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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone.

Welcome to meeting number 16 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on September 18, the committee is meeting today as part of its study on Canada-United States border management.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses, both in person and by video conference, for the first hour and a half of the meeting.

Ranatiiooshta Swamp, acting chief of police for the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service, is joining us by video conference.

We're also joined by two officials from the National Police Federation. These officials are Brian Sauvé, president, and Lucas Bédard, director of the Atlantic and Central region.

Lastly, we're joined by associate professor Leah West, as an individual.

Welcome, everyone.

Mr. Swamp, you have five minutes to give your opening remarks.

[*English*]

Ranatiiooshta Swamp (Acting Chief of Police, Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service): Good morning. Thank you for the invitation to appear today.

My name is Ranatiiooshta Swamp. I'm the acting chief for the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about the unique realities of policing in Akwesasne and how they relate to Canada-U.S. border management.

Akwesasne is not only a first nations community; it's one of the most geographically complex areas in North America. Our territory spans two countries, two provinces and New York state. These borders run through neighbourhoods and, in some cases, individual homes, creating operational challenges unlike those anywhere else in Canada.

Due to this geography, Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service patrols and enforces laws in Ontario and in Quebec. It must transit through New York state to carry out its duties. Organized crime

groups exploit this complexity, forcing a small first nations police service to operate at a transnational level with limited resources.

Our community faces significant cross-border public safety pressures, including fentanyl and opioid trafficking, firearms trafficking, human smuggling, contraband smuggling and marine-based smuggling along the St. Lawrence River. What passes through Akwesasne affects communities across Canada and the United States, highlighting Akwesasne police's frontline role in national and cross-border security.

We maintain strong partnerships with the Canada Border Services Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Sûreté du Québec, the United States Border Patrol, Homeland Security Investigations, New York State Police, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Coast Guard and, most importantly, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police, on the southern portion of Akwesasne. These relationships enable joint partnerships, intelligence sharing and a rapid multijurisdictional response, yet many collaborations remain informal. Formal agreements to streamline authorities and shared operational frameworks among Canada, the U.S. and our three governing councils—the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council—are essential to improving public safety and accountability.

Our perspective on Bill C-2 and Bill C-12 is that we're supportive of the intent to enhance CBSA and Coast Guard powers, accelerate control on drug precursors and expand intelligence sharing, all of which would strengthen Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service's operational capacity. Our implementation recommendations are to recognize the first nation service as an essential partner; to include targeted funding for infrastructure, technology, staffing and training; to formalize cross-border coordination protocols; and to apply enhanced powers with transparency and community oversight.

We also stress that the border policies must respect first nations rights under the Jay Treaty of 1794, ensuring free passage of first nation people. Modern enforcement must not restrict family movement, cultural ceremonies, hunting, fishing, harvesting or community governance. Strengthening border security must go hand in hand with culturally informed, rights-affirming approaches.

To meet these related challenges, the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service requires federal and provincial support in three areas.

The first is operational infrastructure. A permanent policing presence on Cornwall Island, Ontario, is a critical and important aspect of improving accessibility, visibility and emergency response. Our marine unit facility also requires expansion, with proper docking, secure storage and rapid launch capability.

The second is technology and intelligence. Modern surveillance, enhanced marine radar, secure communications and real-time intelligence systems that are interoperable with those of federal and U.S. partners are essential.

The third is personnel and sustainability. The Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service faces federal-level challenges daily but remains funded as a small, local service. Long-term and stable federal support is necessary for staffing, specialized training, mental health resources and recruitment. Our mandate is both community-focused and border-focused, and funding must reflect that reality.

We must also recognize that Akwesasne is self-governing, with inherent responsibilities over lands and waters. Effective border management must treat first nation police services as full partners. Community trust is essential in enforcement success. The Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service provides culturally grounded policing that federal agencies alone cannot. Supporting first nations-led policing approaches strengthens public safety and advances reconciliation.

Akwesasne is not a gap in border security. We are a critical and essential partner. With proper tools, cross-border frameworks and sustained federal collaboration, AMPS will continue to protect the community while enhancing the safety of Canadians and Americans.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Swamp.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

We'll now turn to Mr. Sauv , who has five minutes for his opening remarks.

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

[*English*]

Good morning.

Thank you for the invitation.

I'm Brian Sauv . I'm a sergeant in the RCMP, as well as the president and CEO of the National Police Federation, the sole certified bargaining agent representing close to 20,000 members of the RCMP, who serve communities across Canada.

I am joined today by our Atlantic central region director, Lucas B dard, who has 17 years of federal policing experience as a member of the RCMP, specifically in C division, or Quebec.

The Canada–U.S. border is a critical corridor for trade, travel and economic activity, but it is also a front line in the fight against organized crime and a wide range of illegal smuggling. Protecting our border is essential to safeguarding Canada's national security.

Through its federal policing mandate, the RCMP has the sole responsibility for guarding and enforcing laws between all official points of entry. RCMP officers are uniquely trained for this role, applying specialized skills in law enforcement, intelligence gathering and investigative techniques. Our members also maintain close working relationships with our U.S. counterparts to identify and respond to emerging threats. RCMP officers' training and operational experience allow them to navigate Canada's complex legal, geographical and technological challenges.

Recent discussions on expanding CBSA's authority and mandate between ports of entry overlook the fact that, according to the agency's own figures, it is already short up to 3,000 officers, which are needed to fulfill its existing mandate. Instead of duplicating mandates, the federal government should invest in strengthening the RCMP's federal policing program, which is already equipped to lead this work. The NPF recognizes and appreciates the investments announced to date, including \$1.3 billion in border infrastructure and technology, as well as additional RCMP and CBSA personnel. However, these are just initial steps to ensure a safer border.

Over the past year, the NPF has engaged with Canadian and U.S. law enforcement agencies to identify opportunities for improvements. These discussions have informed the following recommendations.

First, invest in modern equipment and streamline procurement processes. To adequately monitor Canada's extensive and expansive border, our members must be able to obtain, fully adopt and quickly deploy modern technological tools. The current procurement system can be slow and cumbersome, limiting the ability of the RCMP to quickly respond to emerging threats.

In August, the RCMP launched a drone patrol corridor across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, extending from ground level up to 500 feet and within approximately one nautical mile of the border. With access to this technology, it was able to expand coverage to remote and high-risk areas, enhance situational awareness and support intelligence-led patrols, targeting illicit cross-border activities.

By adopting more agile procurement policies, including granting national security exemptions in cases related to border security, and investing in modern equipment, we can ensure that our members have timely access to equipment for effective operations.

