melillo: I'll turn it over to him.

The Chair: That's fine. I wanted to be sure we're clear.

It's over to you for five minutes.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you, again, to the witnesses for being here and taking part in such an important discussion.

I want to come back to the negotiations of these important funding agreements.

The Auditor General's report, Mr. Tupper, mentioned that many communities did not feel engaged, that the negotiations were not true negotiations, and that the federal government was coming to the table with predetermined funding allocations.

Why is this happening? It seems that your department is not negotiating, necessarily, in good faith.

Mr. Shawn Tupper: Mr. Chair, I think there is a question of practice, which isn't a great answer, in the sense that we have done it in the past that way, and we continue to do it in the present that way. One of the efforts that we are trying to pursue in the department is that concentration of expertise and programming in one single place. Our desire is indeed to expand the kind of work we do to be able to engage more directly and consistently with communities, to not rely on just the cycles of how these agreements work, but rather to make sure we have a much more consistent engagement with communities. Therefore, between funding decisions we learn what the needs of communities are, and that gets reflected in the next round of discussions. That, I think, is something that will allow us to say that we are actually engaging in a better way with community leadership.

Mr. Eric Melillo: I understand. Have you taken any specific, concrete measures in that regard that you can point to?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: We started with, as I say, bringing the entirety of my indigenous activities within the department together. That has been translated into some of our regional organizations so that I have people on the ground now. They will be more accessible to community leadership, and that is a really important part—that people are present and it's not a fly-in-fly-out sort of relationship.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you. I appreciate that. I'll move on to another topic, with limited time as I'm sure you can appreciate.

Mr. Tupper, I'll stick with you, though. The report also found that equitable funding is not defined by Public Safety Canada, and there was “not an approach to allocate funds equitably to program recipients.” We've heard that a bit already. Can you speak to why equitable funding does not have a specific definition, and what the department is doing to rectify that?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: On the latter part of the question, Mr. Chair, next month, as we engage with our partners in this, that has to be a part of it. As we collectively look at the Auditor General's report and understand the kinds of actions that we need to address the recommendations that have been made, that will be a part of the conversation. That equity is something that we share in terms of who the funders are and how we work with communities.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Okay, I appreciate that, Mr. Tupper. I have just one more quick question before I turn the floor over to Mr. Nater. Public Safety Canada, according to the Auditor General's report, does not keep an accurate listing of the community tripartite agreements. Do you have any response to that?

Mr. Shawn Tupper: May I turn to you, Chris?

Ms. Chris Moran: You may. Thank you.

I'd like to add a point about the equitable distribution, and part of the challenge with that is that the program does serve two very different types of policing—one being self-administered, and one being the community tripartite agreement. The sizes of those self-administered services are quite different. We have some that are quite small and some that are very large by policing standards, which creates challenges.

With respect to a single list, we use a database for program delivery, and it is true that there may not have been one single Excel spreadsheet, for example, with a listing, but it is not accurate that we do not know where that funding is going and who gets it.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you for that. Unfortunately, I have to stop you there, because I did promise Mr. Nater some of my time, so I'll turn the floor over to him.

Mr. John Nater: Thank you, Chair. Hopefully we can deal with this very quickly. I would like to move the motion that I have on notice from last week.

That, in relation to the committee's ongoing work on government contracting and further to the information provided by the Treasury Board Secretariat on April 12, 2024, the committee order:

(a) the production of copies of the 140 conflict of interest declarations filed in the 2022-23 fiscal year and the 162 conflict of interest declarations filed in the 2023-24 fiscal year concerning public servants employed in the core public administration who were involved in contractual relationships with the Government of Canada;

(b) the production of copies of any conflict of interest declarations filed in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years by persons employed by the federal government, including Crown corporations, but outside of the core public administration, who were involved in contractual relationships with the Government of Canada; and

(c) the production of records that detail all payments made in respect of the contractual relationships disclosed in the declarations referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b), provided that

- (d) the names and contact information of the public servants may be redacted;
- (e) for greater certainty, no redactions shall be applied to the names of contracting entities or the value of the contractual relationship disclosed, including, where multiple relationships are disclosed, the value of each contractual relationship disclosed; and
- (f) these documents, with only the redactions authorized by paragraph (d), shall be deposited with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages,
- (i) in the case of the documents referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b), within 21 days of the adoption of this order, and
- (ii) in the case of documents referred to in paragraph (c), within 35 days of the adoption of this order.

Chair, I would just briefly comment that the article we saw in La Presse today just gives us further motivation for this information. It's been provided to us in a spreadsheet with just the sheer numbers. This is simply getting more information from the Treasury Board Secretariat with the appropriate redactions. I think it is incumbent on us to do this, and hopefully we can get consensus around the table to pass this quickly today.

- (1715)

The Chair: I was going to ask you, Mr. Nater, if there is any chance that you have consensus from your colleagues around the table. First and foremost, I have to seek unanimous consent to continue for 15 minutes.

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: The meeting will be adjourned in one second.

I want to thank our witnesses for coming in today, all of you. I appreciate it. I understand that there will be some information forthcoming. That can be sent to the committee clerk.

For subcommittee members, I have a reminder that we will be meeting back here right after the votes.

This meeting is adjourned.

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