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# **Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, June 6, 2013**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson**



## Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

Thursday, June 6, 2013

•(0945)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP)):** Good morning, everyone.

This is meeting number 88 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, on Thursday, June 6. This morning we have with us Chief Doug Palson, from the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association. We normally open with a 10-minute statement and then we'll do rounds of questions.

Welcome and thanks for being here this morning, Chief Palson.

**Chief Doug Palson (Vice-President, First Nations Chiefs of Police Association):** Thanks very much.

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for your invitation to speak on behalf of the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association, which I'll refer to as the FNCPA. Chief John Syrette, president of the association, was unable to attend and asked me to appear in his place.

I am Chief Doug Palson, chief of the Dakota Ojibway Police Service, the headquarters being located in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. I'm also the vice-president of the FNCPA. My work with first nation communities began with the RCMP in The Pas, Manitoba, in summer 1987. In 1988 I joined the Brandon Police Service and was appointed chief of the Dakota Ojibway Police Service in 2008. I am of Métis descent.

The First Nations Chiefs of Police Association was incorporated in 1992. It brought together the chiefs of police of self-administered policing agreements that resulted from the 1991 cabinet approval of the first nations policing policy. The FNCPA held its first annual meeting in 1996.

The FNCPA works to advance self-administered first nations police services within Canada. Our mandate is to serve first nations police services and first nation territories across Canada by facilitating the highest level of professionalism and accountability in their police services, and in a manner that reflects the unique cultures, constitutional status, social circumstances, traditions, and aspirations of first nations.

The FNCPA holds an ex officio voting position on the board of directors of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, and many of the first nations police executives are active members of the CACP committees. The FNCPA has been formally recognized by the Assembly of First Nations. Our total membership of 60 represents 38 stand-alone, self-administered first nations police services. We hold

an annual conference where the business of the association is conducted and the membership is brought up to date on national, topical issues. One of these is the sustainability of first nations policing, which I'll address in more detail in a moment.

The work of the FNCPA covers eight areas of responsibility: effective policing on first nation territories; reflecting cultural, social, and constitutional diversity; accountability; training to meet the needs of first nations police services and communities; education of members and partners about the roles and functions of the first nations police services; provision of advice and expertise on issues of justice and public security to members, non-members, and governments; effective partnerships; and identifying and promoting best practices in first nations policing.

At our most recent annual conference held here in Ottawa two weeks ago, our members identified effective policing on first nation territories and partnerships as the two most pressing priorities.

Effective policing on first nation territories is a good lead-in to the current discussions on the economics of policing. We see a place for the first nations policing voice as part of these discussions because we have a keen understanding of the economics of first nations policing. In January of this year, in Ottawa, Public Safety Canada hosted the Summit on the Economics of Policing: Strengthening Canada's Policing Advantage. The Minister of Public Safety stated that the term "Economics of Policing" refers to "the evolution and sustainability of policing in a time of greater fiscal constraints and enhanced public expectations."

The summit is described as one step in a long journey towards increasing efficiency and effectiveness of policing in Canada. Public Safety Canada has said that one planned outcome of the strategy, for ministers to consider, is to ensure that policing in Canada remains sustainable now and in the future. Although the FNCPA was not one of the associations that participated in the discussions that led to the summit, some individual first nations' chiefs of police did attend the event and we have been monitoring developments closely.

As an association, we are committed to efficient and effective policing that is sustainable now and into the future. We do not need to be convinced about the importance of the innovative approaches the Minister of Public Safety referred to when he called for "integrated efforts by multiple local agencies". We do, however, recommend a reality check.

● (0950)

We have concerns about the availability and capacity of service agencies in the vulnerable and often remote communities served by first nations policing services. At a time when budgets for corrections are increasing, our communities find it more and more difficult to access federal crime prevention funding. We feel strongly that investing in prevention needs to be part of the discussion about the economics of policing. Front-end prevention is more cost-effective than corrective measures on the back end.

We also seek recognition of the constitutional relationship that sets out the responsibilities of both the federal and provincial governments toward first nations. The federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to be part of the solution to the economics of first nations policing.

Let me outline very briefly the history, context, and current situation of stand-alone, self-administered first nations police services that are funded under the first nations policing program. My intent is to convey the fundamental challenges that first nations police services face in providing a basic level of service. This is at a time when other police services are putting in place structural and administrative reforms and strategies to address cybercrime, national security, and terrorism threats, and in some cases deciding whether to purchase a helicopter.