Second, expand and strengthen specialized and integrated border teams. When Canadian and U.S. agencies work together and share information, they are significantly more effective than when working alone. These partnerships are key to tackling cross-border crime and keeping our communities safe. For instance, in December 2024, an integrated border enforcement team in Alberta seized 189 kilograms of cocaine at the Coutts port of entry. More recently, in July, the same Alberta IBET intercepted a truck carrying nearly 67 kilograms of cocaine.

These initiatives unite the RCMP, CBSA and U.S. law enforcement agencies to strengthen intelligence sharing, align investigative efforts and facilitate coordinated operations.

Third, enhance federal policing resources. Federal policing is the backbone of Canada's national security framework, yet chronic resource shortages continue to hinder our border security program. Rising operational demands paired with limited staffing, outdated technology and infrastructure gaps are straining frontline enforcement and restricting the ability to keep pace with evolving threats.

• (1115)

Over the last several years, the NPF has been advocating for the federal government to establish dedicated, fenced funding for federal policing and to end the backstopping of contract policing. Without dedicated funding, federal policing feels the impact of limited resources, reducing its ability to train members, staff critical positions, pursue investigations and maintain smooth operations.

Our members are committed to securing Canada's borders, but they require the tools, officers and sustained commitment needed to succeed. The NPF will continue to advocate for policies that achieve these objectives and allow our members to continue to secure Canada's borders effectively.

I look forward to any questions.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sauvé.

Ms. West, you have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Leah West (Associate Professor, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

With my time, I will focus on information sharing and lawful access, two elements that any serious strategy to counter transnational organized crime across the Canada-U.S. border must address.

Let me be direct. Canadian law enforcement continues to operate under legal authorities that are outdated to the point of being dysfunctional. This is not a new problem, and that is precisely why it is so frustrating.

The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians recently reiterated what those of us who work in this space have known for more than a decade. Its findings were long, but I'll focus on five.

First, the RCMP and CSIS face serious and persistent barriers to accessing communications content.

Second, the lack of a legislative response to the Supreme Court's Spencer decision continues to impede the ability to investigate national security threats.

Third, the lack of a statutory requirement for communication service providers to maintain lawful intercept capabilities and the absence of general data retention obligations create operational gaps and the risk that data sought under a warrant won't be available.

Fourth, a Canada-U.S. data access agreement, under what is commonly referred to as the CLOUD Act, would finally remove long-standing jurisdictional barriers to judicially authorize access to U.S.-based platforms that provide digital services in this country without compromising privacy or encryption.

Fifth—my old favourite—the intelligence-to-evidence dilemma remains unresolved and continues to undermine the RCMP's ability to investigate and prosecute serious threats.

None of this is new. None of their findings were surprising, yet here we are. Why?

In part, it's because officials struggle to explain the real nature and urgency of the problem. Recent testimony before this committee on Bill C-12 made that painfully clear, with overly benign examples, vague warnings about risk and a limited willingness to engage meaningfully with the privacy concerns that have been raised for years. That dynamic does not build trust; it erodes it, and trust is already exceptionally low on this issue.

Past attempts at lawful access reform have left civil liberty and privacy advocates skeptical, and the absence of sustained consultation has only deepened that divide. The last comprehensive consultation on this issue was in 2016. The legal, technological and security environment has transformed since then, but the conversations have not.

Relatedly, multiple governments have attempted to implement lawful access reform, as has become the norm with most national security reform, through omnibus legislation in response to a crisis. This approach is deeply cynical and anti-democratic, and it threatens our national security. Our security and law enforcement agencies should not have to wait for a political crisis to have the tools and authority they need to defend Canada; Canadians deserve thoughtful debate about the laws that engage their privacy rights. These gaps don't just affect domestic security; they directly undermine our ability to co-operate with U.S. partners on threats they care about—fentanyl production, terrorism, human trafficking, child sexual abuse material and organized crime.

To implement any CLOUD Act agreement, Canada would need to update the Criminal Code to allow for authorized collection of basic subscriber information with a production order. We would also need to give Canadian judges the authority to provide production orders on companies based outside Canada that provide digital services in this country.

More broadly, Canada urgently needs clear statutory rules that distinguish what information can be disclosed to law enforcement on a statutory basis and what requires prior judicial authorization. In a data-fuelled world backed by AI analysis, in which any piece of information could be revelatory, this question can't be left to law enforcement to assess on a case-by-case basis, with them relying on the courts. Without clear rules, agencies face uncertainty, and errors can have serious implications for both privacy and security.

If we want to be a credible and reliable partner to the United States, and if we want to protect Canadians from transnational criminal networks, then we need to stop treating lawful access as a problem to be revisited the next time the public isn't looking. We need a serious, thoughtful and transparent conversation about reform.

I hope this committee's report finally marks the beginning of that conversation.

• (1120)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. West.

We'll now open the floor to questions from the members. We have until 12:30 p.m. for discussions with the witnesses.

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

[English]

Chak Au (Richmond Centre—Marpole, CPC): First, Police Chief Swamp, thank you very much for your presentation. It was very interesting. I'm really impressed by the heavy load you have to carry.

I will ask you three questions all at once because I know that time is running out quickly.

First, Akwesasne has sometimes been identified as a smuggling corridor for organized crime, human trafficking and things like that. I would like you to respond to that claim. This is a serious matter in your area.

My second question is about the duties you carry. Do you agree that your police force often has to shoulder the responsibilities of the CBSA or RCMP without proper support and other kinds of facilities?

Third, you mentioned that co-operation and coordination are very important. I agree with that, but what is the situation right now for the RCMP, CBSA and U.S. border police in terms of co-operation and collaboration? Is the division of labour or the jurisdictions' distinctions sometimes a barrier to this kind of collaboration?

I hope you can answer all three questions at once.

Ranatiostha Swamp: Those three points are what we are living in our daily lives.

On the first question, regarding the corridor of Akwesasne, yes, unfortunately we have a negative light shed on us internationally. That's because we are a first nation community, and we are accessible via the water. In reality, the majority of our community is law-abiding. We are being heavily exploited by organized crime because of our complex geography.

To answer your second question, yes, we carry our frontline policing duties and take on additional federal responsibilities regarding human trafficking and human smuggling. We have to be more or less jacks of all trades. We have a continued pass-along relationship with the CBSA immigration department.

As for your third inquiry, regarding our current relationships, we have very strong relationships with the RCMP, CBSA and HSI on all of our coordinated areas of responsibilities on both sides of the border. We would respectfully request that those continue. We just need to make enhancements and make improvements to them.

Chak Au: As a follow-up question, can you give us one or two examples of when the coordination does not work, for whatever reason, so that criminals can really take advantage of the gaps?

Ranatiostha Swamp: I wouldn't say it's not working entirely. It's just that because of our geography, it is delayed. We need to enhance our relationships.

