



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

TÉMOIGNAGES

NUMBER 010

Friday, July 24, 2020

Chair: The Honourable John McKay



Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call to order meeting number 10 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

We have two sets of witnesses. We have Christian Leuprecht from the department of political science at RMC, along with Rick Parent. From the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP, we have Michelaine Lahaie, who is the chairperson.

With that, I'll ask Christian Leuprecht to lead off.

Professor Leuprecht, you're up for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Dr. Christian Leuprecht (Professor, Department of Political Science, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual): My thanks to the committee for the invitation.

I will give my presentation in English, but I will answer your questions in both official languages.

[English]

I want to begin with a caveat that I recognize that, as a white male tenured professor, I speak to this topic from a privileged position, but as you know, I've written about this issue extensively, both about police governance and the RCMP. My latest book also deals with public security in federal systems.

As background, I don't think there's really any debate when it comes to systemic racism in policing in Canada. Anybody who's read the final report by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada reports and the CRCC's "Report into Workplace Harassment in the RCMP", the evidence is pretty unequivocal.

The real question is, what does this mean and what are the implications?

You have the long version of the text with you. I shall confine myself to the abbreviated remarks, which focus primarily on the recommendations and the action items.

I'm concerned about the growing gap in civil society between policing...and in terms of police-civilian relations. It's ultimately politicians that, of course, set the framework, conditions and constraints for the delivery of police services. I'm deeply concerned that, without concrete and sustained political action and leadership,

the gap between police and civil society relations will continue to grow.

I would also like to point out that my 2017 study on the RCMP contains a 41-page annex, detailing every recommendation made in 15 reports between 2007 and 2017. You will find the annex on the Macdonald-Laurier Institute's website. The point is that we don't lack for studies. We don't lack for analysis or diagnosis of what the challenges are. There's a broad consensus on the way forward. In terms of analysis, I would point out that bureaucracies reproduce themselves, so we have an issue of institutional culture.

The second point is that we need systemic use of force statistics for policing across Canada, including the RCMP. I think the recent discussion has shown that better data is certainly an important part of the conversation in terms of identifying the exact challenges.

We need to professionalize policing. The code of conduct for the RCMP says, "Members treat every person with respect and courtesy and do not engage in discrimination or harassment." The public, I think, expect the same sort of professionalism from police as they do from others—nurses, engineers, lawyers and physicians—and I think they don't see that. I think they're concerned about that, so having more of a service mentality is an important part of the change here. Part of what we see is police officers having assimilated a bit of a solipsistic mentality, in terms of us versus them, over the course of their careers. There are ways to mitigate that.

The fourth point is that we need to reduce the propensity for violence. At the same time, I would say the violence is not arbitrary. There is a national use of force framework to which the police chiefs, I'm sure, will be able to comment better than I can, and most of the force that we see is in accordance with that framework.

The recommendations are that we need to change the leadership and the management model. People enter the organization and they work their way up through the ranks, and there are very few organizations left like that today in our society. They're usually managed by people who are professional managers: professionals in HR, finance, policy and communications. The RCMP has civilianized these positions, so why not ask them to testify as witnesses before the committee?

Part of the leadership and management challenge is also separating the RCMP in the way that DND and the Canadian Armed Forces are two separate legal entities. While that has not eliminated the presence of harassment and racism, it has provided greater bandwidth within those two organizations in terms of dealing with these issues, and has provided a better balance between the uniformed and the civilian perspective. This is something the RCMP desperately needs, and that all police services in this country desperately need.

We have a challenge in that we need to civilianize the delivery of services, as service delivery has expanded for many police forces. We need to make law enforcement organizations more diverse. The quickest way to do that is to civilianize, because for many of the reasons that you have been discussing, I think minority communities are a bit reticent about joining. We need a better model for public and community safety than simply giving everything to the police. I think police are neither particularly efficient nor effective—

• (1105)

The Chair: Excuse me, Professor Leuprecht. I'm being asked by the translators for you to slow down just a bit.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: Sorry, that's my habitual problem in testimony.

The Chair: Is it a habitual problem? We'll have to give you special training then.

Please continue.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: We need a different service delivery model. We need to return to community policing, increasing.... We have police, RCMP and also many urban services whose members do not live in the communities where they provide service.

NSICOP's 2019 annual report reviewed inclusion and diversity in the security and intelligence community. That included the RCMP. The review looked at why a diverse and inclusive workforce was so important for performance and operational success. It showed that visible minorities were under-represented in the RCMP, including in the senior ranks. The report also documents that resistance to diversity and inclusion was strongest among the RCMP's NCO level, uniformed members who are on the front lines and in middle management.

The committee should invite the RCMP's new civilian senior human resources official to testify as to what the RCMP is doing to address this challenge. If we draw from the ranks for senior management, to some extent we're replicating the challenges.

I document what difference community policing makes, but I think the RCMP needs to become more of a consultant rather than the answer to the challenges that many communities face. As I have said many times before, the RCMP is too big and has too many roles, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to govern.

The RCMP needs to get out of contract policing. We should give the border to the CBSA. We should take criminal intelligence out of the RCMP and generate a separate organization so the RCMP can become a genuinely federal police force focusing on federal priorities, and it can be civilian led. The Australian Federal Police is a good example; it has always been civilian led.

The RCMP needs separate employer status. It needs a different remuneration system. It needs a completely different training regime. It needs a separate career and professional development framework and path for officers. We also need a national 311 next-generation system to divert non-emergency calls from the 911 system.

I will close—

The Chair: I'm sorry. You can finish it up, but we have to—

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I will close with my four points on action items.

We need to hold middle management accountable. The CAF demonstrates the effect that can have in terms of curtailing the sorts of challenges we are seeing.

The RCMP needs to release results of discipline hearings to the public. There's a ministerial directive on this. The RCMP has not published an annual report since 2017. Commissioner Lucki, as has been widely reported, has 180 Civilian Review and Complaints Commission reports on her desk dating back to 2016. That backlog simply is not acceptable.

My challenge to you as a committee is this. You have concrete opportunities to do things here and now, and that is Bill C-3, which is currently before Parliament. I detail several challenges that bill currently has. For the sake of time, I will not go through these in detail here, but Bill C-3, with the improvements that I lay out, can effect very clear and concrete change right here, right now.

• (1110)

The Chair: I am going to have to cut you off right there, here and now. I apologize for that.

We're going to move to our next witness, Michelaine Lahaie.

You have seven minutes, please.

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie (Chairperson, Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today on the subject of systemic racism in policing services in Canada.

The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP is an independent body established by Parliament. The commission makes broad-ranging recommendations regarding policies, procedures and training with the ultimate goal of improving policing and enhancing RCMP accountability. Greater police accountability is achieved through effective oversight, not only for public complaints but also through reviews of systemic issues.

As the Minister of Public Safety recently indicated to this committee, indigenous people, black Canadians and other racialized people experience systemic racism and disparate outcomes within the criminal justice system. That system includes all police forces, including the RCMP.

I must point out that the work of the commission is not immune to the long-term and ongoing effects of systemic racism. For example, it has been reported that there is an overrepresentation of police use of force incidents involving indigenous and racialized people. However, many of these use of force incidents do not result in a public complaint. Why is that the case?

In the commission's northern British Columbia investigation, which was undertaken as a follow-up to a Human Rights Watch report, we asked members of indigenous communities why they do not make use of the complaints system. We found out that many indigenous people are either unaware of the public complaint process or do not trust it. The process can be excessively bureaucratic and difficult to navigate.

However, the commission has taken some action to improve the accessibility of the public complaints system, including making the public complaint form available in 16 different languages. We most recently worked very closely with the territorial Government of Nunavut to ensure that the complaint form and additional materials on the complaints process were available in Inuktitut.

Even with these strides, the commission still needs to do more to ensure greater accessibility, trust and transparency in the complaints process. Ultimately, my goal is for people to believe that they can file a complaint with the commission and be treated fairly, without fear of reprisal. To achieve that, we need to consult indigenous and racialized communities to identify and break down the systemic barriers that exist within our current system and implement their suggested changes. We must adopt a regime that better serves all communities.

In that regard, the commission, along with the RCMP, was involved in advancing an informal resolution process put forward by indigenous leaders. Such projects are key to combatting systemic racism and restoring public trust.

In terms of the RCMP, I must highlight that the commission's lens tends to focus on individual allegations of bias, discrimination or racism. We do not get complaints of systemic racism as a rule. It is only when we take a step back and analyze our findings that the systemic nature of racism becomes apparent.

One such area is in the disparity of treatment between Caucasian and indigenous women detained for public intoxication in northern British Columbia, as noted in the commission's public interest investigation into policing in that area. In a review of occurrence reports involving the policing of public intoxication, the commission noted that there were differences in treatment between indigenous and Caucasian women when it came to detention for public intoxication. Seventy-three per cent of indigenous women were held in cells until sober. In contrast, 54% percent of Caucasian women were held in cells until sober. As well, indigenous women were four times less likely to be taken home, rather than lodged in cells, as compared with Caucasian women.

The commission is also currently working on a systemic review of the RCMP's bias-free policing model. This review is examining the RCMP's bias-free policing policies and training, and assessing the broader application and accountability framework that is in place to ensure that RCMP members adhere to these policies. Ac-

countability and transparency are key to addressing systemic issues and bringing about change.

To that end, I would suggest that there is an opportunity to further enhance the oversight regime with Bill C-3 and would make the following recommendations to strengthen the bill.

First, I recommend statutory timelines for responses to commission reports to codify the schedule established in the CRCC-RCMP MOU. At present, the legislation requires the commissioner to respond as soon as feasible. Responses to commission interim reports now take an average of 17 months. One of the commission's reports has been waiting for a response for over three and a half years. This is unacceptable in any system where accountability is critical.

● (1115)

Second, public education and outreach to indigenous and racialized communities must become statutory requirements. Bill C-3 currently makes public education mandatory for the commission's new oversight mandate for CBSA, but these activities remain optional under the RCMP Act. The only way that the public complaint process works is if people trust the system. The only way to build that trust is through our outreach efforts.

Third, I would like to see both the commissioner and, once Bill C-3 comes into force, the president of the CBSA required to provide an annual report to the commission outlining the status of implementation of the commission's recommendations. This would increase the transparency of the complaint system and reassure Canadians that the RCMP and the CBSA are held to a high standard of public accountability.

Finally, the commission needs to be appropriately resourced to conduct systemic reviews. At present, systemic reviews are conducted when sufficient resources are available. However, as chairperson, I must constantly make the decision between dealing with complaints from the public and conducting systemic reviews.