The purpose of the first nations policing policy is to provide first nation and Inuit communities on reserve, crown land, or land set aside for their use, with access to police services that are professional, effective, culturally appropriate, and accountable to the communities they serve. The first nations policing program is intended to support the policy and to facilitate the transition to self-administered police services in communities that choose such a model. Successive evaluations and reviews, while pointing out challenges of uncertain and inadequate funding, the need for strengthening police governance, and other areas for improvement, have endorsed the principles of the first nations policing policy and confirmed the cost-effectiveness, clearance rates, and community satisfaction with the program.

As you are aware, Public Safety Canada administers the program, which has no statutory basis and is a discretionary federal transfer payment program. The cost of policing is shared by federal and provincial governments at 52% and 48% respectively.

Our association focuses on first nations policing through self-administered agreements that are part of the first nations policing program. Our association is unique in being able to speak on first nations' experiences with these agreements, which are intended to be negotiated among first nation or Inuit communities, provincial or territorial governments, and the federal government. The past 20 years of experience with self-administered agreements under the FNPP reveal the following issues that relate to the economics not only of policing but also of community safety, health, and well-being.

First of all, the lack of a legislative basis for first nations policing means that this innovative and proven policing model has a shaky existence and an uncertain future that is not good for first nation communities. First nations policing is seen by governments as an

enhancement to the basic policing services provided by the province or territory, when in fact the self-administered police services are the de facto police service on the ground with enhancements coming from other policing services.

Funding levels are inadequate when compared with other policing services' budgets, particularly in light of the geographical and socio-economic conditions of many first nation communities. Standards for infrastructure, training, and general operations are imposed by governments, but there is often no funding for implementation and compliance. Comparisons of costs between first nations and other models must take into account the specific challenges of service delivery to first nation communities as well as community needs.

The limited funding within the program prevents communities that want a self-administered policing service from having one. Budgetary planning processes for first nations policing are not in accordance with the municipal, regional, provincial, or federal policing organizations. Civilian governance is required of first nations police services, but funding and educational resources have not been consistently provided by the federal government that set this condition.

● (0955)

Consultation among governments and first nation communities on levels of services required in the community does not take place in a meaningful way before policing agreements are signed, even though those agreements call for such consultation. Communities tend to be somewhat disenchanted with the process and feel that they are not respected.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** Excuse me, Chief Palson. Could you wrap up?

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes.

In conclusion, the FNCPA sees a risk in the current national dialogue on the economics of policing led by federal-provincial-territorial governments. Our caution is that the long-standing and fundamental challenges of self-administered first nations policing may be overlooked. The needs of first nation communities are important and their voices deserve to be heard.

Like others who are discussing the sustainability of policing, the first nations police are committed to serving the communities. We are doing so in accordance with the principles and intent of the first nations policing policy. The current discussions provide an opportunity to renew and strengthen the federal government's commitment to first nations policing.

Mr. Chairman, the FNCPA has important input to add to these discussions, which is why we welcome the chance to appear before this committee. I'd be pleased to answer any questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll go into seven-minute rounds of questions, starting on the government side with Ms. Bergen.

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

Thank you, Chief Palson, for being here. It's so nice to see somebody from home.

I want to begin by asking you if you could just describe for us the Dakota Ojibway Police Service in terms of how many communities you are serving. Could you tell us the population, the total number of people you serve, and then what your total operating budget is?

The reason I'm asking that is just to compare it with other police services. For example, the City of Portage la Prairie has RCMP policing services that police the city as well as the municipality. Depending on their population, probably anywhere from 10% to 20% of their budget is provided by help from the federal government, whereas in first nations policing the federal government provides about 52%. I think you mentioned 52%, while 48% was from the province.

If you could just describe for us the population that you're policing in terms of numbers, I'll follow up.

**Chief Doug Palson:** Right now, we're the only self-administered first nations policing service in Manitoba. We have a sworn complement of 30 or 31 officers. With civilian staff, we have a total of approximately 42 staff. We're presently serving five first nation communities throughout southern Manitoba. The approximate total population for the five communities is 8,000 people.

Among the challenges we have are the distances. In comparing small municipal services, whether it be an independent municipal service or a contract with the RCMP, we have detachments that are probably almost 200 miles apart, with the Roseau River south of Winnipeg, and the Birdtail Sioux almost at the Saskatchewan border. Those distances are huge for us.

Also, to make another comparison, the type of service delivery we provide to the community is sometimes difficult. In making comparisons, you have to ensure that you're comparing the same levels of service.

Our annual operating budget is about \$5,200,000. It's in that range.

• (1000)

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** About \$5,200,000 per year?

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes.

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** That's to police about 8,000 people. I know the distances. I live there—

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes.

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** —so I know. That's just so I'm clear on the numbers.

Can you talk a little bit, then, about how you are able to collaborate with other police services to provide policing? The area

you're describing is not like a northern remote community. For example, Grand Rapids, let's say, is much more sparsely populated.