Let's say we're talking about the trafficking of humans. We would receive information. It doesn't matter which side, whether it's on the southern border or the northern border, because trafficking is both northbound and southbound. When we receive the first information—if it's in Cornwall, Ontario, we receive information from the RCMP or Cornwall police—it takes coordination and it takes time to get resources in place to respond to that. Within minutes, the same set of people or that person could be in transit crossing the St. Lawrence River and land within the Akwesasne territory. From the moment of landing in Akwesasne territory, it could take you two minutes to cross over into our southern portion of Akwesasne.

• (1125)

Chak Au: In that kind of situation, what could help address the problem?

Ranatiostha Swamp: My suggestion is that we continue to improve and establish formal frameworks and protocols so that we can work collaboratively in teams. We already have, within the police service of Akwesasne, our organized crime unit. We have embedded officers from the RCMP and the SQ to streamline approaches and work on major organized crime.

Chak Au: Can you pinpoint some particular issues or suggestions that would help with the problem? Yes, we understand that we have to improve communication, coordination and all kinds of things, but can you pinpoint one suggestion that you think would help?

Ranatiostha Swamp: One of the major ones is continued improvement in communication. We need encrypted communication capabilities, both federally and U.S.-Canada.

Chak Au: Now you have to—

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, MP Au. That's all the time we have for now.

We'll turn to MP Ehsassi for six minutes, please.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Thank you to the witnesses for everything you do, day in and day out, to strengthen and fortify our public safety. I'm very grateful for your opening remarks.

Now, if I could, I'll start with Chief Swamp.

On a couple of occasions, you touched on issues such as contraband trade and human trafficking. At this particular committee, most of our focus so far has been on illicit drugs and firearms. Could you share with us the scale of the challenges of contraband and of human smuggling?

Ranatiostha Swamp: Sure. You have to understand that we are a small police service, and we have to take on these federally mandated offences. Because of our geography, we are faced with that, and we are left in the middle, in both the U.S. and Canada.

Now, all of these instances are happening, and, with our very low resources and very low staffing, we have to respond. Also, there are continued negative views of Akwesasne being a conduit. Yes, that is true, but you have to understand that the organized crime networks are exploiting our areas and heavily influencing our community members.

When that happens, we always get put in a negative light. That continues to grow in the news, and the criminal element gains knowledge of Akwesasne as an open area when that's not necessarily true.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: As you may know, last week we heard from the commander of the Ontario Provincial Police. He stated, "first nations communities and territories adjacent to our border are being systematically utilized and exploited as smuggling corridors and contraband staging zones." I take it you would agree with that.

• (1130)

Ranatiostha Swamp: I would agree with it, yes.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Would you like to add anything further to that for our consideration?

Ranatiostha Swamp: I would agree with it in that Akwesasne is being used, but I would add and comment that we are not the only area. There are other areas to the south of us, and the east and the west. The same instances happen around us.

It's just because of the quick accessibility through Akwesasne. That's why there is always a focus on our territory.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: Absolutely.

Also, then, you touched on the issue of the need for long-term federal support. Do you receive financial support from both the Canadian government and the U.S. government?

Ranatiostha Swamp: Yes, we do.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: How do they compare?

Ranatiostha Swamp: We're in a quad agreement with the Quebec, Ontario and federal governments.

Hon. Ali Ehsassi: I will turn to Mr. Sauvé.

Thank you again for being with us today.

You underscored the need for us to streamline our procurement practices so that the RCMP can do a much better job. You touched on the issue of national security exemptions when it comes to procurement. Could you elaborate on this so that all of us can familiarize ourselves with what needs to be done?

Brian Sauvé: I have previously given some specific examples about the challenges with procurement. I understand Minister Lightbound is doing a review on procurement, and we've submitted to that.

My friend Mr. Bédard may also have commentary. In the Swanton sector, deploying mobile command posts, having unmanned aerial surveillance remotely look at the border and using radar tools, for example, within the seaway along Lake St. Francis or those particular areas, as well as updating infrastructure on a continual basis, are things that face challenges within the RCMP.

If we really look at border security as a national security issue, I think there's an opportunity for whatever sitting government to say you can bypass these procurement rules and go with whatever trusted vendor you see fit.

I don't know if Lucas has something to add.

Lucas Bédard (Director, Atlantic Central Region, National Police Federation): The only thing I'll add is that, for the border piece in Quebec, the members require technology in order to do their jobs properly.

If you look at Beauce, Saint-Jean, Sherbrooke and Valleyfield, which are our four border detachments across Quebec, they have limited capacity on technology.

Talking specifically about drones, if those drones could be equipped with infrared technology to detect human movements, and with Bluetooth technology and cellphone technology, this would greatly help them identify when people are coming across the border. People use their own intelligence against us, so they know when our patrols are in and when our patrols are out. This would greatly help us in our ability to move that forward.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ehsassi.

I'll now give the floor to Mrs. DeBellefeuille for six minutes.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for joining us.

Kwe, Mr. Swamp. When we started the border security study, I thought that there was no way that you would sit this one out. Thank you for accepting the invitation. I'm the member of Parliament for the constituency that includes Dundee and other border crossings. There's a great deal of co-operation with Grand Chief Abram Benedict. I'm glad that you're here.

I would like you to talk about your recommendation. Today we're holding our final meeting on this study. We have one objective. We want to gather recommendations so that we can ask the government to make improvements to ensure better border security.

You talked about your need to expand marine facilities. Everyone knows that Dundee, Lake Saint Francis and Akwesasne have heavy waterway traffic. People involved in organized crime have big boats with powerful engines in order to move fast. Even the Royal Canadian Mounted Police may not have the equipment needed to go after people involved in organized crime who use high-performance boats.

When you talk about the expansion of marine facilities, can you specify the needs? If these expansions were carried out and you had the necessary equipment, how would this change your work to ensure better border security?

• (1135)

[*English*]

Ranatiostha Swamp: You would have a clear understanding of the complexity of dealing with that area, particularly Dundee, right to the dam area as well.

Speaking about marine operations, thankfully we have very much improved in that area. We have implemented two operational teams, which have been installed since 2017. As a result, we've established a marine boathouse facility to house our marine units. Unfortunately, at this point and age, we've already outgrown it. We are unable to meet the demands and the response time requirements. We are unable to have the rapid deployment capabilities of a marine unit, because of the lack of equipment and resources.

In addition, we face heavy countersurveillance. Organized crime within our community is exploiting that. We are in a small community. That's where our marine boathouse is located. We have identified, in the past, persons who have placed themselves strategically to conduct countersurveillance.

We need to be able to utilize the resources within the immediate and outside areas so that we can basically deploy our resources in those different areas and work collaboratively with the RCMP, the CBSA and the U.S. Border Patrol.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: As residents of the Dundee area can see, a few years ago, the RCMP removed its marine radars. These radars helped the RCMP share information in real time. As a result, there are fewer RCMP marine units on the scene.