I do realize, however, that we have our own work to do. We need to dedicate more resources to outreach and public education in indigenous and racialized communities. We must consult and we must listen. We must become more transparent. We recently began to post summaries of public complaint decisions on our website. It is important that the Canadian public be made aware of our work and the recommendations that we make.

The commission must be consulted on any changes to oversight for both the RCMP and changes to Bill C-3. With its 35 years of experience in overseeing our national police force, the CRCC is uniquely qualified to provide insight and recommendations to inform decision-makers on this critical and pressing issue for Canadians. We are at an opportune time to effect change.

[Translation]

Thank you again for inviting me here today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We now move to our six-minute rounds, led by Mr. Paul-Hus, then followed by Mr. Sikand, Madame Michaud and Mr. Harris.

Monsieur Paul-Hus, welcome back to the committee. You have six minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Ms. Lahaie.

At the end of your testimony, you talked about certain problems, but I'm going to start by asking you how many complaints you receive on average per year. Then, what percentage of the complaints you receive are related to racism?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Thank you very much, Mr. Paul-Hus.

We receive between 3,000 and 3,500 complaints a year. Usually, we receive between 2,500 and 3,000—

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Sorry, I'm not getting translation, Chair.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Sorry. I will give my answers in English, then, to allow for the simultaneous translation, because I'm not sure how to change to the French piece.

On average, we receive 3,000 to 3,500 complaints per year. We tend to send about 2,800 of those complaints over to the RCMP.

Over the course of the past five years, we've received 76 complaints that deal with bias, racism or discrimination.

• (1120)

[Translation]

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

We can say that, out of 2,000 complaints, 76 complaints about racism is a small number.

In your speech, you said that the commission was facing certain problems. You receive the complaints, you process them and you send them to the RCMP, but the RCMP Commissioner is the one who must analyze them and provide a response. You said that it takes up to 17 months to get a response, and that there is often no response at all.

Can things be done to change this situation?

[English]

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: To clarify, she is required to respond in accordance with the legislation, so she must respond to our reports. She must indicate whether she accepts our recommendations. If she does not accept them, she has to tell us why.

I believe the solution to this issue is to insert statutory timelines within Bill C-3, so that they are required to provide a response within a time that's articulated in the law. We currently have an MOU with the RCMP that articulates those timelines, but they are not statutory.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Okay.

You have made recommendations on the changes that should be made to Bill C-3. Were you consulted during the drafting of this bill? We feel that no one asked for your opinion.

Did the government ask you?

[English]

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: The commission was not consulted on Bill C-3 when it was drafted.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: So it is safe to say that the problems you are experiencing with the RCMP will also be experienced with the Canada Border Services Agency. You said that the president should report. However, another system is currently being created which, I believe, will face the same problems.

Is that what you are foreseeing?

[English]

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: It is possible that we will have similar problems with the oversight of the CBSA.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Okay.

On the website, your organization's last public report dates back to 2017. Can you tell us why other reports were not produced during those three years?

[English]

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: For me, as the chairperson, it comes down to commission resources.

When I came to the commission, we had one public interest investigation that was ongoing. That was the investigation that dealt with the RCMP's investigation into the death of Colten Boushie, which was launched in 2018. That report has now been completed, and it is with the commissioner for response.

We also had a backlog of files, because, in an organization with a relatively small budget, we have to make the decision constantly between dealing with public complaints from Canadians or launching our own larger investigations. I chose to hire additional staff and prioritize the clearance of our backlog, rather than launching additional investigations. I also attributed a large number of internal resources to the Boushie investigation, because it was important that it be completed in a reasonable time. We were able to deliver it to the commissioner early in 2019.

The Chair: That is it for Mr. Paul-Hus.

Our incomparable clerk has pointed out to me that your less-than-incomparable chair has made an error. I assumed that Mr. Parent was with Mr. Leuprecht from RMC, when in fact he is a separate witness.

I'm going to go out of order and ask Mr. Parent to make his presentation, and I apologize for what is clearly my reading error.

• (1125)

Dr. Rick Parent (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the levity at the beginning there. I appreciate that. It eased things off, so it was good.

Just as a quick introduction, my name is Rick Parent. I'm speaking more or less as a police officer. I have been a police officer and have been involved in policing for over 40 years. I go back quite a way, to 1980. From policing I went into the academic world, finishing up as an associate professor at Simon Fraser University's school of criminology. Much like Christian, I've done a lot of research. I continue to research and publish.

I think Canada has a great policing system. We're quick to criticize it. I would argue that Canada has one of the better police services in the world, probably in the top five, if not the top 10. One of our problems is that we tend to compare ourselves with the United States. We tend to use a lot of U.S. data and a lot of U.S. issues when interpreting what our Canadian society and Canadian policing is.

When I look back, I would say there was a shift in policing for the good, to some degree, in the mid-1980s when Canadian policing took on many of the things that this committee is looking at. Whether it is racism, hiring minorities or using polygraphs today, system background checks, vetting racist attitudes before they get into the system, working with the LGBT community or hiring women and visible minorities within the organization, I would argue that Canadian policing has done a lot in the past 25 years to make it one of the top institutions within Canada.

Having said that, yes, you're correct. We know it's not perfect. There's a lot more work that can be done, and I think that's where the committee has a great potential to leverage the changing world.

In the mid-1990s, I saw that policing somewhat got hijacked by a U.S. mandate, here in Vancouver. With the Victoria Police Department, I saw tasers come in 1999. We thought that the best way was to follow our American brothers and sisters and implement what they did in the U.S., because everything in the U.S. was better. I would argue against that. What I've seen over the years is that, more and more, Canadian policing has taken on a culture of use of

force. It is focusing on enforcement and has gone away from the service and safety issues that it traditionally had up until the mid-1990s.

I personally have seen a shift in the last 25 years. This is borne out in the research when we look at Mr. Dziekanski and the YVR incident. Policing has become more bureaucratic.

I also agree with many of the things that Christian has brought up. Agencies like the RCMP are too spread out. They're doing too many things and not doing them well, like all of us would be. If anyone tried to do all the things that the RCMP does, and continues to take on, they would only drop balls. That's basically what's happening.

One of the other problems I find is that, in Canada, we lack a central agency in Ottawa to oversee policing. If you are a civilian or an activist, there is no data for Canadian policing. You have to go to one of the 200 departments and try to obtain that data and, as we've heard, it doesn't come very easily even when it's legislated. Again, we tend to look at the United States.

There's a lack of transparency in Canada. There's a lack of Canadian data. There's a lack of civilian involvement. I would argue there should be more of that.

We need to get back to where we were 25 years ago, in the sense of becoming a service that the public phones up like they do the fire department. Even though they don't fight a lot of fires, we know that firemen will take on a lot of tasks to help the public. I think that's where we need to go with Canadian policing: back to the roots that we've traditionally had.

One of the examples I'm quick to bring up is police shootings. In the United States they occur five to six times more frequently than they do in Canada, but most Canadians don't know that. Canadians spend probably 60% of their time watching American news. We can tell you all about Trump. We can tell you all about what's going on in the United States, but we know very little about what goes on in Canada. Again, I blame Canadian policing for that. We need to be more transparent. We need to have better data.

• (1130)

I would argue that we need a central agency in Ottawa that looks at Canadian policing, that looks at, again, as we've heard, oversight. It would be run by civilians to shape policing so that it stays on track and does continue to have the diversity and the good things that are so common to Canadian policing—building trust and building values within our system, relationships with the public—and with a focus on ethics. We sometimes forget about ethics as another aspect. I think if we have ethical policing steering us along with relationships with the public, that's where we're going to go into this positive realm.

We've focused on U.S. policing, and we tend to focus on use of force. Again, this is systematic within police agencies across Canada, and again it's the theme of militarization, more guns, weapons, tactics. We need that, but it shouldn't be the driving force. Service and safety should be the number one factor that police should be hired upon and we should train upon.

I'll stop there.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Again, I apologize for not realizing that you weren't part of the RMC presentation.

With that, we'll return to the list. Next up is Mr. Sikand for six minutes, please.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is going to be for Ms. Lahaie. Whenever I talk about civilian oversight, I like to preface my comments, and it's actually not too different from what Mr. Parent said. By and large our system is good. Our law enforcement officers are good, but you can always make the system more efficient and have it work better for Canadians.

Having said that, I noticed that you attended SECU once last year. You talked about the lengthy time it can take to review public complaints, noting that it can sometimes take years for reports to be finalized.

How beneficial would it be to establish a baseline for time limits for the RCMP to respond, and what would be the best course of action, in your opinion?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Thank you very much for your question.

From the commission's perspective, it would be extremely beneficial for baseline timelines to be established. That's one reason that, in December, Commissioner Lucki and I signed an MOU between the CRCC and the RCMP that did establish those timelines. A copy of that MOU is posted on the commission's website.

However, the MOU is not binding, so if parliamentarians could establish solid timelines, statutory timelines within the act, it would be extremely beneficial. Canadians who have made complaints will get responses to their complaints in a timely fashion, and that increases accountability exponentially.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Speaking of accountability, we've heard that the CRCC isn't regulated, that it has a lack of representation from the affected communities. Surely amongst recent international discussions on policing, this has probably become more pronounced.

In your opinion, should we be expanding participation to those affected populations? How do you think we should go about that?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: In my opinion, the commission can only benefit by having greater diversity. One thing we're doing internally is that we're setting up our own internal diversity and equity committee to look at inclusion and to ensure we're looking at diverse opinions from across the organization.

Internally, we are a diverse organization, but we do not have significant indigenous representation. I believe that is something we

need to correct internally so that we're providing a better lens on the issues we deal with on such a regular basis.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: I have one final question for you. Your predecessor also noticed that the CRCC has the expertise not only to deal with the public complaints but also to undertake systemic reviews and investigations into the RCMP.

You recently published a review of the service's use of force. How do you foresee improvements involving wellness calls and de-escalation?

• (1135)

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: In terms of wellness calls and de-escalation, there are two things that really need to be looked at. The first thing that is critical is training. Police officers need to be better trained to be able to handle those particular situations. That means no longer taking a "command and control" approach, as I indicated in my statement, and looking towards greater de-escalation. That is the most important thing.

The second thing is that there needs to be greater efforts made on the part of provincial and territorial governments to provide greater mental health...so that police forces, when it's required, can work with individuals so that de-escalation is made more possible for those who are in crises.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Thank you.

Christian, through your extensive studies on the subject, you've arrived at the conclusion that the RCMP is in need of significant structural change in order to bring about the necessary professionalization of the force and deliver the level of service that Canadians should expect from them. Some of your recommendations include remuneration based on skills rather than seniority, civilianizing the management and senior leadership of the RCMP rather than promoting through the ranks, and requiring higher levels of education and training from officers.

