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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, everyone.

This is meeting number 70 of the Public Safety and National Security Committee, Tuesday, February 12, 2013.

If we have time, I'll just say right off the top, in the final 30 minutes of today's meeting we will go in camera to consider some committee business. I remind you of the decision we made last week.

As far as today's meetings go, we are continuing our study of the economics of policing in Canada. We have as a witness today the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Berry Vrbanovic is here, the past president of the FCM. Leanne Holt is a policy advisor to the FCM.

Welcome.

Also by teleconference, hopefully, from Brooks, Alberta, we will have Kimberley Sharkey, the deputy mayor of the City of Brooks. I see that she's there now.

Our committee at this time wants to thank each of you for appearing before our committees—one here in Ottawa at 8:45, and one at 6:45 in Brooks.

Kimberley, we thank you for getting up and getting down there early this morning.

We'll begin with some opening statements. Maybe we'll go to Mr. Vrbanovic here first. I hope Ms. Sharkey will be able to hear his comments as well, and then we'll look forward to her comments.

Mr. Vrbanovic.

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic (Past President, Federation of Canadian Municipalities): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the committee for inviting us here today.

With close to 2,000 members, FCM represents the interests of municipalities on policy and program matters that fall within federal jurisdiction. Our members include Canada's largest cities, small urban and rural communities, and 21 provincial and territorial municipal associations across our country.

FCM welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

Municipalities, which pay for 60% of policing in Canada, have a huge stake in the economics of policing. Municipal stand-alone

police forces serve 77% of all Canadians, and we contract services from the RCMP to serve another 15% of our population. Municipal governments pay the salaries of two out of every three police officers across the country. Overall, policing and public safety costs currently make up 20% to 50% of municipal budgets, depending on the community.

I'm sure you have heard the statistic often over the course of your study, that the cost of policing has doubled in Canada over the last decade. Municipalities are paying for 60% of that increase. Compared to federal and provincial governments, municipalities have few tools for raising funds, and as more money is spent on policing, there are fewer resources available to address other services that contribute to safe and healthy communities. The current situation is not sustainable for municipalities, or for property taxpayers.

The Minister of Public Safety, his ministry, and this committee have taken an important first step in addressing this growing problem by leading this national discussion about the economics of policing. FCM welcomed the opportunity to participate in January's Economics of Policing Summit, which put the spotlight on the three-pillar approach defining efficiencies within our policing systems. What we learned at the summit, and what I think you have heard so far at this committee, is that there are significant changes under way at the operational level of policing in Canada.

Our police forces are looking for efficiencies and better ways to serve our communities. They are studying and implementing new models of policing, like the early intervention Hub model, from Saskatchewan, or the safe communities initiative, in Alberta. In both cases police are working across jurisdictions, with a range of service providers, to reduce crime and keep people out of the criminal justice system.

As we watch police and public safety providers breaking down silos and working together to make tough but important changes to improve the delivery of policing in Canada, we have to recognize that all orders of government must be ready to do the same. There are cracks in the policing system that we, as governments, need to start fixing. Over the last two decades, the national and international responsibilities and priorities of our RCMP have, for a range of reasons, grown and shifted. However, resources have remained fairly static, and in some areas on the decline, which has often left the RCMP straining to carry out all of its federal policing responsibilities.

A 2011 Auditor General report showed that in order to meet its national commitments, the RCMP had been forced to cut funding for federal policing, including organized crime investigations, border integrity, drug enforcement, and money laundering. Over time, this has meant local police forces are dealing with crimes that were once the exclusive purview of the federal RCMP. Every year municipalities spend hundreds of millions of dollars on major organized crime investigations, drug crimes, interprovincial and international Internet crime, commercial crime, and national security investigations.

Border communities in Ontario alone spend upwards of \$1.5 million annually on law enforcement and support at international border crossings.

The case of the Toronto 18 saw integrated policing efforts lead to the RCMP arrest of 18 men under Canada's federal anti-terrorism legislation. Local police incurred \$2.5 million in costs, over a four-year period, providing enhanced court security for that trial.

The reality facing governments and our police is that crime has become more complex, more technical, and more mobile. Jurisdictional lines between federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal police are constantly blurred, as these crimes play out on the streets in our communities.

It is difficult to suggest that as governments we are doing our best to find efficiencies and effectiveness in policing when we don't have a clear understanding of who is responsible for what, who is doing what, and who is paying for what. A 2008 FCM report on policing found that a fundamental problem with the current regime is the absence of a clear and shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various orders of government in the area of policing services.