Do you agree that the RCMP should once again install modern radar technology so that it can send you information more quickly, in real time, thereby giving you the opportunity to carry out joint marine operations?

[*English*]

Ranatiostha Swamp: Absolutely. I would agree.

We need advanced technologies to respond to the complexity of our jurisdiction. It would be a disservice to both Canada and the U.S. to have limitations and restrictions on law enforcement capabilities. We need those advancements to meet the demands and the ongoing countereffects of the organized crime.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Okay.

Mr. Swamp, you recommend formal agreements or procedures. I thought that the partners had agreements, but you talked about formal agreements. What do you mean by that? What's your expectation?

[*English*]

Ranatiostha Swamp: I'm referring to cross-border protocols, which need to be in place so that we can streamline operations. Right now, because we have an organized crime unit, we have established a working agreement with the RCMP and the SQ. We have small frontline agreements in place, but we need to establish larger protocols for cross-border....

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. DeBellefeuille.

Ms. Kirkland, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): I've enjoyed the study. I'm thankful that Madame DeBellefeuille decided to move that we study this, because this border management study has revealed a lot of things to us.

I have found that, in the discovery and in speaking with folks at the RCMP, the CBSA and so on, some disturbing things have come forward, specifically with regard to the CBSA. Mark Weber, the president of the Customs and Immigration Union, for instance, testified about a toxic work culture at the CBSA. The attrition rate is preventing, quite frankly, the ability to hire the new officers we would like to have.

Mr. Sauv , do RCMP members report similar patterns? If so, is it a widespread issue across the RCMP as well—that you're aware?

• (1140)

Brian Sauv : I was here last week—Mr. Weber and I appeared on the panel—and I heard about the challenges the CBSA is having with respect to its workplace. In the headlines, you will see that the RCMP has had its challenges.

When I joined the RCMP over 20 years ago, it was a different place than it is today. I can attest that, through four commissioners under my service, the organization has taken great strides in improving its culture. When I started, a member might have turned a blind eye to something, but today, blind eyes aren't turned.

We are in a better place. Can we always improve if we're seeking perfection? Yes, but we are in a much better place.

Rhonda Kirkland: I'll delve into this further to clarify and possibly get some discovery. The committee heard testimony that women, specifically, at the CBSA are removed from acting roles or specialty duties when they become pregnant, take maternity leave or experience serious illness.

In the last 10 years, have RCMP members reported anything similar? If so, has that improved, as you see it? Also, is there still potentially a problem for women specifically?

Brian Sauv : I haven't seen what you would call a demotion as such, but the RCMP has a police service that's very operational out in the field.

We have a pregnant member working policy. When a member divulges they are with child, obviously, the organization has a responsibility to make sure the member and child are safe. Normally, they are taken out of harm's way, so they are not going to be responding to 911 calls and so on.

Rhonda Kirkland: That's perfectly understandable and accessible.

Are you aware of any officers who felt their career progression was harmed when they returned from maternity leave or anything like that?

Brian Sauv : I'm sure those stories are out there. They haven't reached out to me, but if they see this testimony, they should please feel free to reach out to me. We'll deal with it.

Rhonda Kirkland: They haven't reached out to you, and that could be good news. It could be good news that it doesn't exist, but I think we'll find out. One thing I've learned over the past several weeks is that as soon as someone feels safe to say something, invariably, others generally feel safe to come forward as well. It will be interesting to see comments on that.

Brian Sauv : I can add that since we signed our collective agreement in 2021, we have had a couple of ongoing grievances.

Members who were in their probationary period out of Depot and went on parental, family-related or maternity leave did not get the salary progressions that a working constable would have gotten. We're working through them, and those grievances should be resolved, I hope, within the next year.

We think our argument is solid, and the RCMP thinks its argument is as well.

Rhonda Kirkland: It sounds as though the RCMP has worked through a progression of making culture change happen over the last many years. This gives me hope that the same thing can happen at the CBSA, and it gives me hope for all of those who are coming forward.

How's the attrition? Is there an annual attrition rate for RCMP members?

Brian Sauv : Yes, there is. I got some numbers about two weeks ago, because we are definitely pushing for recruitment. You saw the government's commitment of 1,000 new members.

It is steady, if not declining. Usually, it was around 800 a year, give or take, across Canada in every business line, but we're down to about 790 or 775 or so. It's steady, if not declining.

Rhonda Kirkland: How many new members are trained each year?

Brian Sauv : At Depot this year—not including our experienced police officer program, which may have 100 to 200 experienced police officers coming into the RCMP—we're looking at 40 troops of 32. Out of this number, you would have maybe 1,000 graduating, because not everybody graduates.

Rhonda Kirkland: There are approximately 200 to 300 net officers in a year. Would that be fair to say?

• (1145)

Brian Sauv : At its present pace, yes, but I know the RCMP is looking at expanding the number of troops next year, going up to 50, so we will probably have even more net.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Kirkland.

Let me now turn to MP Powlowski, who will speak for five minutes.

By the way, some of you may want to celebrate the fact—or not celebrate the fact—that MP Powlowski is now a regular member of this committee.

Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): I am pleased to be. Actually, this is good timing, because I met Mr. B dard in my office on this very issue a couple of weeks ago.

I'm the member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, which means I go from Thunder Bay to the Manitoba border. It's a big border area. The people in the west of my riding, around Lake of the Woods and Rainy River, are really upset with the lack of border patrol in the region, primarily because of Americans fishing on the Canadian side and not following all the rules they're supposed to be following.

I've been involved over a number of years in trying to get an increase in the number of RCMP and CBSA members working in that area. My understanding is that the RCMP is trying to recruit more people for that area, but this has been pretty unsuccessful so far. There used to be 25 RCMP members stationed between White River and the Manitoba border. I think there are now three.

What is the problem in getting more RCMP to a place like north-western Ontario to be involved in federal policing? With this budget, we've committed to hiring 1,000 new officers. I think there's an increased recruitment allowance of \$1,000.

Number one, what's the problem? Number two, does what we did in this budget go very far in addressing the problem?

Brian Sauv : This would be subject to Lucas's additional comments.

In my opening remarks, I mentioned a sustained commitment to the federal policing mandate of the RCMP. We have seen shifting priorities from different governments—which shifts the response, with a limited human resource pool, in the federal policing program. For example, one particular government might see cyber-crime or international money laundering as the problem of the day. The RCMP responds by moving resources there, taking them away from border security, national security or whatever. Now we see border security as an issue, so we're perhaps shifting resources from other units, waiting for adequate resources to backfill to have a sustained mandate.

Lucas can comment from his experience in Montreal, which is most probably similar to your experience from headquarters in London, Ontario.