However, the RCMP police union, the NPF, is strongly opposed to these recommendations in favour of the status quo. The head of the NPF, Mr. Brian Sauvé, is due to testify at this committee later today. What would you say to the NPF and its membership to change their minds?

The Chair: That's an extraordinarily complicated question.

You have only a minute to answer that, so I'll let it go. I don't want to interrupt you again.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: The chair is putting me on notice, so I'll keep it very brief.

Ultimately, we need to work with the police associations and the police unions. They represent the front-line members who are doing a very difficult job and, by and large, a very good and professional job. At the same time, ultimately, my recommendations reflect broader structural issues. The insanity we have is that we keep on picking new police chiefs and new commissioners and hope we'll get all this fantastic change. We've played this game over and over. We keep reproducing the same results.

I would urge the committee to look at some of the broader structural issues and work with the RCMP's new association/union to try to effect structural change that gets improved outcomes for the communities that are served, for the members within the RCMP who have to perform a very difficult and challenging task, and for the federal government, which ultimately owns the police service.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sikand.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have six minutes.

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

I'm going to start with Mr. Leuprecht.

Thank you for your testimony. One of your sentences particularly struck me. You say that when the police are the only form of authority in a territory or a community, they quickly become the enemy, so to speak. Yesterday, Mr. McCaffrey, who is a chief of police, told us that in many first nations languages the word “police” means “those who take us away”. That evokes Canada's colonialist past and the whole residential school episode. In the community where he works, the word has been changed to “those who help”.

I think small actions like those can help reduce prejudice or change perceptions. In your opinion, what other actions should be taken to change attitudes and develop a relationship based on help rather than a relationship based on conflict?

[*English*]

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I apologize for answering in English; it's just because of the translation issues.

In many small communities that are policed by the RCMP, the RCMP is often the only federal presence in those communities. In some cases, it is the only governmental presence from outside a community, and often dealing with very considerable challenges. I think it is no surprise that this one presence then becomes seen in an adversarial fashion and that some of the members—certainly not all, and I would say a minority—internalize that as an “us and them” mentality.

There are two important components to this. One is that this reflects a broader failure of educational, health, social services and economic development within those communities, where the RCMP ends up picking up the pieces. We need to return to a more holistic approach to community policing and to community safety.

At the same time, as the chairperson of the CRCC has pointed out, there are serious challenges. As the data with regard to the use of force toward indigenous and minority people by the RCMP in particular bears out, there are particular structural issues within the RCMP. I would say those start with Depot, which is a socialization organization and socializes a certain type of command and control mindset. Starting with a complete overhaul of the curriculum and the training regime at Depot would, I think, also effect change.

I'll leave it there. Many of the other recommendations I've already detailed in my submission.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

You are proposing a complete overhaul of the model on which the RCMP is currently based. You have made a number of recommendations, but you have had little time to explain them in detail. I would like you to tell us which one, in your opinion, is the most pressing. Sometimes, when you have to fix everything, you have to start from scratch.

We want to rework the RCMP model, but where should we start?

[*English*]

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I think the opportunity for the committee and the RCMP in the short term to effect immediate change is the recommendation to hold middle management accountable. There are many instances, to which the chairperson will also be able to testify, where I am puzzled that in an organization that, since 2003, has clearly sent the message that harassment is unacceptable, middle management did not step up and the public issues that we see reflect that.

I would say holding the staff sergeant level accountable for incidents of harassment or potentially inappropriate use of force is critical to change, because middle managers will either simply ignore the problem until they're posted out and someone else can pick up the pieces, or they will try to pass off the problem to someone else. Having them own that problem, making them responsible and facing consequences for not acting is what the Canadian Armed Forces has done with regard to racism and with regard to harassment. I think it has shown to produce certainly positive results within the organization.

No legislative change is required, simply a clear signalling by the political authority to the commissioner about what is going to be expected from here on in from middle management and what the consequences are for middle management not acting.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds left.

[*Translation*]

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

I will come back to Ms. Lahaie later. My next question is a little complicated, in my opinion, and I may run out of time. So I will wait until the next round to ask it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris, you have six minutes, please.

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

First of all, I'd just like to say that my observation from the evidence today from Professor Leuprecht and both other witnesses is that we have a system, as Professor Leuprecht pointed out, where we have 41 pages of recommendations going back to 2007. Ms. Lahaie talked about recommendations being made and sent to the commissioner. After a while, we'll know whether they're accepted or not, but we don't know, and I think Commissioner Lahaie would say we don't really have an effective way of finding out whether the recommendations have been followed or not, as evidenced by your northern B.C. situation.

What are we dealing with here? Is it true that the oversight by the civilian review board that you're heading, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, is an effective model? We've heard suggestions that the RCMP as an institution is broken. Is the oversight that's conducted by your organization broken in a way that can't be fixed by your suggestions, or do we have to look further than that? I have a problem here with all these complaints, lots of recommendations but no follow-through, and apparently the same issues that we're dealing with now.

• (1145)

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I would point out to you that the commission's authorities are the same authorities as you would have with a commission of inquiry. What that means is that we have the authority to make findings and recommendations. Those findings and recommendations are then sent to the commissioner. She is required to respond to our reports and, in her responses, she is required to indicate whether she accepts our recommendations or not, and if she does not accept our recommendations, she has to indicate why she does not accept those recommendations.

The second portion of that, as you point out—and it is one of my recommendations going forward—is that the commissioner should be required to provide a letter to the commission on a yearly basis that indicates the status of the implementation of the recommendations that she has accepted. Putting statutory timelines into the act means that she must respond to public complaints in a timely fashion and, as well, putting into the act a requirement for an annual report on the status of the implementation of those recommendations will certainly strengthen our oversight role, and it will strengthen the accountability of the RCMP.

Mr. Jack Harris: You've also suggested in your statement of July 21 that over the past four years you've issued 14 reports concerning individual cases where RCMP actions in wellness checks or for a person in crisis were unreasonable. You referenced other reports going back to 2009, 2014 and 2016, saying the same kind of thing that you did in terms of the RCMP approach. You issued that statement on the 21st. Obviously, you're not satisfied that there has been no response, so your recommendations going back several years, four years, and these other recommendations going back to 2009 don't seem to be having the effect they should.

What do you think can be done about that?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: By having the commissioner report on the status of the implementation of those recommendations, that's going to increase the accountability. Right now, what's happening is that many of those reports are awaiting a response.

The reason we, or I, chose at the commission to release a public statement is that we were dissatisfied, effectively, with the fact that recommendations have been made over and over again with respect to wellness checks, and the RCMP does not appear to be listening. We issued that statement because I felt that it was in the public interest for that information to be made available.

We increase accountability by imposing timelines for responses to these reports and by requiring the commissioner to indicate the status of the implementation of our recommendations.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam, who initiated the MOU, the MOU that resulted last December? Was that the commission or was that the RCMP?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I would say it was something we came to jointly. Both organizations realized there would be value in our having an MOU.

The commission has existed for almost 35 years. We've never had an MOU with the RCMP, although it has been in the legislation. We felt that it was time to move forward with respect to putting an MOU in place. It was the first step in starting to impose timelines so that we could get more timely responses to Canadians with respect to their complaints.

Mr. Jack Harris: It has been suggested that having an indigenous person as a fellow commissioner along with you would be of value and that you should be using indigenous people as part of your investigative team.

Is that the case now with respect to investigations? Would you think there would be value in having that, and perhaps having a little more authority beyond recommendations?

• (1150)

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I believe there would be value in having a member of the commission who is indigenous—and just to clarify, we're called members, not commissioners.

I also believe, yes, we would be strengthened by having indigenous investigators. That said, my investigative team at the commission is quite diverse, but we do need to move forward with having a greater indigenous footprint here at the commission.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Morrison, you have three minutes.

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

Thank you to the witnesses today. It has really been a great conversation so far.

My first question is going to be to Dr. Parent.

I know you were involved in recruiting into JI, the Justice Institute, and I wonder if you were comparing that or if you've been to Depot.

I guess the question is that we talk a lot about the training of the RCMP and municipal police forces at effective levels. Should there be more training? Should there be changes? I wonder, with your experience, whether you can elaborate a bit on the difference in training or if you feel that six months is enough for the RCMP and the municipal police. They're a bit different, but could you maybe just provide us with some of your expertise?

Dr. Rick Parent: I think the training is very similar. Again, I would argue that there should be more of this customer service, client-oriented focus for the recruits.

In fairness to the RCMP, they have a tough go. Once they leave Depot, they're posted somewhere in Canada. Typically, they're running short. That's a constant theme in the RCMP.

While the training is good in Depot and very comparable to other police academies, whether in Ontario, Quebec or in British Columbia, where the RCMP needs more direction or more assistance is once the recruit is deployed in the field, because often the recruit will leave Depot and will go to northern Saskatchewan or northern British Columbia. I know many of these people. I've been out there with them. They will have a matter of days, maybe a week or two, with another officer. Basically, they're flying by the seat of their pants when they get out into these areas. All they can draw upon is the six months' training they've had and whatever life skills they've had in the past.

They tend to hire young people, and a lot of the young people come from university backgrounds or academic backgrounds, which is nice, but again, they lack a lot of the people skills and what we used to term as "common sense" is not that common anymore. When we're dealing with complex problems, with different cultures, with diversity, they might or might not have those skill sets and abilities.

Mr. Rob Morrison: I did actually bring up with the commissioner the question of hiring locally—in other words, hiring provincially or territorially—so that you get people who actually want to go to those small communities, rather than those who may be looking for the bigger centres.

For example, in Delta they hire for people to stay in Delta, but in the RCMP, they're going to go all over. Part of the solution may be to hire people locally who, therefore, want to be in that area.

Dr. Rick Parent: I totally agree with you. I think that's one of the biggest problems, which could easily be fixed, with the RCMP. They have this model. In Vancouver, many of the recruits—friends, students of mine—will come from the Vancouver area, and they want to work in the Vancouver area with the RCMP, but they wind up in northern Saskatchewan. They therefore quit after 18 months or two years and join a municipal police service, which again results in a shortfall of RCMP officers.

The RCMP, then, has a model that needs to be fixed. I agree with Christian that there are many ways to fix it without spending a lot of money or making a lot of big changes. You need, though, some civilian influence, and I think the problem is that most of the influence in the RCMP is internal, and it doesn't get any better as time goes on.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Morrison.

Madam Khera, take three minutes, please.

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

Thanks again to everyone for being here. I'll start with Ms. Lahaie.