In the area you're discussing, there are a lot of other areas around Roseau River. Altona is fairly close, and in some of the other first nations that you're policing, there are other police services that are close by. Are you collaborating with them? Do they work together with you to help? Can you provide assistance to them as well?

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes, we have a good working relationship, essentially with the RCMP, but also with the Brandon Police Service and the Winnipeg Police Service. With Brandon and Winnipeg, it's more for training. A lot of our recruit-level training happens through the Brandon Police Service program. It has in the last few years. Where the boots hit the ground, the rubber hits the ground, at detachment levels, our relationship is more with the local RCMP. For the most part it's a pretty good working relationship, although on the communities we are the police service of jurisdiction. If we require their assistance, we will request it. They are the provincial police, and they're mandated to do that regardless.

A good example would be a homicide. In the past we have managed some of those investigations on our own. In this day and age that's not for an agency of our size, regardless of whether it's us or whether it's a smaller community agency. To manage homicide investigations, you need to have the proper resources. We'll ask the RCMP, their special investigation unit, to come in and assist in those areas: tactical response, identification services, that sort of thing. We have a good relationship with the RCMP, i.e., the provincial police, to provide those services for us.

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** Do any of the first nations that you police provide any funding at all to you directly? Are they hiring you or is all of the funding provided by federal and provincial governments?

**Chief Doug Palson:** It's essentially all provided through the FNPP and by the federal and provincial funding. There is a little bit of funding that comes in through our crime prevention, and it's a very little bit. Through some grant funding for some youth programs, we initiate Lighthouses funding and things like that. In our policing agreements, the community or the band supplies the infrastructure, like the building, for the detachment, and then we rent it from them. That's their call.

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** So they provide it, but you have to pay them.

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes.

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** They're not providing you free infrastructure.

**Chief Doug Palson:** No, not really.

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** Each one of these first nation communities is not, out of their own band resources or first nation resources, providing anything. In fact you're paying them.

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes, that's how the funding is structured, both federally and provincially, for the policing services for those communities.

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** I've lived on a first nation community up in Grand Rapids. I'm also very familiar with that area. Do you think that there would be some value in, in some way, these first nations making some contribution, whether it's financially, whether it's in terms of infrastructure, or even—and you haven't commented on this—volunteers, that buy-in, literal buy-in from the community? I think it's so helpful for any community when the community takes ownership as opposed to everybody else taking care of them.

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes. There is movement towards that, but it's a slow process. As you're likely aware, there are a lot of challenges these first nation communities face, the socio-economic side of it. As a service, we've initiated a couple of programs to help. A good example is that a couple of the communities' leadership came to me and asked if we could help them raise the bar, for lack of a better term, of their security services.

Most communities have some version of community security, mostly just to monitor the buildings and things like that. Some of those services are struggling. So we embraced that and we developed what we referred to as a community safety officer program. What we did was facilitate the training. We brought in some trainers we knew for that and developed a three-week course for them. They're just finishing that up next week. This is just in its infancy, and that's an example. We're hoping that it will evolve into something greater, where we will have a closer partnership with some of the local security people in the community, and develop a working relationship and trust to the point that maybe we could utilize them for certain situations that free up some of our—

• (1005)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** Thank you, Chief Palson.

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** That's all my time. Thank you.

Thanks, Chair.

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

Mr. Rafferty.

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

I think you'll probably agree, however, that not all first nations police services are created equal. There are some who have a large fly-in component, for example.

This wasn't my line of questioning, but I want to carry on with what Ms. Bergen was saying. In those communities—I'm thinking of northern Ontario, where I live, and of the NAN communities in particular—I know that the first nations they serve do their best to provide as much service as they can to the police; for example, by providing housing, and spaces to work, and so on. I didn't want anybody to be left with the impression that first nation bands themselves are not contributing to the overall policing picture.

It has been 21 years now, I guess—since 1992. Over that time, what are some of the frustrations that you have heard from chiefs of police? I don't want to steer you in a particular direction in that answer, but I'm thinking, for example, that the fairly high turnover

rate among officers is probably one thing you have heard from chiefs.

Is there anything else you'd like to highlight?

**Chief Doug Palson:** Thank you for steering me that way. I became rather focused on my world, on my police service in Manitoba, and you're absolutely right. We are a national association, and there are significant differences, especially with the challenges my colleagues in Ontario and northern Ontario face. They are huge. Sometimes I wonder how they actually do it, although I think the relationship with the Province of Ontario is probably a little better than ours is in our situation.

Yes, there is a high turnover of members, especially with the Nishnawbe-Aski. They really struggle with that issue, because of the fly-in, the isolation, working alone, and those sorts of things. We have experienced some of it too. A lot of it happens when things start to slide salary-wise and the members are looking around. We have stabilized a bit. We were able to get a modest increase in the last couple of years to help retain our members.