Lucas B dard: Essentially, as Brian said, it boils down to priority mandates. If I speak about Quebec, it's similar to Ontario, since it's a federal policing mandate.

National security investigations are probably number one on the list. Protective services are second. Then you have a plethora of other things that come into effect—fentanyl, which would come under the CFSEU, and then the border. When you don't have enough members to fill all those gaps, you wind up making choices, and those choices wind up creating other gaps. Problems then arise, and you have to fix those problems. You keep doing the pieces of the puzzle around you.

In short, you need to have your staff fully staffed in order to get Rainy River, Valleyfield or Saint-Georges de Beauce filled. Until that is complete, we will be living these—

Marcus Powlowski: How much of the problem is the fact that...? From talking to the RCMP, my understanding is that the priority goes to contract policing. You have a contract with, say, some towns in communities in Saskatchewan or Manitoba, places where

there is no provincial police force. When new recruits are trained, I think at federal expense, they end up in these positions rather than doing the federal policing.

Did I hear you right, Mr. Sauv , that you recommend for the RCMP to get out of contract policing and be solely dedicated to federal policing?

Brian Sauv : No—not unless there's a different Sauv .

Voices: Oh, oh!

Brian Sauv : That would not be my recommendation. In fact, we have an entire report on the RCMP and how the integrated model we provide probably best serves Canada from a lot of perspectives.

I will say that, yes. In contract policing, resources are protected by contract, which the RCMP must deliver on. It may be hard to believe, because it's long in the rear-view mirror, but we are still coming out of the pandemic in post-secondary educational institutions. Our training academy at Depot shut down for six months. It then had to slowly ramp up. When you talk about six months, it is not just one troop: 24 troops of 32 had their training interrupted. They had to restart.

We are just getting back to a point of being at cruise control on the highway from the COVID pandemic with respect to recruiting. I've said this a lot: Training a police officer is not a light switch. It's a dimmer switch. You slowly turn it up to get them out the door.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Powlowski.

Mrs. DeBellefeuille, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Sauv , I'll repeat in French some of what you said in English. You have between 18,500 and 19,000 officers spread out across Canada. This number has remained more or less the same for a number of years. Your responsibilities are growing. Organized crime is increasingly organized and equipped with technologies that the RCMP lacks.

You said something worth noting. If the government declares that the priority lies in the fight against greenwashing or money laundering, then the resources will follow. Today, borders are the issue. A few months ago, the issue was car theft. So the resources have shifted.

Which sector is currently being depleted as resources shift to the government's current priority of border control? Which sector is suffering right now? Is it the investigations?

Brian Sauv : I'll ask Mr. B dard to answer your question. He experienced this in Quebec City or Montreal.

Lucas Bédard: To answer your question, Mrs. DeBellefeuille, I would say that there have indeed been many shifts in priorities. As a result, not just one sector or one investigation has been suffering the consequences. They have all been affected.

Take the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu border, for example. Currently a minimum of 12 officers work each shift. Ideally, 24 are needed, but there are never that many. Right now, many staff are loaned out to make up the shortfall. By using staff from the federal policing national security program or the combined forces special enforcement unit to fill these positions, we're opening up our investigative services to other issues. It's a bit like a game of musical chairs.

So there isn't just one sector completely devoid of resources. However, as we shift resources left and right, we aren't operating at full capacity.

Claude DeBellefeuille: You said that a game of musical chairs in response to changing priorities and insufficient resources are weakening a number of sectors at once. You said that the ideal number of officers in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu would be 24 per shift. This means that the Valleyfield command post in my constituency also lacks resources. Moreover, this post is located far from the border. I know that talks are under way to create a satellite post in the Haut-Saint-Laurent RCM. This would help you operate more effectively and respond more quickly.

Would you recommend setting up satellite posts?

Lucas Bédard: We already have some. Sherbrooke has a satellite post in Stanstead, and Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu has one in Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, not far from the border.

In my opinion, we need to put a bit more energy into technology. In particular, the members are asking for drones. For example, in Beauce, we have cameras and motion detectors. However, the members must go from one camera to another to retrieve the SD card. They then arrive two weeks too late.

The Chair: Thank you—

Lucas Bédard: We need better technology so that our members can properly patrol border areas and become equipped to tackle organized crime and human trafficking in real time.

The Chair: Thank you. Sorry to interrupt this important discussion so abruptly. However, I must now give the floor to Mr. Lloyd for five minutes.

[English]

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): I'll start with Professor West.

Is it your opinion that, if the government comes forward with lawful access legislation, it should be stand-alone legislation and not part of a bigger package, as we saw with Bill C-2?

Leah West: Absolutely.

Dane Lloyd: Why is that?

Leah West: It's because lawful access demands fulsome debate on its own merits. There are always opportunities to tweak around the edges. We've seen lawful access reform put forward in various bills to deal with specific issues, but the type of reform that was proposed in Bill C-2 was so significant that it really deserved its own bill.

Dane Lloyd: Okay.

Mr. Sauvé, you talked about procurement, and obviously you're there to help represent the safety concerns of members. At this committee, I've raised the issue of the government procuring Black Hawk helicopters numerous times. The helicopters have since required Transport Canada exemptions because they didn't meet the safety requirement in Canada. Are your members concerned that they're flying potentially unsafe helicopters?

● (1155)

Brian Sauvé: As far as I'm aware, our members are not flying the helicopters. They are riding in them. I wouldn't want to see our members fly. Don't put me in one of those pilot seats. I might be able to go up but not land.

No, our emergency response teams are not expressing concerns about the safety of these particular transportation vehicles. Our pilots—because we also represent rotary-wing and fixed-wing pilots within the NPF—have expressed some concerns about the future. If this is an approved vehicle that's going to be used and procured by the RCMP in the future—so that we have our own pilots and our own maintenance engineers operating on it—what does that look like for them? What does the training look like? How are we going to, in the future, deploy a fleet of these helicopters with the challenges that are already being identified?

Dane Lloyd: I've received some really interesting access to information stuff related to the criminal intelligence estimate. It says, “Vancouver and Toronto are two of Canada's busiest container port[s]” and are the main destination for “precursor chemicals”. Organized crime is using “businesses or shell companies [to] exploit precursor licences”, and Canada has become a major exporter of fentanyl and methamphetamine.

This was a criminal intelligence estimate back in 2019, and the crisis has only worsened in this country. Why do you think it's taken so long for the government to start taking action on this issue?

Brian Sauvé: Is there an opportunity to recommend the re-creation of Canada's ports police?

Dane Lloyd: That's on the table for sure. Can you elaborate on that, Mr. Sauvé?

Brian Sauvé: They were disbanded before my time. I've never actually worked with them.