• (0850)

When we look at what's ahead for policing, including training and technology upgrades for a national interoperable emergency broadband network, for example, we know that the strain on municipal budgets will only grow.

Front-line policing is also seeing frustrating trends as cracks within Canada's mental health and homelessness systems play out in our streets. Studies in Vancouver have shown, for example, that the police have become society's 24/7 de facto front-line mental health workers. Municipalities do not have the reach or resources to continue to take on more, or to address the social and economic factors that affect crime rates.

Public Safety Canada has started an important conversation about the economics of policing. On this issue, perhaps more than any other order of government, it is municipalities that understand that efficiencies in policing must be found. We must bring down the overall cost of policing. We must champion innovative and efficient policing and crime prevention systems.

If we are truly committed to achieving these goals, then as governments we must begin the discussion about the impact and costs of the changing roles and responsibilities of our federal, provincial, and municipal police forces. We must make sure that governments are accountable and work together to give our police the tools they need to implement change and keep our communities

safe. We look forward to building on what we heard at the summit and what we are hearing from the minister, that Public Safety Canada is committed to moving forward together.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Vrbanovic.

We will go to Ms. Sharkey in Brooks, Alberta. Do you have some opening comments as well? After that, we will go to a round of questioning.

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey (Deputy Mayor, City of Brooks): Yes, I do have some opening comments. Thank you very much for allowing me to speak with you this morning. I'm going to touch again on some of the overarching reasons that we are aware of locally, that have a real impact on policing costs. Some statistics: in the last ten years the RCMP in the city of Brooks has grown from 15 officers to 23. Of course this is due in part to our population growth. Ten years ago we had a population of 11,604, essentially one officer for every 773 people, and currently our population is about 13,676, with one officer for every 547 people. We have not had a significant growth in population, however we have had a fairly significant need for the increase in police officers.

Of course other factors come into play: the sophistication of crimes and definitely labour-intensive systems and time-consuming processes. So many barriers seem to be imposed with regard to the sharing of information. With the safe community initiative and other types of initiatives, the sharing of information is delayed and sometimes doesn't happen due to the legislation around privacy issues, I suppose. Most often the people and organizations that provide that service remain on the periphery due to privacy legislation. The folks who need assistance generally don't get the required assistance in time, so without intervention, the RCMP remain involved.

Our RCMP building is owned by the government, and we recently received notice of a rent increase. In the past the rent has been approximately \$130,000 per year, and it's now \$245,000. That's a \$115,000 jump or 88%. That's really tough on our municipality and other municipalities as well, of course.

We're very fortunate that our local detachment works closely with the city. They provide us with numerous options for levels of service, and we try to balance what those true policing functions entail. That's paramount to understanding minimum policing service levels and ensuring our RCMP are engaging in duties and functions that can only be done by the RCMP and not by others. I have an example of this that we've implemented. I know in some communities the RCMP take on the role of diversity coordinators. In Brooks the city has recognized the need for a diversity coordinator, however we've incorporated this role into an in-house city position that works in partnership or in tandem with RCMP. This initiative allows for the same type of work to be done in our community, however the cost is substantially less.

Currently our RCMP detachment is integrated with numerous services such as ALERT and crime prevention strategies and such. It has become apparent that we would also benefit from a crime prevention coordinator, and of course we're looking for ways to make this happen that speak to efficiencies. Again, is this a true policing function, or can we effectively have a position that would be less costly if this role is held by a person in the community who has a dedicated mandate that is fully understood and supported by the RCMP?

Our community is very diverse. We're known as the City of 100 Hellos. It brings numerous challenges, numerous opportunities, and we're always looking for ways and initiatives that are truly relevant to our community to become more efficient and work with the RCMP to close those gaps.

Thank you.

• (0855)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Sharkey.

We'll move into the first round of questioning. We'll go to Mr. LaVar Payne who is a good member on our committee.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Kimberley, for filling in for our illustrious mayor of Brooks. You've presented an excellent opening statement. Can you tell me and my colleagues if the RCMP has always been the police force in Brooks as a city or when it was a town, or did you have your own municipal force?

• (0900)

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey: Good morning, LaVar, thank you.

We have always contracted with the RCMP.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay, thank you, that was just for clarification for my colleagues.

You outlined a number of issues in terms of the policing and the additional costs of the building, which is a fairly substantial increase. I don't know how that's played in terms of taxes, or in costs of the officers in terms of the contract. Have you seen any major increases in prices there as well?