The other frustration that we all face is the frustration of the instability we have faced in the last several years—

**Mr. John Rafferty:** Are you talking about funding?

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes, I mean funding instability.

The most recent announcement in March was well received, adding some solid ground. The stable funding piece, though, is still an issue for all of us chiefs.

**Mr. John Rafferty:** Yes, it's pretty hard to plan, going forward.

This leads me into my next question. One of the things we've been studying in this economics of policing study is certain models that are changing police work, certainly in Canada, and also elsewhere.

You touched on social services in your preamble. We're looking at these other models, and particularly at partnering with social services. I imagine that would be a very difficult task for many first nations police services.

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes. The concept is great. I see that we have to go there, but it is very challenging in some of our communities, because some of those social services entities, although most of them exist in some form or other, don't exist with the same capacity as in an urban centre or something along those lines. It is very challenging.

• (1010)

**Mr. John Rafferty:** Have you heard any rumblings from the provinces about their part of partnering, saying that they are going to have to cut back, that you are going to have to cut?

Are provinces talking about that? Is this a reality going forward, or in general are the provinces quite content to continue the funding formula?

**Chief Doug Palson:** I think in general they're quite content to continue the funding. Most provinces are in the same situation as the federal government may be with respect to overall economics in general, and so they are not forecasting any significant increases either.

There is still continued finger pointing between the province and the federal government with respect to funding. Sometimes, unfortunately, it appears that it's used as a crutch on each side to say, "We're good to go with this amount of funding, but it's them; they are not going to give their share"—that sort of thing.

**Mr. John Rafferty:** I just want to ask a question, the glass-half-full question. What do first nations police services do right in Canada? Why is it important that they even exist?

**Chief Doug Palson:** Actually, it's amazing the work we do given some of the circumstances, challenges, and instability in funding levels we have. I see them as being embedded into the fabric of the community.

I'm being careful not to make this a criticism of other policing services or delivery models, but with the self-administered services you're connected with the community. We do our best to try to have as large a complement of members who are first nations or of aboriginal descent as possible, which helps. We work closely with the community. That's the biggest piece.

In some cases it's something as simple as a language issue. Some of our communities are still very traditional. The one in particular I'm thinking of is an Ojibway community where a lot of the people, even some of the younger people, still speak that language. We have several officers there, and it's really beneficial they can communicate that way.

**Mr. John Rafferty:** I don't live in a NAN policing area, but I do live in the Treaty 3—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** Sorry, John, it's a quick question and a quick answer.

**Mr. John Rafferty:** —area, and I'd just like to concur with what you said. As I travelled around the riding this summer, Treaty 3 police would be very visible at powwows and all sorts of things. They certainly do a good job.

I must say that they're certainly well received by the first nations where they are. I agree it's a valuable service. I do think we have to make sure they're funded properly, to make sure they continue.

I don't know if you want to make a comment. I was just making a comment.

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes. My colleague Chief Conrad DeLaronde is doing a great job over there in Treaty 3. They're a well-respected police service across the country, actually.

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

We'll turn to Mr. Norlock.

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Through you, to the witness, thank you for appearing today.

I have a little bit of experience with first nations policing, having worked along the James Bay and Hudson Bay coasts, assisting first nations policing.

I just want to go over a couple of the statistics with you. I just wonder if there are some similarities between where I policed and your area. You say the population you police is about 8,000. Your budget's about \$5.2 million per year.

I worked in Northumberland County, and I believe, if I remember correctly, our budget for about 70,000 people was about \$5.5 million. It was a much smaller area, I will admit, with three detachments. In northern Ontario, with the Ontario Provincial Police, the outfit I was with, some of our detachments were between 100 and 200 miles apart.

I just want to talk about some numbers here.

First of all, I have to say that the socio-economic issues you deal with can be, in some areas, significantly different, so the funding formula has to be adjusted to that reality. I readily see that.

I didn't write down the exact number, but I think you said you had somewhere in the vicinity of 30-some officers.

**Chief Doug Palson:** We have 31 sworn officers.

• (1015)

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** You have 31 sworn officers, with a civilian complement of—

**Chief Doug Palson:** We have 12 civilians.

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** You have 12 civilians. Okay. I think that would be pretty close to the average police force in terms of civilian versus uniformed members.

If I can carry on a little bit, you mentioned funding. Let me just set the record somewhat straight. I'm just going to use rough numbers because numbers float around this place and in our heads and at every level.

Since I took office seven years ago, there's been a 30% increase for first nations policing. As you indicated, there was recently an agreement committing about \$612 million over the next five years to first nations policing, and in particular, additional funding in 2011 of \$30 million over two years. That brings the funding level up to pretty reasonable.