We're a country bounded by water. British Columbia, for example, has the longest coastline in the world, perhaps second to Portugal. It has the largest ferry system in the world, perhaps second to Germany. Do we focus adequately enough on our coastlines and our ports? Perhaps there's an opportunity to revisit that decision from years ago.

Dane Lloyd: Mr. Sauv , in your briefing to this committee on Bill C-12, you expressed concerns that the proposed legislation “does not introduce any mechanism to track, verify or audit the movement of precursor shipments within Canada to ensure they reach legitimate end-users”. Can you elaborate on the concerns you've raised?

Brian Sauv : Well, I was in support of the recommendation to expedite the identification of...and the assurance that, when those particular precursor chemicals come into Canada, they go to the end-user that's identified.

These are some challenges we see now. You can have organized crime groups using shell companies, as you mentioned, that are importing those precursor chemicals, and right now we really have little to no oversight on where they go, who they are received by and whether numerous precursors are being brought in under numerous shell companies to—

Dane Lloyd: Have you seen the non-resident import program being abused? Is this something you've identified as a potential avenue for precursor chemicals to get into the country?

Brian Sauv : I haven't seen this, but I can look into it and get back to you.

Dane Lloyd: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Ramsay, you have the floor for five minutes.

Jacques Ramsay (La Prairie—Atateken, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the four witnesses.

Ms. West, the principle of lawful access currently prevents law enforcement agencies from doing their job. Moreover, drafting a completely new bill would entail considerable delays.

In this situation, do you believe that parts 14 and 15 of Bill C-2, as drafted, would more quickly ensure that law enforcement agencies can operate effectively and do the work expected of them and regularly required of them by our Conservative friends?

[*English*]

Leah West: It's a tough question.

Part of me says yes, because I believe that elements of the bill deserve swift passage, but part of me says no, because there are elements that need to be fundamentally reconsidered. It would be somewhat challenging in its current form without in-depth consultation and prolonged committee hearings. If there were a commitment to doing that, to robust reconsideration of elements of the bill, I would support it.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Jacques Ramsay: You said that this matter was already discussed in 2016. It was discussed more recently at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. There have been various initiatives. We didn't suddenly pull this out of a hat. The clauses, as drafted, are based on discussions that took place.

Now, from a technical standpoint, would the clauses in parts 14 and 15, as drafted in Bill C-2, help law enforcement agencies do the job expected of them, meaning detective and investigative work, particularly when it comes to organized crime?

[*English*]

Leah West: Yes, they would. However, I think there are elements of the bill that are unconstitutional. I do not think the demand letters as they currently stand would pass muster if challenged in a court of law. Therefore, they should be heavily amended to make clear and explicit exemptions for certain types of information in order to move forward.

There are parts of the bill, such as the subscriber information production order, that I think pass constitutional muster and should be passed, but there are other parts of the bill that, without significant amendment, I simply do not think would be constitutional.

[*Translation*]

Jacques Ramsay: I'll take note of this. However, I would like to point out that we've received many opinions stating that the parts, as drafted, comply with the rules of law and respect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That said, you're obviously entitled to your opinion.

You also spoke about the CLOUD Act. Can you tell us why Canada should be concerned about this? What are the benefits of the CLOUD Act? I believe that Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States have a partnership, but that we aren't involved in it. Can you elaborate on the CLOUD Act? What should we look out for? Are there any benefits?

[*English*]

Leah West: The CLOUD Act would allow a judge to issue a production order in Canada—if the Criminal Code were amended—that would be enforceable in the United States by simply serving it on a U.S. company, just as if it was served.... Vice versa, a U.S. production order could be served on a company in Canada for data. What is required in order to make it work is for there to be symmetrical legal authorities—or at least equivalent legal authorities, if not exactly parallel.

We currently don't have any method that matches the U.S. basis for issuing a subpoena to receive basic subscriber information. Right now in Canada, you require a warrant for that, so we wouldn't be able to take a U.S. subpoena for basic subscriber information, serve it in Canada and have it authorized if we had a CLOUD Act agreement. The agreement allows for the recognition of each other's authorities, and it ensures that you will have parallel authorities, but we simply do not have those parallel authorities in Canada as it stands.

The real importance of a CLOUD Act agreement, especially for Canadians—I think our law enforcement would be the significant beneficiary of it—is that many Canadians use software and service providers based in the United States that have no bricks and mortar in this country. Therefore, they cannot be issued lawful production orders in this country because they do not physically operate here. This is a huge impediment to gaining lawful access to data for countries that provide services in this country but do not operate here.

[*Translation*]

Jacques Ramsay: I understand that you don't see any legal impediments to this—

The Chair: Mr. Ramsay, unfortunately, I must interrupt you to give the floor to Mr. Caputo for five minutes.

[*English*]

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): I'm sorry; I thought the Bloc had one more round, but I guess we're on round four, which we don't normally get to.

I want to pick up where my colleague Mr. Ramsay—

The Chair: Just to make sure that everyone understands, we are at the end of round two. I'm sorry. We're on the first intervenor at the start of round three, so we will have Madame DeBellefeuille in just a moment.

Frank Caputo: Okay. I apologize, Chair.

Professor West, you may have seen me having a chuckle. Let's just put it on the table here. The reason I was having a chuckle is that the Liberals have put forward a piece of legislation that is prepared to get to the end without respecting the means of constitutionality. They want to get to the ends of law enforcement, which I think we all want to get to, but at the end of the day, parts 14 and 15 have laudable components that are not necessarily constitutionally compliant.

The reason I chuckled wasn't your answer; I chuckled because it was, “Well, I guess you're entitled to your opinion.” You have a doctorate in law. I've looked up your credentials. You're eminently qualified. This isn't just an opinion. This is something shared by a number of people.

I'm not sure what my colleague did. I mostly prosecuted Internet offences against kids, so I'm very well aware of lawful access and the Bykovets decision. Parts 14 and 15 failed because public opinion prevailed against what I would characterize, in my view, as elements that were clearly concerning. I don't think that you and I stand alone in thinking that there were elements in parts 14 and 15 that weren't constitutionally compliant. I'm not trying to belabour this point. I'm trying to make the point that everybody in the government can say to pass parts 14 and 15 right away. It's just not the way it works—unless you want the legislation to get struck down.

I just want to give you a chance to comment on that, please.

• (1205)

Leah West: Part 15 could probably get there through amendment in committee. Part of the problem with elements of part 14, more specifically, is issues around the demand letter. To speak to

the issue of consultation, there's never been consultation on this element of the bill in the past.

I've been studying lawful access since three law degrees ago, and this has never been put forward in legislation. There was no consultation on that in 2016, so there has been no consultation with stakeholders, privacy advocates and other academics on that specific element of the bill. This is one area in particular in which consultation would have helped alleviate the very real concerns that privacy and civil liberties advocates have in this country.