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey: Of course, with the increase in officers, our expenditure is about 23% of our overall budget, so definitely we've seen a huge increase there. Then, of course, there are other costs associated with implementing programs and the building. Our overall expenditures have gone up approximately 23%.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Having been there on numerous occasions, I know that Brooks has a very diverse culture—as you mentioned, there are the 100 hellos. How has policing evolved over the years in terms of the population growth in Brooks?

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey: We definitely found it necessary to have a more diverse RCMP force. It's definitely beneficial for them to know different languages and have that connection. When we're talking about true policing functions, these RCMP officers have to get out into these cultures and be known. There's a lot of concern when people come from other countries and there's mistrust and misunderstanding. Our police force is very active in just being out in the community, being seen and being heard, showing that they are safe people to go to, instead of being scary. They have to break down those barriers.

We're questioning now what true policing functions are. Are they the actual processes? It's so much more evolved and necessary than just breaking up a fight at two in the morning and taking someone away and processing them. There are all sorts of other things that are necessary in this community.

Mr. LaVar Payne: You did talk about some potential changes in-house and working with the RCMP on various aspects, particularly diversity. What have you done in terms of working with the local RCMP in that area?

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey: We have started a few different initiatives. We have the safe communities, and that's a group of council, RCMP, and local residents who get together and talk about all those concerns and help the RCMP and the city figure out what the priorities are. Then those are taken back to the RCMP to see how they can best manage those types of concerns.

We have, of course, the diversity coordinator; the RCMP are very integral to that. The diversity coordinator is a city position, yet we know it's necessary for the RCMP to be out, to be seen and be involved, so of course that person in the in-house role works very closely with the RCMP.

We've also started a new initiative for domestic violence. A large part of our population is from immigration. I know there are definitely provincial and federal parameters that come around. We see immigrants or temporary foreign workers come into our community and they cannot bring their families for three years. A lot happens in three years. When those families actually do get to come, there's a definite disconnect and a lot of domestic violence in our municipality. So we've started a domestic violence intervention team, which was spearheaded by the RCMP. A lot of work has been put into that area for prevention.

• (0905)

Mr. LaVar Payne: I have one minute left. Here is one last question, Kimberley.

Could you highlight what you see as potential areas of efficiencies for the police services that could be achieved for the City of Brooks?

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey: Just recapping, we're looking at true policing functions: what does the term mean, how are they evolving, how are they changing, and what is the impact? What role does the city play: are we able to fill those gaps in-house? Is that the best solution, the most efficient use of policing time and dollars?

We're very fortunate to have those open discussions with our RCMP and with council as a whole to figure out how we move forward, keeping costs as low as possible, I suppose, but yet get what we need out of the RCMP.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to the opposition. We'll go to Mr. Garrison, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the deputy mayor from Brooks for that very clear presentation of policing issues there.

I want to turn to the FCM to talk a little bit about some of the things they have said.

I certainly come from a riding with diverse policing. I was just making a note to myself: I have two municipal police departments, six municipalities policed by the RCMP, five first nations, and unorganized territory that is policed under the provincial policing contract. You talk about lack of clarity. Often residents of my riding have a really unclear understanding of responsibilities and of who is paying for what in policing.

I come from a community within that riding that has had a decade-long dispute with the provincial government over the best way to deliver policing services, with the province prohibiting the municipality from contracting with the RCMP, which the municipal council wanted to do because they felt it delivered better service at a lower cost and would coordinate with the neighbouring municipalities, which were already being policed by the RCMP. We've been dealing with this—I am a former municipal councillor—literally for a decade, trying to figure out the best way to deliver police services, without ever saying that there's anything wrong with the quality of service we're delivering now, but feeling that there is a lack of coordination, a lack of efficiencies that could be achieved by other modes of delivery. Because of that, I was very interested to hear you focus on roles and responsibilities.

Am I understanding correctly that you are really saying that, while on paper we know who is responsible and who should pay for what, in practice municipalities are picking up responsibilities from a lot of other levels of government?

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: I think it's fair to say that dealing with crime in today's world is a very complex issue, and the reality is that people who are engaged in crime don't necessarily understand what the role of the federal government is in policing, what the role of the provincial and territorial governments is, and what the role of municipal governments is.

We believe that fundamentally there needs to be a conversation, with all three orders of government at the table, that gets into this issue of roles and responsibilities. Through that discussion and through what we think is necessary—which includes the development of some good research into what is happening across the country, what some of the best practices are, and so on—we can start

making better use of the existing resources within Canada to address policing issues.

While the focus of that obviously needs to be on roles and responsibilities, at some point part of that conversation also needs to include resources and the question of who is paying for what. At some point, that will need to work itself into the conversation as well.