You're right about the economics of policing. I'm going to ask a couple of quick questions, and please feel free to correct me if I'm wrong. When you talk about levels of governments arguing with each other, I, like you, don't like to see that. I like to see us working together. Federal government transfers to the provinces, in particular Manitoba, which I believe has about 30% of the provincial GDP from transfer payments—

**Ms. Candice Bergen:** It's 40%.

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** It's 40%. I've just been corrected by someone who lives there.

We have not decreased.... As a matter of fact, we've increased transfer payments to the provinces. When the provinces say they can't afford it, I just say we've kept our part of the bargain.

Has your police force contemplated bringing in some civilian volunteer staff?

I recall, when I worked along the James Bay and Hudson Bay coast, they had peacekeepers. I know they did a pretty good job. They're like volunteer bylaw officers. Are there any first nation territories in your area that have peacekeepers or something like a police auxiliary?

**Chief Doug Palson:** Our service did have auxiliary at one time. The struggles they had were in trying to generate the interest from the community to participate in the auxiliary program. It was before my time. What I heard about the auxiliary program, when it did exist there, is that they would get interest, but it wasn't from the actual community. It was from neighbouring communities and individuals from towns or the city who wanted to get some experience and be able to build towards a policing career, that sort of thing. They did an okay job.

Provincially there were some issues with regard to liabilities and things like that, which I think led to the demise of the auxiliary program. We could initiate an auxiliary program in some version. Unlike our neighbours in Saskatchewan, for example, under their provincial police act, the province still recognizes some version of a special constable. Manitoba doesn't do that anymore. They used to. I'm not sure if they're going to be re-evaluating that. So we have to be careful with what kinds of authorities and duties and responsibilities we would have any such volunteers participate in. We do summer student programs and things like that.

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** How about some of the first nation territories, the individual municipal-type level governance? Have they contemplated bringing in bylaw officers? I know with the Ontario Provincial Police, we often—when we're negotiating contracts with municipalities—negotiate the kinds of calls that uniformed officers will go on. If they have a robust bylaw enforcement officer regime, it can often reduce your policing costs.

Have your first nations' chiefs contemplated that? Secondly, do you operate under the community policing model? Generally you bring in, as you know, folks from different walks of life in the community as well as your municipal leadership—or in this case your first nations' leadership—and talk about how to address crime in the area. Sometimes that might stimulate the municipality into forming a better relationship. When I talk about a better relationship, I mean a better working relationship with their police.

Could you talk about those two items?

**Chief Doug Palson:** We operate under a police commission and most of my colleagues across the country have similar arrangements. It's written right into the policing agreements, and our commission consists of a representative from each community that we police.

Also in conjunction with that, we encourage each community to have a local police board or committee. It's to varying degrees of success and that's exactly what those committees are about. Ideally I encourage and help the communities, encourage them to select people from those communities, from the different programs within the community. Like I said, it's working with varying degrees of success. We have one community where it's working very well. I hear stuff...a lot of things don't get to my desk, and that's the way it

should be. They're handled right at the community level between the corporal and their committee.

• (1020)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** I'll have to stop you there. We're going to turn to Mr. Scarpaleggia, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Yes, thank you, Chair.

Just to follow up on your last comments, you mentioned a committee. Is it a kind of coordinating committee? Could you elaborate on this committee that you mentioned in response to Mr. Norlock's question?

**Chief Doug Palson:** We call them local police boards. Some communities like to call them committees. Let them call it whatever they feel comfortable with. It's a group of people from the community who meet monthly, usually, and discuss community issues in relation to safety and health in the community, basically.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** But they wouldn't get involved in specific cases, as they do, for example, in Prince Albert and Calgary. Are you familiar with their hub and spoke model? They'll bring in people from social services, education, the police force, whatever, and they'll look at each case and decide that a multi-faceted intervention, a coordinated intervention is required. For example, they may send a social worker to a home and someone from the school board to a home to get one of the kids back in school.

You don't have that kind of model for operating in a first nation community, I guess.

**Chief Doug Palson:** I'm very familiar with that model. It's a good model. I think everyone will evolve and sort of move towards some version of that.

Right now, no, the local committee is not at that level, the one I'm thinking of, but some of the pieces of that puzzle are at that table. There are unique challenges in those close-knit, family-oriented first nation communities. It's going to be a while before such a model can be massaged into those communities, I think, because there are also those entities, whether it's probation...

Probation is a good example. I notice in my world it's often very much in flux. A lot of times it's vacant, and there is a lot of transition for people there. In some communities, with the education there are varying degrees of stability.

Those are key pieces of that hub.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Right.