Ms. Lahaie, can you please clarify for me the number of complaints you get and how many you get based on race and discrimination?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: The number of complaints that we receive on a yearly basis is between 3,000 and 3,500. The categories of allegations we have do not include discrimination or racism, but I can tell you that over the course of the last five years we've received 76 complaints that deal with racism, bias or discrimination.

Ms. Kamal Khera: That number is quite low, if you compare it with the realities, and especially the realities of the racialized communities and perhaps the testimonies that we've been hearing.

How are you tracking that they're based on racism or discrimination?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: We're tracking it because the individuals indicate that they believe they've been discriminated against based upon race or culture or religion. The individuals actually come out, and oftentimes with complaints with respect to officer conduct or perhaps a negative attitude. The individuals will frame it by stating that they believe they've been discriminated against based upon race.

• (1155)

Ms. Kamal Khera: Can you clarify? Given that there's a clear differential of results from racialized people, I hope you're not concluding that there's a low number of complaints based on racism, or that there is little or no systemic racism within the RCMP.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: No, I'm not at all making that conclusion. As I indicated in my remarks, one thing the commission has noted is that indigenous people do not make use of the public complaints system. That is an issue for us that we need to work on. The best way to work on it is through better public education and better outreach, and the only way we get to that place is through increased resources and a statutory requirement to perform those activities.

Ms. Kamal Khera: Thank you.

Ms. Lahaie, would you say that the CRCC is representative of the communities it serves? Could you provide us with an overview of how many women, black, indigenous and racialized Canadians there are at the commission?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I'll be able to provide you with those statistics afterwards. I don't have them at my fingertips right now.

I can tell you that the commission is very diverse. In terms of gender balance, we're approximately 55% women, as a matter of fact, here at the commission, and we have a very diverse population.

I can provide you with those specific statistics afterwards. I'll send them to you.

The Chair: Okay. We'll have to leave it there.

Mr. Uppal, take three minutes, please.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Thank you, and thank you to all the witnesses.

Professor Leuprecht, the National Security Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians in 2019 did an annual report in which they reviewed inclusion and diversity within the RCMP, and the report statistics showed that visible minorities were under-represented in the RCMP, including among senior ranks.

Can you elaborate on this?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I think it demonstrates the value of having an independent review of organizations by parliamentarians of the changes that the government has put in place. I think the NISCOP report is very important for everyone to read. As you point out, it is the first independent triangulation of representation within the force, and it strengthens my case for the challenge of drawing from the ranks in the senior representation of management.

I think part of the previous conversation also suggested that there are good reasons that many minority communities may not be particularly interested in joining the uniformed ranks of the RCMP but may be much more interested in joining the civilian ranks. If, then, we want to have a more representative RCMP, civilianization is an important step in that direction.

Hon. Tim Uppal: Thank you.

Chairperson Lahaie, you mentioned that the commission is very diverse. Do these members also have broad experience in policing?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: On the commission right now in terms of policing, we do have some staff members who are former police officers. I must point out our role, though. We are civilian oversight. We take that very seriously. The most important thing from a staff perspective is that the staff of the commission need to have a diverse and broad range of experiences coming from very different areas. For example, if I look at my investigative team, some of my investigators are former police officers, but some come from more of a social background. That really provides us with a diverse experience here and it provides us a very diverse lens on the investigations that we do.

The Chair: Mr. Uppal, you have about 30 more seconds.

Hon. Tim Uppal: My next question will take too long, so I'll wait. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Damoff, you have three minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being with us today.

I want to start by getting something on the record. The fact is that the overrepresentation of black Canadians and indigenous peoples in the criminal justice system in Canada is just as bad as in the United States. In terms of people shot by the police, 30 people in Canada were killed between January and June. Three indigenous people were killed in three days in Winnipeg. To say that Canada isn't as bad as the dumpster fire in the United States is to do a disservice to those who have been killed and their families. I just wanted to get that on the record.

Ms. Lahaie, I looked at the flow chart on your website about how to file a complaint. I've had conversations about the process with Dr. Allen Benson, whom you probably know. He has indicated that the process is so difficult that many people have to hire a lawyer in order to file a complaint with the RCMP. As a result, many indigenous people who have experienced racism and discrimination actually never file a complaint.

I applaud the work you've done in translating into other languages, but I'm wondering if you've considered simplifying the application process so that it's easier for individuals to file those complaints.

• (1200)

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Yes, as you point out, we have done translation into many different languages. The best way that we can make the system more accessible is through increased public education and outreach. You are correct that when you look at that flow chart on our website, it can be highly confusing, but we've simplified the complaint form a great deal over the course of the past few years.

As well, we have intake officers. If individuals choose to make a complaint with respect to the RCMP, we have a phone number and we have an email address. They can reach out. We have very well-trained staff who can talk people through the process and explain to them exactly how it will work.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Would you consider putting together a group of, for instance, indigenous peoples, black Canadians and other racialized Canadians to be part of a review of that process? If Dr. Benson, who's on the ground, is hearing that it's difficult to apply, then I'm wondering...because so often we exclude people as government. I don't think education solves the problem. If you don't trust the RCMP and you don't trust the institution, you probably won't come forward.

I put that out there for your consideration.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I think your idea is definitely worthy of consideration. There's no doubt that we need to do greater consultation.

The other thing I need to highlight as well is that our process is a remedial process. Really, the focus is on identifying issues with policies, procedures and training. If any officers are found to have had conduct issues, we make recommendations for operational guidance. The process is remedial in fashion.

But yes, I like your idea. It is certainly something that I will take into consideration.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Damoff.

Madame Michaud, you have a minute and a half.

[Translation]

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

My questions are for Ms. Lahaie and are along the same lines as Ms. Damoff's.

You said that there are now 16 languages available on the website. More recently, Inuktitut was added. So of those 16 languages, three are indigenous, whereas there are dozens of indigenous languages. The information pamphlet and the online complaint form are only available in French and English.

You mentioned 76 complaints related to discrimination and racism in the last five years. In your opinion, is it possible that not having access to the complaint process or to a form in one's mother tongue can be a major obstacle to filing a complaint? Personally, I believe it can deter a victim of discrimination from filing a complaint. There is still a phone number and an email for people who want information, but are there trained people and translators who can help people file a complaint?

[English]

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: The commission does have agreements in place with the translation bureau, where if an individual wishes to make a complaint and we do not have access to the individual's mother tongue, we do three-way calls with the translation bureau, between our intake officer and the individual who is making the complaint. We have done that in the past, and we will continue to do that.

As well, the commission is always open to producing other complaint forms in other languages. We've done it in the past, and we can do it again in the future. The languages that have been chosen—

The Chair: I'm sorry. Madame Michaud had a minute and a half. It's a very brief period of time.

Mr. Harris, you have a final minute and a half.

• (1205)

Mr. Jack Harris: Ms. Lahaie, what would happen if someone made a complaint of excessive use of force. What if the individual making the complaint was an indigenous person, but didn't complain that it was because they were indigenous? Would that be treated as a racially based complaint or not?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: We don't have a category for racially based complaints, but we do routinely make findings and recommendations in our reports that speak to the importance of cultural sensitivity within indigenous populations.

Mr. Jack Harris: I understand that. You counted them at 76, so if I made a complaint as an indigenous person, but didn't say that the use of force was because I was indigenous, then that's not considered one of your 76 complaints.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: No it is not, but it doesn't mean that we wouldn't address the issue.

Mr. Jack Harris: No, I'm just trying to understand the statistics.

Can you tell me why you don't publish your reports and recommendations, except in the case of public interest matters? You could easily allow the public to see what the recommendations were and what the facts were without disclosing privacy.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Yes, you're correct. The Privacy Act is the main reason why we do not do that, but if you go to our website, you will notice that we have begun to publish summaries of

the complaints that we have received. We are going to continue doing that, going forward, to increase the transparency.

The Chair: That brings us to the end of our time with this panel.

Normally, the chair doesn't intervene in questions, but Ms. Damoff made an opening statement about comparability between American and Canadian interactions with citizens, which I thought was directed at Dr. Parent. I think there would be a benefit to the committee to at least hear your response, Dr. Parent, to Ms. Damoff's initial statement.

Dr. Rick Parent: I'm well aware of that statistic, and there's a big difference between what the media report and what actually happens. I'm well aware of how CBC put those stats together and how it used, I would argue, sensationalism. It doesn't put in the actual context that occurs and it does not do a concluding statement at the end of the year.

If you look at the facts, the facts are very different. I have those facts, and I've personally pulled all those files that I talk about. There's a difference between the media and what actually happens with Statistics Canada.

Ms. Pam Damoff: With all due respect, Mr. Chair, those comments did not come from the media. They came from a briefing I had from the Government of Canada. I wasn't talking about police killings. I was talking about the overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. I wasn't taking it from the media.

The Chair: I knew I shouldn't have opened this thing up.

Dr. Rick Parent: It's a good discussion.

The Chair: That is the point of a parliamentary committee: to have points of view, often different points of view, fleshed out.

It may be useful for you, Dr. Parent and Ms. Damoff, to go offline and have a direct conversation, so that there may be a point of reconciliation between what appears to be quite divergent statements.

With that, I'm going to suspend. I want to thank, on behalf of the committee, each and every witness here. This has been a very stimulating and useful discussion.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1215)

The Chair: We'll resume our meeting.

This is the 10th meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying systemic racism in policing services in Canada.

We have with us, for this panel, Peter Sloly, chief of the Ottawa Police Service; Dale McFee, chief of the Edmonton Police Service; and Tom Stamatakis, president of the Canadian Police Association. The speaking order for the time being will be Chief Peter Sloly, then Tom Stamatakis from the Canadian Police Association and then Chief McFee.

With that, Chief Sloly, I'll ask you to proceed with your seven-minute presentation.

Chief Peter Sloly (Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service): Thank you. I would like to thank the committee for inviting me to participate in this very important discussion.

My name is Peter Sloly, and I am the chief of the Ottawa Police Service. I am proud to serve the one million souls who reside in the nation's capital. I am proud of my 28 years as a police officer in Canada. I am a proud black man, a proud native of Jamaica and a proud Canadian citizen.

I will start by unequivocally stating that Canada is the best country in the world, that the Canadian policing model is the best in the world and that Canadian police officers are among the finest people in the world. I will also unequivocally state that individual and systemic racism exists in Canadian policing, in all Canadian institutions and in Canadian society as a whole. These statements are not mutually exclusive.

The ongoing negative impact of systemic racism is eroding the public's trust and confidence in policing, which is essential to keeping our communities safe. Not addressing systemic racism is not only failing our communities; it also puts our own police service members at risk. Systemic racism is a well-established concept rooted in our colonial past, embedded in our legislation, enabled in our institutional practices and sustained in our organizational culture.