Frank Caputo: Certainly. In fact, it was way before I got into Parliament, but then justice minister Vic Toews introduced lawful access and was roundly mocked by the Liberals. There was a famous quote—I'm not going to repeat it again. This bill goes further, as I understand it, than the bill Vic Toews put forward that was mocked by the Liberals. It is a bit rich to come in here and people try to say we really need lawful access and try to get people to say that.

I want to move on to something else, which is data retention. This is actually a really important point. I know that, in my prosecutorial work, data retention was difficult because you have service providers and their data takes up space. You have to store it somewhere, and that costs a lot of money, of course, so it's in a provider's best interest to get rid of the data as quickly as possible. When you get rid of the data, you extinguish law enforcement's ability to recover or to obtain the data.

Am I being clear here?

Leah West: Yes, I agree with that.

Frank Caputo: When we have complex investigations.... I think an ISP address typically lasts three months, and then it changes. Is that correct?

Leah West: It depends on the provider. It can be minutes in certain instances.

Frank Caputo: Most complex investigations don't end within three months. Would you agree?

Leah West: I would defer to my law enforcement colleagues on this one.

Frank Caputo: Mr. Bédard and Mr. Sauvé, sometimes they take years. Is that right?

Brian Sauvé: Sometimes they take years, and if we were to talk about child pornography, for example, that can take months, if not years.

Frank Caputo: Typically, it's also a workload issue, because the report goes to Washington, D.C.; it then goes to the RCMP in Ottawa and then local law enforcement, and, depending on how busy they are.... Now, because of Bykovets, they have to write up a production order to get what would normally be easily accessible information.

If an investigation takes a year and the data is only retained for three months, that's crippling to law enforcement, is it not?

• (1210)

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt. The question was excellent, but we will have to wait for the answer because we now need to move to MP Blair, a distinguished guest today.

Thank you for being here, Bill. You have five minutes, please.

Hon. Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Welcome to all of our witnesses. I've had the opportunity to work with you quite extensively in the past, and it's good to see you here. Thank you for your testimony today.

If I may, I'd like to ask Chief Swamp a question.

The federal government provides the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service with about \$12 million a year in funding. I'm aware that the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police service, your counterpart on the American side, receives no federal funding whatsoever.

I wonder if you might be able to suggest to us whether the lack of funding for your partner on the U.S. side of the border has any impact on your ability to work closely with it.

Ranatiostha Swamp: It brings out the difficulty in providing assistance when we are working on the same target. I wouldn't be able to provide a response to the exact facts regarding their funding. I am aware that they rely heavily upon grants and go from grant to grant.

To answer your question, when we are targeting a certain person in the direction of the southern portion of Akwesasne, and they lack resources and staffing, it does affect us, yes.

Hon. Bill Blair: I'm strongly of the opinion that cops count. If you want to prevent criminal activity, particularly organized criminal activity, you have to make it more difficult for the criminals to commit those crimes and make it more likely they will be caught. The people who are responsible for those investigations play a very critical role in preventing those crimes, and it's essential for them to be adequately resourced and funded to do the important job we ask them to do.

I'm not a former prosecutor, nor do I have a law degree, but I have been involved in the lawful access discussion for decades. I was the chair of the CACP national organized crime committee and the chair of the national security committee when we introduced the Canadian law enforcement strategy, which led to the Canadian integrated response to organized crime, or CIROC, with which you are all familiar.

I've participated in extensive consultations on the issue of lawful access, first of all, when it was conducted by then attorney general Allan Rock and then solicitor general Wayne Easter prior to 2005. I was also very involved in advocacy and testimony before the committee on behalf of the police community when the Harper government introduced Bill C-30 and Bill C-52.

I want to return, if I may, to Dr. West. I very much appreciate and respect your opinion, but we also have opinions from the Department of Justice on the legislation before us today.

As I understand it, the test of the constitutionality of legislation is based on four principles. One is whether it's a pressing and substantive objective. We've heard considerable testimony from our wit-

nesses today and from others that, in fact, the objective of law and action is important to society, and it's significant enough to justify limiting a charter right. It is certainly not trivial or an administrative inconvenience that we're addressing.

The next principle is that it has to be rationally connected to the objective, and I believe this is quite clearly articulated.

Another principle is that it has to be minimally impairing. If there are alternative ways to achieve the objective, it could cause a reflection, but it has been suggested to us by our Department of Justice officials that, in fact, it is minimally impairing.

Finally, it has to be proportional in its effect, and the benefit of the action has to be proportional to the negative impacts of the law.

We've heard ample testimony, and most Canadians are aware, that organized crime—particularly at our borders—represents a significant national security risk and that we have obligations to our neighbours with respect to the work we do.

This has been through a number of legislative attempts in the past. I appreciate your opinion, but I think we need to explore the debate with respect to its constitutionality a bit further.

• (1215)

Leah West: That assessment has to be applied to every single provision, not to the legislation as a whole, and I know you know that. Vast pieces of part 14 and part 15 meet the test, but some elements don't, and this is informed not only by my own reading but also by the readings of those who speak on behalf of privacy and civil liberties groups.

As someone who used to work as counsel to CSIS, I'm very aware of the impetus behind the law, but I think, in particular, the information demand requirements.... Simply, the proportionality and the minimal impairment are not met, because it is so broad. I think it could be made constitutional, but I am not aware that this element has ever been subject to the kinds of consultation you mentioned and that we were a part of.

This is a novel issue, and it's novel to address a point of law that has arisen since the last time there was consultation. It deserves a re-look. I will say it is moving forward as its own bill now.

The Chair: Madame West, I'm sorry for interrupting. I let that conversation go a bit longer because of the common interest around the room, but I have to stop now to be fair to everyone.

We'll move to Madame DeBellefeuille for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Chair, thank you for generously allowing me to take a few extra seconds, given the interpretation delay.

Ms. West, your comments are helpful. I want to tell you that I greatly admire you. You're a smart woman who also held her own against a former minister of public safety and emergency preparedness. Congratulations.

As members of Parliament, we've seen civil society react quite strongly in opposition to parts 14 and 15 of Bill C-2. In my opinion, this comes down to a failure to take public opinion into account and to involve civil society in the consultations. Civil society may not be aware of the vital need to relay information in real time. I think that this element was lacking when it came to getting everyone on the same page. I believe that civil society understands the challenges. However, perhaps it doesn't understand the urgent need for a more specific framework. I think that this constitutes a barrier.

We'll need to prepare a report following our study on border security. If our report were to include just one of your recommendations for improving border security, what would it be?