**Chief Doug Palson:** If they're not there, and solid, it's very difficult to make that work.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Yes. So you're saying that a lot of the players who would be around the table may not be available, either because of perhaps distance—they may be located far away—or there is simply a vacancy in that area that needs to be filled, a social worker vacancy or a teacher vacancy or what have you.

That's the particular challenge in adopting the hub and spoke model in some of these communities, I guess.



• (1025)

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes. There's a capacity piece to it, and also the political will.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** The political will in the community, or...?

**Chief Doug Palson:** The politics in first nation communities can be very raw at times; that's in flux too, and ever-changing. To have a well-designed hub program, you want sustainability, and it has to be able to withstand changes of leadership. You also have to have the other bigger players—i.e., the province, usually—on board. I believe, or from what I understand, the Province of Saskatchewan is very much on board and almost in a driver's seat for that program.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Right. But as you say, the smaller the community, the more intense the politics, really. Everyone knows each other, maybe, and therefore the greater the potential resistance. Something that would work in Calgary, a bigger city, or even Prince Albert might not work as well in a smaller community, just because of the closeness of the people in the community.

**Chief Doug Palson:** Again, I'm basing that a little bit on my experience and speculation. I don't think it's something we should be afraid of trying, but there are certainly unique challenges. That's all I'm saying.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Yes. Given the distances, if you do try it, you might want to use this video conferencing technology.

Would the police service have the resources to adopt this kind of technology, which makes the whole hub and spoke process a little bit more expensive? Or is the fact that resources may be scarce perhaps an obstacle to adopting the hub and spoke model in communities that cover a large area?

**Chief Doug Palson:** I'll use our situation as an example. We're a program under the tribal council, but each of our communities is a unique community. They're their own community, and they have their own chief and council. For their issues, for instance, or for their identified people in need in that particular community, I think it would have to be a community hub that would do it.

There are some shared social services in child and family services across the communities, but for a lot of it, they are independent in the community. So it's not so much the technology piece; it's more the people piece.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Right. Interesting.

How many first nation communities would have first nations police forces versus the RCMP? It would either be a first nations police force or the RCMP, I imagine. It wouldn't be a provincial police force, like in Ontario or in Quebec.

**Chief Doug Palson:** No, in my world it's the RCMP. But in Ontario and Quebec it's the provincial police for those provinces. There are a lot of first nation communities being policed by OPP or by the Quebec provincial police.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** What leads a community—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** It will have to be a quick question.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** —to choose a first nations police force model versus a provincial force or the RCMP? What would lead to that choice?

**Chief Doug Palson:** I'll use an example. I have several communities right now—and I'll use the term “lining up”—that want our services in their community. Basically, what they're seeing is that when they speak to these communities and see some of the things we're doing in their neighbouring communities, they want that for their communities. They want that presence, and they want that connection. They want some of the programming we do in our crime prevention stuff. Some of our communities are relatively small and a model of policing delivered from, for instance, the RCMP or OPP or something like that, it doesn't fit. That type of programming and presence in the community wouldn't jibe with how they staff and how they provide service to the community.

[Translation]

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

I will now give the floor to Ms. Michaud for five minutes.

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Thank you for appearing before us today.

I would like to briefly come back to the issue of funding. It was indeed an important part of your presentation. Based on my understanding, you are decrying the fact that the funding is neither stable nor predictable and that, therefore, it is harder to meet the needs of police forces in the first nations communities.

If your overall budget increases over time, but certain programs are eliminated, such as the Police Officer Recruitment Fund, which several first nations communities have used, it creates the kind of problem you raised in your presentation.

Is my understanding correct?

[English]

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes, if I understand exactly what you're referring to. I'm not clear on the question.

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Okay, it's maybe the translation. I'll give it a shot in English. I normally don't do this, but I will give it a shot.

What I was saying was that you were mentioning that the funding wasn't adequate because it wasn't stable. It's hard for organizations to be able to plan. Even if the general budgets given for that type of service do get bigger, if there are some initiatives like the recruitment fund for the police and those are eliminated, you still need to fill the needs of those programs, and that might be one of the issues that you are pointing out. That's what I wanted to clear up. Is that a bit clearer?

• (1030)

**Chief Doug Palson:** Yes. The recruitment fund, the five-year funding that you were referring to—

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** That was one example.

**Chief Doug Palson:** —that ended on March 31, that very much affected my colleagues in Ontario. For us and my colleagues out west, that funding did go to the province. We didn't use it for actually hiring police officers and putting it right on the ground. We never saw that from the province. What they did with it I don't know. That's where it differs for Ontario.

The first nations police services in Ontario definitely used that to put uniformed police officers on the ground. That's what really hurt them when the funding finally ended. I'm not sure where that sits with the Province of Ontario right now, or what they're doing with that.