A common misconception about systemic racism is that it involves a few bad apples who engage in racist thoughts and behaviours. This is not true, because imperfectly good people can commit acts of omission that allow individual racists to survive and even thrive in organizations. Imperfectly good people can also consciously or unconsciously enable systems to create and perpetuate policies and practices that work to the advantage of some groups and to the disadvantage of others.

Systemic racism exists within all Canadian institutions. Further, these institutions are interdependent, interactive and compounding on each other. For example, individual and systemic racism in education, health care, social services and housing will directly contribute to the underpinning elements of crime.

Criminal activity will eventually engage the justice system into this cascading set of institutional failures. To dismantle systemic racism along with all forms of discrimination in policing, we need to make positive investments in police culture, police operations and the broader institutional ecosystem that the police operate in.

Changing police culture is not something that can happen overnight; however, there are specific steps that police leaders can do today that will build a healthier police culture for the future. For example, a greater critical mass of diverse sworn and civilian personnel at every level of the police service has been shown to diminish some of the more pernicious aspects of police culture. That is why the Ottawa Police Service has enhanced our recruitment, hiring and promotion processes to increase the quality of our members and to accelerate the diversification of our organization.

Human rights experts have helped to identify the following three things that police services should do to build a healthier culture and eliminate systemic racism. First is collecting and analyzing disaggregated race-based data; second is developing an equity, diversity

and inclusion tool kit to review and update all policies, procedures and practices; and third is identifying and removing all aspects of the organizational culture that sustains systemic racism or resists attempts to dismantle it.

The Ontario Human Rights Code and the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act establish the responsibilities for police services, police boards and police oversight bodies to prevent and address both individual and systemic racism. There is a further positive obligation on police services to make sure that they are not engaging in systemic discrimination in any form. All Ontario police services must comply with these legislative requirements and standards.

That said, Canadian police leaders must go well beyond mere legal compliance. We must demonstrate our own personal and professional commitment to promoting and protecting human rights and charter rights. We must take the initiative to lead the redevelopment all of core systems, human resources, professional standards, corporate risk management, operations and IT, such that these systems accelerate the advancements that we have already made to bring greater levels of diversity, equity and inclusion into policing while also dismantling systemic racism that has too long persisted in policing.

The community does not want law enforcement or the use of force to be the dominant problem-solving tools of policing, nor do they want law enforcement to be the dominant factor shaping police culture. These concerns help to explain why indigenous, black and racialized communities sometimes feel they are overpoliced, under-served and overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

The community and police do not want to be the only or even primary response option to every call for service everywhere on a 24-7, 365 basis. This model does not fully serve the community's needs, and it puts police officers in an untenable position where they do not and cannot have the knowledge, skills and abilities to consistently and successfully deal with non-police related calls, most notably with people suffering from mental health issues or addictions.

● (1220)

The public and police members want policing that prevents and reduces crime. They also want police to partner with the communities to address a wider variety of public safety issues—such as neighbour disputes, parking complaints, road safety, school safety, disorderly behaviour in public areas and other human services issues—where the police would play more of a support role, not the lead role that we currently do.

That is why the Ottawa Police Service has committed to making major investments in the following three operational strategies.

The first is neighbourhood policing: deploying officers in the neighbourhoods experiencing higher calls for service, criminality and/or social disorder to work with local community stakeholders to prevent and address a broad range of community safety and well-being issues. The second is intelligence-led policing: enhancing the intelligence-led policing model that will still have crime reduction as a priority, but be fully aligned with the neighbourhood policing model to prevent crime and disorder while getting at the root causes of crime. The third is community safety and well-being: implementing a community safety and well-being plan that brings together police, education, health care, social services and community stakeholders to create an integrated service delivery model that proactively assesses individual and community needs and the risks associated with them, and addresses them in the pre-justice space using a combination of social workers, mental health practitioners and/or police officers.

The best way to prevent crime is by addressing the root causes of crime in full partnership with the community. We can do this while still demonstrating the ability to deal with the most prolific criminal offenders. Simply put, the police should prevent first and foremost and enforce last and least, while partnering in all ways and always. This will enable the co-production of public safety and the co-destruction of systemic racism.

I know that my colleague, Chief Dale McFee, will focus the majority of his presentation on the types of changes needed to further align and integrate the larger ecosystem of institutions that the police operate in. This is an area where I think we can make the biggest, most impactful and most needed changes: changes that will save the lives of community members and police service members, changes that will provide greater dignity and respect to minority community members and police service members, changes that will rebuild public trust and police morale and changes that will result in a massive return on investment for taxpayers and an opportunity for further investments in community safety and well-being for all Canadians in all communities.

In conclusion, I am proud of the progress that has been made in my chosen profession of policing. I am proud of the Ottawa Police Service members for their contributions to that progress. I'm proud of all members of Canada's police services who have contributed to advancing our social fabric, our democracy and our nation. Much has been accomplished, but much more needs to be done.

I'm personally and professionally committed to fixing this issue. Thankfully I'm not alone in this work. I'm surrounded by a critical mass of other leaders in the Ottawa Police Service and across this great country, leaders who know that this is not the time for resisting change and not the time for incremental change. This is the time to make real change.

Policing in Canada has been moving from denial and resistance to listening, dialoguing, learning, owning, partnering, codesigning and co-producing the cultural, operational and system-wide changes we need to dismantle systemic racism in policing and in the wider Canadian society. The conditions to make meaningful

change exist right here and right now in Canada. There are no more excuses.

Indigenous, black and racialized communities need this. Women and newcomers need this. Front-line police officers and police chiefs need this. [*Technical Difficulty—Editor*].

● (1225)

The Chair: Chief Sloy, you're fading, but you're clearly out of time.

Chief Peter Sloy: I've concluded. Thank you.

The Chair: That's good.

I encourage witnesses to look occasionally at the chair, as I don't wish to interrupt.

Our next speaker is Tom Stamatakis.

Sir, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis (President, Canadian Police Association): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. I'd like to thank you for inviting me to participate today as you continue your important study into systemic racism in policing services in Canada.

I note there are some new faces at the table since my last appearance, so very briefly, for those who may not be familiar, I'm appearing today as the president of the Canadian Police Association, which is the largest policing advocacy organization in Canada, representing more than 55,000 front-line civilian and sworn law enforcement personnel from coast to coast to coast. Our members are the officers and the communications professionals whom members of the public see in their communities and who are usually the first line of contact people have with their local police service.

As you can imagine, I have been following the proceedings of this committee very closely, and I think it's important to begin my presentation today by acknowledging the very real issue of systemic racism in our institutions. I also think it's important to acknowledge that this is not a problem unique to policing in Canada. The effects of systemic racism are apparent in many of our central institutions, from the media to academia, to the legal system, our health care system and even our Parliament and provincial legislatures.

We need to do better, and that statement goes beyond meaning just having witnesses appear and provide what they believe are the best definitions of systemic racism. From my perspective, whether or not my own specific definition of the problem matches that of any other witness is largely unimportant. The key is that what has become abundantly clear in the past two months is that some Canadians do not believe their police services represent them or treat them equally, based on the colour of their skin or their circumstances. As police professionals, we need to address that.

That being said, I also think it's unfortunate that all police officers have been broadly targeted, both by activists and some political figures, as the ultimate source of the problem. That couldn't be further from the truth. I've had the privilege of working in policing for over 30 years, and by virtue of my role as an operational police officer and as the president of the CPA, representing police officers locally, provincially, federally and internationally, I've had the ability to meet with officers in police services across this country and can say without a shadow of a doubt that Canadians have every reason to be proud of the professionalism and dedication that is shown by our personnel on a daily basis.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2017-18 Canadian police officers responded to almost 13 million calls for service. To put it another way, in the first six months of 2020, the Edmonton Police Service responded to 87,724 calls for service, which averages out to 20 calls per hour, seven days per week, 24 hours per day. These numbers only reflect specific calls for service. The number doesn't even begin to capture such proactive police work as traffic enforcement, community outreach or targeted policing at identified hot spots.

I mention this to highlight the fact that there are overwhelming demands being placed on the men and women who make up our police services. The overwhelming majority of these calls and activities are handled without fanfare, with outstanding professionalism and without use of force. We carefully recruit and carefully screen our officers and then provide them with outstanding training in areas such as de-escalation, and this shows in these statistics.

I think it's important for all of us to keep in mind that it's entirely possible to recognize the strong work already being done by our police services, while also acknowledging that there's more to be done and that there is room for improvement within our sector.

One of the remedies that have been suggested to address systemic racism in policing is the idea that it's time to abolish police or defund policing. I'd like to take just a minute to respond to that idea.

The term "defund the police" is open to interpretation. For some, it's merely a hashtag. For others, it has many definitions: abolish the police, reduce police budgets, reallocate police funds to social services or move towards a social work model, replacing police officers with trained social workers or specialized response teams.

While there is universal acceptance of the need for reforms, arbitrary cuts to police funding are not the answer. Proposals to cut budgets by 10% to 20%, for example, have been put forward, with no plan for replacing the services currently delivered by the police.

Also missing from the discussion is whether other health or social agencies can take on the added responsibilities.

I'd also note that if these cuts were to be imposed without an appropriate replacement plan in place, it will be the most vulnerable and marginalized Canadians who will feel the effects most acutely. It should also be noted that even with increased social supports in place, there will always be a role for front-line policing, particularly when the safety of the public is put at risk.

For example, ideally police would not be the first agency responding to mental health distress calls; however, it is ultimately unrealistic to expect that when someone presents a danger to themselves or members of the public, there would not be a police response, preferably working in concert with trained mental health professionals.

- (1230)

This is an approach that many police agencies have already adopted, with the use of mobile crisis intervention teams that pair a trained mental health nurse with a police officer, in order to rapidly address circumstances where it would be inappropriate for a uniquely police response.

Police associations and front-line officers want to be constructive partners in this important discussion. In fact, nobody would agree more with the argument that police officers shouldn't be the only agency available to respond to calls that generally aren't criminal in nature. Associations also want to be part of the solution when it comes to addressing systemic racism in our sector, but we believe it's important for those solutions to be evidence-based and supported by rigorous research and evaluation, and not be the result of misleading headlines and populist rhetoric.

If we want to have a productive discussion around the future of police spending in Canada, it's important to focus on the entirety of the social safety system. If all that happens is a review or a focus exclusively on policing, a lot of politicians, activists and consultants might feel as if they have accomplished something, but nothing will ultimately change. We need a more holistic or complete approach that engages all stakeholders, all three levels of government and the public, to ensure that Canadians can continue to have trust and confidence in their police services.