[English]

Leah West: It would be to pass the amendment with respect to production orders for basic subscriber information. It's a very narrow recommendation, but it is something that needs to be done. Without it, you can't move on to having a data-sharing agreement with the United States.

[Translation]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Okay.

My next question is for you, Mr. Bédard.

Did the budget or the measures announced give any clear indication that the drones will be replaced by higher-performance models? The officers are asking for technology that will help them do their job in real time. Has their request been heard? Are we on the way to obtaining these drones?

Lucas Bédard: I don't have that information right now.

I know that a number of members in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu are carrying out this study and that they will be submitting a business case. However, given the current financial situation, I'm not sure that they can obtain these drones. That's why we're lobbying for these drones.

I think that you know the geography of Quebec. The border in Beauce is 472 kilometres long. In Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, it's 160 kilometres.

Claude DeBellefeuille: In our area, it's 167 km.

Lucas Bédard: Right. When we combine everything, it makes a vast border.

Claude DeBellefeuille: How do we compare with the United States? Does the United States have this advanced technology on its border?

The Chair: You have 15 seconds to answer the question, Mr. Bédard.

Lucas Bédard: I should ask around before confirming my answer. However, I believe so. If our members are asking for this technology, they have probably seen it on the other side of the border.

Claude DeBellefeuille: Can you send us this information?

Lucas Bédard: Yes, absolutely. I can send you confirmation.

The Chair: Thank you for this good discussion.

[English]

MP Au, you have five minutes, please.

Chak Au: I want to go back to Police Chief Swamp. I have questions about the indigenous police force.

You brought up the lack of funding, and you said that we need more funding; however, in an Auditor General's report from 2024, it was mentioned that \$13 million in indigenous policing funding went unused. Are you aware of funding for indigenous policing not being spent?

• (1220)

Ranatiostha Swamp: I believe that the unused funding was a result of the lack of staffing we have and the line-by-line items projected for the funding. We went through a period when we were very understaffed, and it continues today. Some of the funding was specifically targeted, and we were unable to use it.

Chak Au: From your perspective, you have a lack of funding for recruiting more officers.

Ranatiostha Swamp: That's correct; that is true. We lack funding for recruitment and retention specifically. We are struggling in that area.

Chak Au: I'm sorry to hear that.

The auditor's report also commented on serious issues, such as poor financial management oversight, lack of systematic engagement with indigenous communities, inconsistent RCMP staffing dedication in many communities and insufficient monitoring of whether policing agreement terms were met. I think this is a very serious problem, exposing that although there may be a contract or some kind of agreement, it's not being well managed or monitored.

Do you have any comments on this?

Ranatiostha Swamp: I'm not able to speak to the specific, long-standing concerns you're raising. I can speak to the strong relationships that are being re-established more recently, since my placement.

Regarding mismanagement of funds, that's the first I've heard of. I can certainly look into it. I know that we are very funding-oriented, and there are a lot of internal and external audits transpiring within council.

Chak Au: It's in the Auditor General's report from 2023-24.

Chief, I think you have the advantage of being able to see how the system works here and south of the border. From your experience and perspective, what is working south of the border that we should make reference to or even adopt here in Canada?

Ranatiostha Swamp: I think they're taking more of a stronghold approach south of the border. They're looking at different avenues, and they're moving ahead with full force.

I don't know if it's a matter of restrictions that are limiting us. Possibly, we have more restrictions in place that limit our progress.

Chak Au: Can you elaborate further on that with examples? How are things working better or more efficiently south of the border and not here? Do you have some case examples for us?

Ranatiostha Swamp: I'm sorry, but I don't have case examples.

All I can do is relay that we are continuing to build partnerships at the frontline level, and it seems that the frontline level—with informal protocols in place—is getting a lot of work done. When we talk about organized crime, though, and about the complexities involved in transnational occurrences, we need to put in frameworks to streamline them.

The Chair: Thank you, Chief Swamp and MP Au.

Last, let me turn to MP Powlowski.

Marcus Powlowski: If I can return to my previous line of questioning, you talked about not having enough officers. It's certainly an issue in my riding. The purpose of the committee, with this study, is to make recommendations to the government.

What recommendations do you have for things the government ought to be doing to try to get more RCMP officers out there?

• (1225)

Brian Sauv : We were pleased to see the increase to the cadet recruitment allowance. It's one thing we've been advocating for over a number of years. That will improve the applicant flow to the RCMP; by the way, this set a record last year, and it's anticipated—

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. Sauv .

Let's check to hear if the interpretation now works.

[Translation]

Does it work?

[English]

We'll suspend until it works.

• (1225)

(Pause)

• (1225)

[Translation]

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

I'll give you the floor again, Mr. Sauv .

[English]

Brian Sauv : We were definitely encouraged to see an increase in the cadet recruitment allowance. I finished earlier by saying that the RCMP has seen a record surge in the number of applicants over the last year, and they expect to see another record number of appli-

cants this year. Hence, they are planning to expand the training capacity of Depot next year to around 10 more troops than they had this year.

As we go into contract negotiations, and I hope the renewal of contracts beyond 2032.... I know that close to 450 or 500 of our members serving in contract provinces have a federal policing role on their human resources profile and would like to transfer out of—I don't know—Gods Lake Narrows, Manitoba, for example, or Cold Lake, Alberta, and move into roles in national security, border enforcement or VIP protection.

As more cadets graduate, as we bring in more experienced police officers for different roles, those folks will be able to transition into greater roles, and Rainy River will see more RCMP members.

Marcus Powlowski: We have another expert here, and he would like to ask a question, so I'll turn it over to Bill.

Hon. Bill Blair: Thanks very much, Marcus.

We've talked about RCMP recruiting, and we think it's very positive. We're starting to see some real progress. I was around in 2013, and at the time, as a result of significant reductions in staffing of the RCMP, all 13 of the integrated proceeds of crime units across the country were closed. It's not just the number of people but also the expertise that was lost during the closing of those offices.

We've seen some difficulties with prosecutions. I'm thinking of E-Pirate in British Columbia. The prosecution collapsed for a number of very complicated reasons, but I think part of it was the expertise.

Mr. B dard, you're involved in frontline policing. Could you comment on the ability of the RCMP to respond to the increasingly complex investigations required on money laundering? The entire legislative environment is becoming very difficult, so perhaps you could comment on our ability to respond to that.

Lucas B dard: I can speak for C Division. We still have a money laundering unit with the expertise of the previous proceeds of crime unit. We don't really have that issue in Quebec. Outside of this, it's limited in scope for me because I take care of Quebec, but for Quebec, our expertise is still very much there when it comes to money laundering and the organized crime world around there.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Powlowski and Mr. Blair.

I want to thank the four witnesses for their participation today and for their time and effort in preparing their remarks.

We'll now take a break for a few minutes before moving on to the next part of the meeting.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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