[Translation]

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Fine.

In the course of your presentation, you said that caution would have to be exercised with regard to the kinds of responsibilities assigned to auxiliaries, especially those working in first nations communities.

Can you tell us a little more about that?

[English]

**Chief Doug Palson:** What I was referring to was the discussion around auxiliaries, volunteers, and what authorities they would actually have. Essentially, I know that in our province, they wouldn't have any authorities. They are even moving away from the band constable program; that's my understanding. They didn't have, really, any authorities—peace officer authorities or anything like that.

When you have folks working in those capacities, you have to be careful that they don't overstep what they are actually authorized to do. It's quite limited in what they can actually do. Essentially what the auxiliary programs do, often what I saw in Manitoba, is actually just simply putting another body in a car with the actual police officer. That body had to wear a uniform but none of the tools associated with the trade, really. In some of the larger detachment areas, maybe they did a certain number of paperwork-related duties in the detachment. But it was relatively limited in what they did. They would attend community events and things like that. But for the actual core policing functions, not a lot of that was to be done by auxiliaries.

It is a little bit different in some of the other provinces. For instance, in Saskatchewan, I understand, with their peacekeeper program in the File Hills area that they are experimenting with, they are trained at a different level. They are also given some authority through the provincial government under their police act. So it's a different model there, and we'll see where that goes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Can my colleague ask a question?

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** You would only have 10 seconds to ask your question. You'll get another chance.

I'll turn to Mr. Gill for five minutes.

**Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also want to thank Chief Palson for being here today on this important topic.

One of the things I heard you mention in your opening remarks was about a conference in Ottawa a couple of weeks ago. Could you elaborate a bit on that?

**Chief Doug Palson:** That was our First Nations Chiefs of Police Association. Every year we have a small AGM and conference. This year we had it here in Ottawa. We try to move it around the country a little. We discuss issues that are topical to first nations policing.

We had presentations this year, obviously, from the aboriginal policing directorate, the federal government was in to update us, and Senator White was in to discuss his experiences with restorative justice in first nation communities. Those are examples of some of the presentations we had. We also do association business, in the meeting portion of the AGM.

**Mr. Parm Gill:** Were there any positive takeaways from the conference or the meeting that you were able to gain from having this annual meeting?

**Chief Doug Palson:** There are always lots of positives of getting together with colleagues. There is always a tendency to drift over into a focus on the negatives and the challenges and concerns, but we also share some of the things that we're trying to do in the various communities.

Much of the focus is on funding, as it always is. Many of our police services are going to be potentially running deficits, and we're trying to figure out ways to deal with some of those issues.

• (1035)

**Mr. Parm Gill:** The other topic I want to talk about is regarding a volunteer program. From what I understand, you currently don't have any. I guess there was one, maybe before your time, you said, and eventually it was eliminated and does not now exist. What is the main reason you would give for not getting the kind of participation that you would expect from any community to get out and help the community and become involved?

What we have heard in the past from other organizations and chiefs is that there is actually an overwhelming amount of interest in volunteering coming from the community, which they have a difficult time accommodating, and they then have to kind of pick and choose who gets in and who doesn't.

Why is this the case? Why is there hesitation in the first nation community, or why is this not being pursued?

**Chief Doug Palson:** We do pursue it. We look for opportunities. My colleagues from across the country and I are always looking for opportunities to get people involved and to do things differently and be as efficient as possible.

It's a good question. It is very challenging, in the first nation community environment, to generate the concept of volunteerism and to sustain it.

The other part of it is that sometimes we're working with limited capacity ourselves, and you have to have a certain amount of capacity to manage volunteers. We see that with our summer student program. They're not volunteers and they're only there for a short time as summer students, but you have to make sure that you have your mechanism in place to have somebody monitoring and working with them.

In many cases we only have one person working in a particular detachment, and they're busy doing other things. What a volunteer might be able to do in that particular community is limited.

**Mr. Parm Gill:** You mentioned that one of the advantages of having first nations policemen is that an officer could potentially be from the community and that this could obviously be helpful with such issues as language barriers. Honestly, I'm having a very difficult time understanding why the program doesn't exist and why there isn't an interest from the community.

Can you tell us what efforts are being made by you and by the organization to reach out and create awareness or employ different methods to encourage the community to volunteer? Obviously, we hear, there is a lot of day-to-day stuff that the volunteers are able to come in to help different police forces with, which ultimately helps over the long term—budget, the funding issues that some of these—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** Mr. Gill, unfortunately, you've left no time for a reply to your question.

[Translation]

We will now return to the official opposition.

Mr. Rousseau, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will share my time with Mr. Rafferty.