As I've often said, police believe that proactive policing and building community relationships are a better approach to addressing social issues and the root causes of crime. However, community policing is resource intensive and requires a consistent, sustained approach. Community policing's success hinges on an adequately funded and staffed police service, where officers have proactive or uncommitted time during their shift to engage in day-to-day culturally aware interactions in priority neighbourhoods. Budget cuts will weaken a police service's ability to engage proactively with the community and deliver community policing where it matters most: in Canada's most vulnerable communities.

I'd like to thank you again for the invitation to appear before you, and I look forward to questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stamatakis.

Our final witness is Chief McFee, from Edmonton.

You have seven minutes, please.

Chief Dale McFee (Chief of Police, Edmonton Police Service): Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chair.

I want to first acknowledge that it's a pleasure and a privilege to speak here with Peter and Tom, representing our organizations.

I represent 1,900 sworn officers and approximately 900 civilians. I've been involved in the justice system for over 30 years as a sworn police officer and a deputy minister in government, co-chair of the federal-provincial deputy ministers committee and co-chair of CCJS with StatsCan for over four years.

I am a proud member of the Métis community and have worked to change the way we police for the last 12 years. To complement Chief Sloy's remarks, I'm going to move from his suggestions and ideas around cultural change, which I support, and focus on operational changes to policing and the real crux of this matter, which is systemic change in policing and systemic change across the human service system that puts people in the need of the services at the centre of the needed change.

This is not the first time this issue of systemic racism in policing has been a focus of discussion. The fact that we are gathered here again demonstrates that we must move beyond conversation into meaningful change that focuses on implementation and not more study. The facts are irrefutable. Systemic racism is real and exists within all social institutions in Canada. This might make people feel uncomfortable, and that's okay. I'm hopeful the committee will take away, from the panels held yesterday and again today, the realization that we can no longer look at systemic racism in policing as an isolated issue.

As Justice Sinclair has commented, we need to move past the idea that being part of a systemically racist system means that you are racist. As Chief Sloy also indicated, that is not necessarily the case. Systemic racism is seen across the broad system of all social structures and institutions. There are many examples of this. We don't have to look very far. Residential schools, still struggling in classrooms....

The COVID-19 pandemic has a disproportionate impact on black, indigenous and other racialized communities in Canada. Simply to put social conditions in context: where people live determines such things as access to quality health care, which itself can protect or expose to certain illnesses and disease. This, too, is systemic racism. Indigenous and other racialized communities over-represent in the child welfare system. I could go on.

Despite the evidence, we still can't seem to agree that systemic racism exists in this country. Even in policing, we have leaders who cannot see the impact of systemic racism even though our history is marked by the role of policing in enforcing the Indian Act and discriminatory laws around the treatment LGBTQ2S+ people, among others.

I have been fortunate to speak on these matters of reform around the world for probably the last 12 years. This is a time for leadership and courage demonstrated through commitment to change. This is not just a political matter. As chief, I know there is more work to be done within our organization and the broader environment that we operate in. Nonetheless, I am encouraged knowing that I lead a team of dedicated front-line officers, the overwhelming majority whom, while having no part in building the institution of policing or writing the rules, put on a uniform every day, each one committed to protecting and serving all citizens with compassion and professionalism.

It is as much for them as for those we serve that we must hold individuals who hold racist or inappropriate views accountable, and we must commit to that. However, that by itself does not change the structure of a system that, like other institutional structures and systems in this country, perpetuate racial inequality. What began as a protest against police brutality has evolved into a broader conversation on community safety and well-being linked to broader social and economic issues in disparity.

As a good friend of mine, Sheldon Kennedy, put it, "To know better is to do better." So now what?

Let's start with police operations. The change starts with leadership. Where should leadership put its focus to give us the best results? I'd like to focus on three key areas, though there are many others.

First, recruiting needs to show diversity in not just race, gender or sexual orientation or gender identity but also in diversity of thinking and lived experience. Diverse recruiting changes culture and should never be taken lightly. It's a primary driver of change. So too is taking a close look at promotional and retention processes.

Second is responding to calls, our bread and butter, as Tom and Peter said. There are two things that drive our calls for service: social issues related to mental health, addictions, poverty and homelessness, which account for 80% to 92% of all calls for service; and then, on the other side, addressing the serious offenders who are responsible for over 50% of recontact within the system. They must be responded to in different ways. A failure to do so can actually artificially increase crime rates, impact policing and community relations, and impact police legitimacy.

● (1235)

Third, we need to address harassment, equity, diversity and inclusion so that they remain a priority for every police leader. To demonstrate our commitment in this area, EPS has moved this responsibility under the office of the chief of police.

Finally, moving forward, we need to look at operational and organizational policies and procedures through a new lens. This includes partnerships and dialogue with community members, community agencies, academia and other subject matter expertise to ensure that our policies and procedures are grounded in evidence and supported by research. This means that we can do more of what works and get out of what doesn't.

These are just some of the things that we are doing at EPS, but there are several others. Across Canada, cities and communities have developed strategies to address poverty, homelessness, housing, addictions and mental health.

In creating these funds, we have to ask questions. Who are we helping? Are there different people in these strategies or are most of them the same? We all know the answer is that it's mostly the same people. How much money is being spent on the social safety net in our cities? Is it coordinated? How can we improve our information sharing and pool our respective expertise to support coordination? How many death inquests will it take to be bold in making these changes? How do we measure success? Is it by how many people are taken into the system or how many we get out of the system? Are there minimum standards? We know the answer to that.

As I mentioned, 80% to 92% of all calls to EPS are related to these key social issues, so a coordinated strategy that incorporates both law enforcement and public health solutions makes sense. Could that be the new structure? Are the social determinants of health not the same as the social determinants of justice?

By pulling together the areas that drive the work, rather than basing the structure on historical silos, we can begin to address systemic racism. While EPS is an organization of change, we recognize that these efforts alone, at best, will not have an impact on any singular police agency. It's time to put the collective expertise together in an effort to truly address systemic racism in a way that is intended to effect real and meaningful change within criminal justice, health care, child welfare, educational institutions and not-for-profits, working together for joint outcomes to get people out of the system. Policing will always be a vital public service. First contact will generally be held by police, and we obviously have to get it right.

We are in a time right now with the perfect storm to create change. The only way this change is going to be done is through partnership, data-led local solutions and collective outcomes. It's time that we all look in the mirror, try for this change and be relentless in doing it. It doesn't need everybody, but it needs a consortium of the willing to start the movement and gain the momentum that we truly need in this country to move from a conversation to meaningful action.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thank you, Chief McFee.

We're now moving to our six-minute rounds, beginning with Mr. Paul-Hus, then going to Mr. Fergus, Madame Michaud and Mr. Harris.

For those of you who don't have headsets, please make a conscious effort to speak slowly so that the interpretation can keep up.

[*Translation*]

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

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

My questions are for Mr. Stamatakis or Mr. McFee.

I would like to talk about the causes. Mr. McFee, you mentioned in a report that, in 80% to 92% of the responses, mental health problems were the issue. The people involved had drug or alcohol problems. When marijuana was legalized, the police associations said that there was a risk to the public.

Have you noticed any changes since marijuana was legalized? Has there been an increase in consumption and does it result in an increase in drug-related problems? Is there a tendency for people to use other drugs, which require interventions?

[*English*]

The Chair: Who wants to take that?

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: I can jump in.

In terms of the percentages that Chief McFee referred to, he's absolutely right. The vast majority of our calls are driven by issues related to mental health and addictions. The problem is that if the police don't respond to many of those calls, they can potentially turn into more serious crimes. That has been borne out by the research.

On the question related to cannabis, there's no question that we continue to have issues related to cannabis from a front-line policing perspective. I wouldn't suggest, though, that because we're in a legal cannabis regime, we've seen a significant increase in demands with respect to enforcement related to that. I would argue—and I'll let Chief Sloly or Chief McFee weigh in here—that from a policing perspective, we are not prioritizing personal consumption, quite frankly. First of all, we don't have the resources, and second, Canadians have been quite clear with respect to that issue.

• (1245)

The Chair: Chief McFee or Chief Sloly...?

Chief Dale McFee: I have to apologize; I'm not getting the translation.

What was the second part of the question?

The Chair: Pierre, do you want to give the second part of your question?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Since the legalization of marijuana, have the cases of intoxication increased, leading to violence? Do certain communities or certain groups have more problems with use, meaning that police interventions are often linked to mental health issues involving violence?

[English]

Chief Dale McFee: First, I apologize for my bad French.

In relation to marijuana, I'll give you the Edmonton example. We're not seeing a great impact with marijuana, to be bluntly honest. We still are seizing a large amount of marijuana in the mail, which is still an issue. I don't think we're seeing a big change there. There's not a real measurable impact on our crime rate, either, so I think it's very much the same. We're seeing a much bigger impact with meth, which makes everything unpredictable. It kind of tells us that we don't need a marijuana strategy or a fentanyl strategy; we need a people strategy. People are using all of these drugs. Meth is one that's very unpredictable.

In relation to mental health calls for service, we are seeing a significant increase. COVID-19 has also shown us a significant increase in suicide rates. It is the perfect storm. As well, domestic violence is starting to upturn. I think what we really have here is a bunch of the social determinants, as I mentioned, that are disproportionately driving police calls for service. They are disproportionately making it a really high-risk situation in many of these cases, which just come in as troubled persons or checks on welfare and so on.

The intoxication piece has increased and the unpredictability has increased. That makes it very tough to not send a police officer to these calls. It has really shown us that the response needs to be PACT, our team of police and mental health workers together, and we're now hiring social workers to have police and social workers try to respond as well. Once it's safe, the other agency takes the lead. That's what I mean by partnership.

Hopefully, I answered the majority of that question.

The Chair: Chief Sloly, Mr. Paul-Hus has asked an important question. I'm sure you wish to respond.

[Translation]

Chief Peter Sloly: Thank you very much for your question.

[English]

I will revert this back specifically to systemic racism. I will admit my concerns around decriminalization of cannabis. It occurred while I was temporarily outside of policing in the private sector. I watched it from a very different lens, more as a father and community member, with my concerns around its impact. As I've come back into policing, I can assure you that there has not been, at least in this jurisdiction in the nation's capital, a significant increase in crime or violence at the street level associated with the decriminalization. Changes in consumption have affected driving practices, and that is not limited to any particular geography or demography. The use of cannabis, as far as I know from the studies, cuts across almost every demographic group, so for me it's a non-issue when it comes to the issue of systemic racism.