I would like to know if you have any special units to fight organized crime and street gangs. Is this a big problem for you or in some communities? Do you have enough material resources, such as information technology, to fight this type of crime?

[English]

**Chief Doug Palson:** No. For an agency our size and the type of service we deliver, we don't have special units like that for organized crime, or anything like that. We're a relatively small agency. Our focus is on front-line, uniformed community policing.

Although we have been able to establish a dedicated criminal investigation member and a dedicated member for crime prevention, at our size everybody else is what you see, front line, uniform. In some of the other agencies, in Ontario, for example, the larger you get, the more your capacity is. Right? I believe, for instance, NAPS, at whatever they are, around 130 members, they're a big agency. They have the challenge of distances, but I think they are developing some specialty units. I know NAPS and Treaty 3 were doing some integrated stuff with the OPP specialty units.

That's something we could explore with the RCMP. We're looking at that now.

• (1040)

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

**Mr. Jean Rousseau:** Okay, I'll pass it to John.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** Mr. Rafferty, for the remaining three minutes.

**Mr. John Rafferty:** I'd like to ask you for your thoughts about the other side of policing, which is justice. Things are very different in first nation communities in terms of justice and what justice means to first nations.

I'll just do a little preamble. The rest of the world has a number of... I know Africa best, but they have traditional chiefs, some elected, some hereditary, who once a week have very successful courts in their communities to deal with non-serious items.

I know this has been tried with various success a little bit on the west coast over the years. I'm wondering if there was a real commitment from the provinces and the federal government to deal with a lot of the minor issues, and I'm thinking of things like vandalism in the community, for example, to be dealt with by a chief and council, in other words, to move that model forward in a very serious way right across the country.

First of all, what do you think about that? Second of all, would it have the added advantage, I suppose, of justice being meted out within the first nations, which I think could always be a good thing? Also, in terms of the economics of policing...freeing up your officers to not be dealing with a number of things that maybe could be dealt with at the community level?

I wanted to get your thoughts on that.

**Chief Doug Palson:** First of all, where do I get on this wagon? That's exactly where we need to go. It ties into restorative justice and crime prevention, and preventing crime and preventing stuff in the front end and dealing with it at the grassroots level, as opposed to pushing it up into the system and eventually these individuals ending up in the correctional system, in the jails, and so on.

I'm all for that. We're exploring trying to regenerate some of that stuff in our communities. In the past there had been varying degrees of success with some local justice committees with elders involved, and that sort of thing. I know in our service we're looking forward to trying to regenerate that, or rekindle that.

**Mr. John Rafferty:** Do you think it would be easier if there was a commitment from the provincial and the federal funders to really push that with the ministries of justice, and so on, to set up a proper set of guidelines for chiefs and council to follow?

I'm thinking that if there were a real commitment to make that work from all parties, that it might very well be successful. Could we have, perhaps, your further thoughts on that?

**Chief Doug Palson:** Absolutely, and that's what is going to make it work. It will have to be all levels of government getting together and driving it. That's what is making the hub program work in Saskatchewan.

You have to be careful, as you move forward with that, that you create it more as a framework because each community is a big piece in this and each community is a little bit unique. They have to have the ability to have the model of their justice system, to have enough flex in it so that it suits that particular community. That's the ideal situation.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** Thank you. That's the end of your time.

We'll have time for one more partial round of questions.

Mr. Carmichael, welcome to the committee.

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Chief Palson.

This is a two-part question in our limited time.

Could you speak to best practices within your community that are involved on the national scale from your perspective? Can you give us some examples of best practices?

The second part is: how do you share them? You spoke a few minutes ago to our colleague about technology. Do you have some information, services, or practices, around how to share best practices amongst the different members of your association?

**Chief Doug Palson:** As far as best practices are concerned, from our perspective we're quite proud of some of the cadet programs and youth programs that we've established. Again, each community is different so we let them massage it in as we work with it. In one program it's called the cadet program and in another community they prefer to call it a youth corps program. There are different age groups and they do things slightly differently but it's all about providing the young people with some structure. Our service provides the foundation for that program. Then we bring in the other community partners and work together with them. For instance, health and education is a big partner in that because we use the schools.

As far as transmitting best practices is concerned, we've just regenerated our association a little bit. We have more of a part-time executive assistant who is very good with disseminating information and gets whatever needs to get out to the members electronically on a daily basis. We've rejigged that and re-energized that mechanism with our members, keeping in mind we're not a large organization compared to some.

●(1045)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Randall Garrison):** Thank you for appearing today, Chief Palson. It's been very useful testimony for the committee.

Thanks to all the committee members.

I know we're all wishing Mr. Sorenson well and looking forward to the time when he'll be able to return.

The committee stands adjourned.

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