What is important is the issue of decriminalization of simple possession. Certainly, in my almost three decades in policing, and since I've come back into policing as a chief, I support fully the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police's position on decriminalization for simple possession. It has, over the decades, disproportionately led to enforcement in marginalized and mostly racialized

communities. To Dale McFee's and Tom's position, it has not resulted in meaningful changes in recidivism, and in fact has put more people, many with mental health and addictions issues, into the criminal justice system without sufficient off-ramps. It has significantly complicated and made more dangerous the work of front-line police officers.

The old war on drugs strategy was a failure. I don't know if decriminalization will be as big a failure, but it will be different. Again, I think if we apply it in a broader integrated-system approach, with health care, social services, housing and housing in the not-for-profit sector, we're likely to get fewer people in jail, more people healthy and fewer people on high-addiction drugs. Those who are there will have the health care options on the street before they become a drain—

• (1250)

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave this important conversation there, as Mr. Paul-Hus is well past his six minutes.

Mr. Fergus, you have six minutes please.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'd like to thank the two police chiefs and Mr. Stamatakis for your presentations today. They were all very interesting.

I'm going to perhaps focus my comments, my questions, on Chief McFee and Chief Sloly.

First of all, Chief Sloly, thank you very much for your presentation. As far as I'm concerned, it almost writes the report, and I think you and Chief McFee have complemented each other tremendously in terms of the testimony that you gave today.

Before I get into some issues, let me allow you to finish off that last point you were making in response to my colleague Mr. Paul-Hus's question. If there were to be all of the array of resources put together to combat dependency and mental health issues, would it be worth considering the question of imitating Portugal, which decriminalized possession of all illicit materials insofar as it is to get people off of that dependency and getting them the supports that they need?

Chief Peter Sloly: That's a great question. I'm not an expert in this area, but I'll do my best to answer, sir.

I actually visited Portugal twice, for major conferences around smart cities, in my time in the private sector. The integrated approach to creating a smart city underpins the integrated approach to the process of decriminalization. We have to invest, not disinvest, in policing in order to create the ability for the police services to work in the way that Dale has described and that Tom referred to, for that systemic change, in terms of how we would work in and with community and priority neighbourhoods.

Disinvesting and simply transitioning the money will create another gap in the service delivery social safety net. The best places like Portugal—for me, I've studied Scotland more—have actually maintained investments but produced different service delivery models for the police, while investing more in the other areas around policing, to ensure that we have a smarter and more comprehensive approach to preventing these issues from becoming part of the justice system by off-ramping these people out of the justice system and into the right areas of care and the right community supports.

The other point I wanted to make was that decriminalization, if applied in the same way we did with marijuana, where we provide clemency, will actually give hundreds of thousands of Canadians, many of whom are indigenous and racialized and black, the ability to get back into the job market, earn a wage for their family and contribute to the tax base, which in itself is an exponential financial accelerator for us, as well as being a justice accelerator.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I agree with you in terms of the clemency.

I have a question for either chief.

First of all, let me say that I really appreciate how you talk about giving policing a big rethink in terms of the ways we can talk about increasing community security and health, which would require better partnerships, a different approach. When we had the RCMP commissioner here, she had testified saying that seven in a thousand calls that the RCMP officers get would lead to a violent confrontation.

Chief McFee you talked about 80% to 92% of the calls to the EPS dealing more with social issues as opposed to public security issues.

Is there a rethink going on in terms of what ways police can better respond to what actually turns out to be more the run-of-the-mill calls that they get and the interventions they're asked to make?

● (1255)

Chief Dale McFee: Yes, it's a great question. It's really the crux of what we're talking about because, let's face it, a lot of those calls come in and they're not really knowing what they're going to be. Like I tried to say in my opening statement, if it's meth-related sometimes, obviously, it's unpredictable, and a large part of this is drug or alcohol induced, so it requires a partnership approach. What we have in Edmonton and Ottawa and several police services, including Vancouver or Toronto, is PACT teams, police and crisis workers in a police car going together.

When you go together, whoever.... If it's a safe environment, then obviously the lead goes with either the social worker or the mental

health worker. If it's not a safe environment, the police stabilize that as well.

We're looking at that now. How can we put mental health professionals in our dispatch centre? How can we coordinate dispatch? If you think about it from a different context, the police services in this country almost run as many ambulances as EMS. Between police and EMS we basically are populating.... Police populate 100% of the justice system, and EMS and the police are almost probably 85% of the emergency rooms—

Mr. Greg Fergus: I'm sorry to interrupt. I've been informed I only have a minute left.

Chief McFee, if it's possible, you could write that in a note, if you have the time, and send that to the clerk. We can always integrate into our report what we've received as written as well as verbal testimony.

Very quickly, I'll ask my last question. We obviously have an issue where there is systemic discrimination that exists. When studies have shown that blacks or indigenous people or people of colour are no more likely to commit a crime than any other group, all things being considered, what can we do, then, to stop overpolicing in those areas? What types of approaches can we take so that we're not targeting them and, therefore, finding crime just because we're looking for it in those communities?

The Chair: That's again an extremely important question, but Mr. Fergus is already way past his six minutes. Possibly you can work a response to his important question into other inquiries.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

I'm going to speak to Mr. Sloly, but my thanks to all three of you for your testimony.

In 2019, as a result of complaints from residents who felt that there was too much reliance on appearance or skin colour at roadside checks, for example, the Ottawa Police Service admitted that racial profiling was taking place within its ranks. Subsequently, you promised to table an equity, diversity and inclusion action plan to better address biases and “improve the felt and lived experience of the community.”

Has this action plan been implemented? I believe it was planned for January. If so, have you seen any changes? What are they?

[English]

Chief Peter Sloly: Yes, the EDI action plan was tabled in February in front of our board. It is an evergreen plan, meaning that we've taken what we believe are the top 10 most impactful activities that we can do to address overall equity, diversity and inclusion.

To be clear, that is to ensure that within our police service all of our members are treated with respect and dignity and are able to work in a harassment-free environment; that we address systemic bullying, workplace mobbing, harassment and sexual harassment; and that we provide a safe, healthy and well environment for our members to then be psychologically, emotionally and physically capable of going out and serving in a very diverse and pluralistic community.

The EDI action plan, like almost everything in policing, got way-laid by this giant thing called COVID, but despite that, we have continued to make advancements against those top 10 priorities. We have significantly accomplished three of them, which includes creating the infrastructure.

As Dale McFee talked about, we have created an EDI team and a respect, ethics and values unit within my office, where they have direct access to the office of the chief, the resources, the influence and the power to address the equitable activities of our service to our members, as well as to our community. This includes a strategy around anti-black racism, anti-indigenous racism and systemic racism in the way that I described in my presentation, those three points being used by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in terms of addressing systemic issues within policing.

A lot of work has been done in a short period of time despite other challenges, but we have a lot more work to do.

• (1300)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

In the third point, you talk about identifying and removing all aspects of the organizational culture that sustains systemic racism in your organizations.

In your opinion, are the police officers who work directly on the ground wearing too many hats at the same time? Are we asking too much of them?

[English]

Chief Peter Sloly: Thank you. That's part of the point I was making before, and I think it has been reflected by Tom and Dale.

It is impossible for a human being in a uniform with a badge, a gun and most importantly an oath of office, and with brains and a heart and arms to wrap themselves around the vast diversity of human issues that we are being asked to go to on a 24-7, 365 basis in small, medium and large communities across this great country. We have done too much of that for too long. It has created an unimaginable amount of stress and strain on our front-line officers. They suffer when they cannot save people and they suffer when they're accused of not doing enough, or the right things or even the wrong things. We've put them in a position of frustration and sometimes

failure, and we need to do better for our front-line officers. We need to do better for the communities that rely on them. They must be integrated into a wider set of service delivery opportunities that are available for community members on a 24-7, 365 basis.

A question was asked earlier by MP Fergus that I'll quickly refer to. At the point of contact where the majority of the community calls the police are our communications centres. We have a 911 dispatch centre, but we should have a 911 system, a 311 system, a 211 system, a 411 system and a 511 system, so that right at that point we can properly assess the need for the call and the right services to go, where the police will always be an option. Quite often they will be dispatched in support of the social service worker or the mental health worker, but the immediate contact will be at the right resources and not just the police resource.

We have done a fantastic job in this country and our front-line officers deserve praise and recognition, not condemnation. They need our support, not the defunding and the detasking. The integration is what we actually need here.

[Translation]

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

We talked about including social workers. Instead of replacing police officers with social workers, it could be a collaborative effort. When the call comes in, people can identify whether a police officer is needed on the ground, or both.

Are you in favour of this idea?

Chief Peter Sloly: Yes, certainly.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

In practical terms, what else are you proposing to reduce systemic racism? This is mentioned in the report on equity and diversity that was tabled. From what you can see in your ranks, is the current training sufficient?

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to have to interrupt here. We're almost out of time. I saw a consensus view from all three witnesses on your last question, so maybe we can leave it there. I am really having to run the clock here and I apologize.

Mr. Harris, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Let me first say that the reason this study is taking place is that it's recognized that there is significant systemic overrepresentation, based on race, of indigenous, black and racialized Canadians in our criminal justice system, in prisons and on the wrong end of the use of force by police, leading to serious injury or death. I think that's the reason we're here, and I hope that every police officer in Canada gets to hear what we heard from our first three witnesses in their opening statements. That puts to rest any question in my mind, and hopefully in their minds, that we're dealing with a problem that needs to be resolved.

I commend you for your recognition and for the quality of those statements. We need to find ways to put an end to what we are here for, and if we can do that, that would be great progress.

First of all, Chief Sloly, you were the deputy chief of police of Toronto prior to Mark Saunders' appointment as chief, and you had in place at that time a plan for modernization. You had developed a plan for modernization of the Toronto police force.

Could you tell us what that looked like?

• (1305)

Chief Peter Sloly: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

First of all, I want to be very clear. I was part of a team that was led by Bill Blair, now Minister of Public Safety. I was the deputy chief working for Bill. I contributed to the overall strategy that Bill was leading in that time frame. I applied for the chief's job in Toronto and Mark was successful, and I fully support his leadership within the organization and his attempt to modernize the Toronto Police Service, which touched on many of the things we've talked about here today. Some of the ideas I've shared with you here were certainly part of the action items that the Toronto Police Service has led.

Let me talk about the modernization plan here in the Ottawa Police Service, which very much reflects my lived experience as a black man in Canada and my experience as a police leader in Canada and my belief that policing does need to continue to modernize. Great strides have been made already by the leaders whose shoulders I stand on. I talked about Bill Blair, but also Adam Palmer in Vancouver and Paul Pedersen.

At the core of it, though, is culture change, taking the best of what we have—compassion, service, professionalism, dedication and bravery—but recognizing that many of the HR processes we've used to nurture talent and maintain the emotional health and psychological health of our members over the course of a long 30-year career have not been sufficient. We've seen members who have received moral wounds, some of which have gone on to PTSD, and in some tragic cases, suicide. We need to do better for our members and their health.

We have seen systemic and decade-over-decade inability to significantly suppress crime in communities, as well as to build resilience in communities where they can look after their own needs without depending on any institution, never mind the policing institution. The definition of “insanity” is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting new results but getting the same old results.

We've done some great things. We've built a social fabric and a safety foundation in this country, but it's not enough. A lot has changed and we need to do more. That, I think, is the commitment you've heard from Tom, Dale and me, and it reflects the vast majority of Canadian leaders and Canadian police officers. We're willing to do it with different partners, with health care, education and social services, but we need to come out of this emotional whirlwind and get into a place where we can plan, implement and evaluate those things properly.

Mr. Jack Harris: Chief, I'm not trying to be cynical here, but some of the things you've mentioned, such as neighbourhood policing, intelligent policing, have resulted in some communities in complaints of racial profiling, carding and collecting information

leading to overpolicing of the very groups we're talking about. How is what you're talking about now different?

For example, one of the solutions, I suppose, proposed yesterday by Professor Owusu-Bempah talked about how police are rewarded for making the number of arrests and the results as opposed to perhaps a safe result. Is that something that is being changed? Is that part of the culture change?

How do we go from this point where overpolicing actually happens because of this culture to the point where we don't have this?

Chief Peter Sloly: Again, I want to very quickly reference that my comments around neighbourhood policing were clear. Prevention should be the first thing we do. Off-ramping people out of the justice system, not on-ramping them into the justice system, is the first thing our neighbourhood officers should do. Each one of the speakers talked about it in a very different way, but in the same way.

If you send officers into any place and tell them that their most important tool is law enforcement and if you require of them to do law enforcement in order to get promotions or transfers, they will do those things. That's where the systemic issue comes in. Our officers themselves, through our own systems that we have designed and put them in, have been put in a bad place and communities in a bad place. We need to better task our officers and provide opportunities for different outcomes than just law enforcement outcomes.

We actually need to stop calling our officers “law enforcers”. They are servers, they are protectors, but they shouldn't be referred to as law enforcers. They should be working in service with other agencies to prevent crimes, and if crimes do happen, to try to off-ramp those people from the criminal justice system as much as possible to reduce the demand in the system.

• (1310)

The Chair: Mr. Harris, we're going to have to leave it there.

Colleagues, I have a hard stop at 1:20 p.m. because the requirements are that the room be emptied for COVID purposes, scrubbed and all the rest of the stuff, so I'm going to be a bit arbitrary and cut three minutes down to two. I'm unfortunately going to have to cut off both Madame Michaud and Mr. Harris for their last two questions.

It will be Mr. Morrison for two minutes, Mr. Anandasangaree for two minutes, Mr. Vidal for two minutes and Madame Damoff for two minutes. I apologize for being arbitrary, but we have COVID protocols that have to be adhered to.

With that, Mr. Morrison, you have two minutes.

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

I want to thank both of the chiefs and Tom Stamatakis for coming today.

My question will be for you, Tom, but first of all, I want to thank you for representing the front-line police officers. I know that many times they feel alone out there, with very little support, especially in our remote communities.

My question, Tom, is in relation to our public mental health and how our police officers, especially in remote communities, have to do so many tasks. I know you gave a media release to Global News. Municipal is a bit different from rural. I wonder if you could quickly give us some insight into what you feel we should be doing there.

Mr. Tom Stamatakis: Thank you.

I think Chief Sloly said it very well. We put police officers, men and women, in these untenable situations, where we ask them to do too much. It's particularly a challenge in our more rural and remote parts of the country where there is no access to service and support.

Back to one of the questions in terms of overpolicing, particularly in our indigenous communities or our more vulnerable, marginalized communities, it is about creating that capacity, which has been touched on by both Chief Sloly and Chief McFee, around those other services, those partnerships. When you put a police officer in a remote or rural community on their own, with no access to those other services, it only creates the kind of situation that Chief Sloly touched on in terms of moral injury and frustration around the inability to actually help people, which then leads to the damage that Chief Sloly so very eloquently described. We need to do more. We need to build that capacity. We need to look beyond just policing, to do the things that have been discussed this afternoon by all the panellists. If we don't do these things, nothing will change.

I've been part of so many reviews, coroners' inquests and commissions of inquiry. We need to change what we're doing if we want to address these issues, including the mental health and wellness of the men and women we ask to do this challenging work in often very difficult circumstances.

The Chair: I'm going to have to leave it there, Mr. Morrison. I'm sorry about that.

Mr. Anandasangaree, you have two minutes.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the panel for being here.

I will focus my comments to Chief Sloly. As you know, Chief, I was one of many people who really wanted you to be chief in Toronto because of your phenomenal leadership capabilities. I just want to put that on the record.

You've been in the police service for over 30 years. You were one of the very few, at that time, black men to be part of the police service in Toronto. You've risen through the ranks. What challenges do you think exist today that you had to overcome, that, if you were leading a service, you would change? What I hear from many front-line officers, especially racialized officers, is that there are many obstacles to growth and to retention. Can you highlight the top three challenges that you think could change policing, especially with respect to recruitment and retention?

The Chair: In less than a minute, unfortunately...

Chief Peter Sloly: You referenced recruitment and retention. I think we're actually doing an amazing job of recruiting. It's our coach officer programs—and again, I don't put this on the coach officers. We haven't enabled that first line of cultural change, which is

the actual coach officer program being sophisticated and robust enough to really maintain the vitality of the quality and diversity of what we're bringing in, but the quantity of that has increased.

The second is leadership. We have not, as a leadership group, including me, been able to make the case for change. We have not been able to articulate the issues, such as systemic racism and individual bias. We need to do a much better job of educating ourselves and, therefore, enabling ourselves.

The last point is that we have to stop fighting with each other, the front line against management, management against the associations. In fact, we've had a great relationship with leaders, such as Tom Stamatakis. We have had a misrepresentation of the relationship between front line and management, and management and unions, in the media. We need to stop being divided and conquered. We need to be far more united in our approach.

I think those are three big areas that will advance this issue.

● (1315)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Vidal, you have two minutes, please.

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

I'm going to get right to my question. Obviously, we're working under some tight time frames. It's for Chief McFee.

Mr. McFee, you come from northern Saskatchewan, which is my stomping ground as well. In your time as the chief of police of Prince Albert, you instituted a very proactive, inclusive approach to community policing, which was referred to as the "hub" back then, and then in your time as the deputy minister of corrections and public safety in Saskatchewan, moved that across the province. I would love for you to talk about some of the successes and the positive results you had out of instituting that proactive policing and care model.

Chief Dale McFee: There are 155 of them in Canada and the U.S. right now. I was just on the phone yesterday with Baltimore PD looking at launching one in Baltimore.

What it really is, in a nutshell—I'll try to be quick so that we have more time—is exactly what we're talking about, with there being [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. Put the right service providers in. Put the person and the problem into the equation. Stop worrying about who owns it and just get to the solution, to get the people some help.

You're aware that most of the government right now measures what they take in. Nobody measures what they get out of the system. The reality is that police are over-responding to most of this because they are one of the 24-7, 365 things available. Now, that said, the fact that you respond doesn't mean you should own. We need to use the collective voice, the collective wisdom, the data, the expertise to get the right service connected.

Going back to what I was saying, the fact that the police control 100% of the intake into the justice system doesn't mean that everything should go to the justice system. It's time to change the structure. We've been operating in silos called ministries of health, social services, education for too long. Think of any business. If you ran it for the last 75 years under the same structure, would it be in business today? Probably not. The data now has given us the ability to do things better.

To Tom's and Peter's point, use that first contact to be meaningful in getting people help. There's still the justice system for the serious people, and they need to be in the justice system, but when it's the vulnerable people, a collective response is needed. It's putting all the agencies, including the not-for-profits, together to do it.

Here is just one little bit that I'll leave with you. Do the math on how much money is spent on all those things together. When I was in my job, I started to do this through the CRA. It's huge.

The Chair: I must apologize for being the guy who seems to have the axe around here.

Finally, Madam Damoff, take two minutes, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair.

My questions are for the chiefs. You may not have time to both respond, but you both said that the police shouldn't be responding to the number of mental health calls that you have. I know Chief Nish from Peel. I saw him say that about 82% of their calls are mental health or addictions-related. I recently read that the RCMP has said over 60% of its calls during COVID have been for mental health.

I don't know that police are necessarily the right group to be responding. I know there's an argument to be made for that view, but if you look at institutions where people who have addictions and mental health issues are put, it's the staff who respond and not police. If you look at long-term care—people with Alzheimer's—there's violence that occurs there.

There are great models. Chief McFee, I've heard about your hub model. Can you speak to whether we could be training people to re-

spond to some of these calls, so that we're not sending police to these mental health and addiction calls?

Chief Dale McFee: I think you're onto the crux there, MP Damoff. I think it's a little bit broader than that. They have to be safe first, so responding collectively, together, will give you that solution, and eventually, in time, hopefully you can design a better system.

The reality is that it should be a screening in the dispatch centre first, with a professional mental health worker who has to make the right assessment on the call, to try to get enough information in today's day and age to send the right response. That's what I meant. If you had police and EMS within the same area and had a better service provider, including the not-for-profits, you would absolutely reduce this by 20% or 30% overnight.

• (1320)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'm sorry to interrupt, but I only have 15 seconds. Are you saying that you could actually be determining who needs to be dispatched and then send them out to the call?

Chief Dale McFee: Absolutely. We're in a day and age of AI and everything else, and we're not using it collectively.

Chief Peter Sloly: The federal government controls the standards for next-generation 911. You can actually build that standard so that every police agency in every part of the country has to have that triage capability in next-generation 911. This is a federal responsibility that can trickle down into every single jurisdiction.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

The Chair: That's very useful.

Thank you, Madam Damoff.

This has been one more just extraordinary panel in this study. I want to thank the witnesses for your contribution. It's very encouraging, as a citizen of this country, to hear such a profound articulation of the issues that face policing in our country, and it's a great contribution to our study. I want to thank you for it.

Before I ask for the adjournment, our members need to know this: If you don't get the password, you should please email the clerk, because there's a new number to get into the call and a new password. That will all be sent to you.

I hope it's all sent to you, but apparently some of you have not been getting it.

Again, thank you, witnesses. We're adjourned,

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