Mr. Randall Garrison: It's tempting this morning to go into a couple of issues—the police recruitment fund and the issue that has arisen over severance—but I don't think it's going to be helpful to our study for me to go down that path this morning. So I want to focus on asking you more about what the FCM sees as the biggest cost drivers in policing.

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: There are a number of factors that have impacted upon policing costs in various jurisdictions across the country. As I've identified, part of it has been the more complex nature of crime and the scope of issues that are having to be dealt with across the country. Whether we talk about cybercrime or terrorism and national security issues, all of those kinds of things are playing out in our communities as well. Obviously, this situation is putting some pressures on policing.

Legislative changes are putting pressures on policing, legislative changes that happen at both the federal and the provincial levels. Many of these are often necessary, but we recognize that those changes will have an impact on policing as well.

We feel that all these things need to work into the roles, responsibilities, and resources discussion that we talk about.

Certainly, in some jurisdictions there has been talk. This is admittedly a provincial issue, and so I don't want to delve into it significantly here, but obviously the arbitration process in some provincial jurisdictions has been a factor as well. But I don't believe that is the main focus. I think we need to really look at what the resources are that are in place. Our study back in 2008 indicated that municipalities have had thrust upon them about \$500 million in policing costs over a period of time, and so we need to start having a meaningful discussion about how to better tackle those issues.

● (0910)

The Chair: You have two minutes left, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: That's good, because I want to turn to an issue Mr. Vrbanovic raised: the impact of mental health issues in our communities on policing. What I believe I heard you say is that this is also one of the drivers contributing to municipalities' costs, both in a policing context and in the context of other social services.

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: Absolutely. I don't think you will find a police chief in this country who won't tell you that they have in effect become the 24/7 agency that deals with social services, mental health issues, and so on. In fact, today is probably an appropriate day to be talking about it, with the whole Bell "Let's Talk" initiative that is being carried out across the country.

Without a doubt, those issues are playing out in terms of policing. You need to look at the kinds of things being explored in communities like Prince Albert in Saskatchewan, where they have done some really innovative work bringing together various agencies—policing, mental health, social services, and others—to look at a holistic approach to dealing with some of those challenges, recognizing that there is really only one taxpayer across all the jurisdictions and asking how we can more effectively deal with the challenges we face in our communities, with the limited resources we have.

Mr. Randall Garrison: If I can sneak in just one last question, does the FCM now have a kind of working group on these policing issues? If so, who is leading that initiative?

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: We do have a committee that deals with community safety and crime prevention on a regular basis. Last year, during my FCM presidency term, coinciding with the work of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police I focused part of my year on doing a nationwide consultation on the economics of policing across the country.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move back to Mr. Hawn, please, for seven minutes.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here.

I have a couple of questions, first for Ms. Sharkey.

You talked about the increased cost of the rent and so on of the RCMP building. Are you getting payments in lieu of taxes?

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey: Are we getting payments in lieu of taxes?

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I mean getting grants in lieu of the taxes you would otherwise collect—property taxes and so on—from federal institutions such as the RCMP.

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey: The rental cost of the building is absorbed in our tax base.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I understand that. Are you getting grants in lieu of taxes that you would otherwise collect?

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey: I'm sorry. No, I don't believe so.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: That would surprise me.

What's the reaction of what I'll call the traditional residents of Brooks to the increase in policing because of the influx of foreign workers and so on? How is that going?

Ms. Kimberley Sharkey: It's always interesting when you have long-term residents and you have an influx of people and diverse cultures. This has come about over a time period. People are generally accepting and open. I don't really know if there's a correlation of the impact of the cost, though.

• (0915)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Okay. Let's switch back to Mr. Vrbanovic.

You talked about legislative changes. Are there any legislative changes that you would like to see that you've discussed within FCM

that would make law enforcement simpler, more effective, or more cost effective?

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: Mr. Hawn, I think it's fair to say that we leave much of the specific, legislative agenda to the federal government to deal with those issues in terms of crime specifically. Our focus is on the impact of any changes that happen and how they play out on our streets, in our communities, by our police forces who have to deal with it from a policing perspective, and what that means ultimately in terms of roles, responsibilities, and resources.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I don't want to put you on the spot, but do you have a suggestion of an outcome that you would tie back to a legislative change?

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: I do know, for example, that one of the things that our partner in this discussion, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, has talked about are efficiencies in the judiciary and looking at the ways our judicial system operates and how that can help address some costs around policing in our country.

For example, we have extended periods of time when officers are sitting and waiting for cases to come to trial and so on. That obviously is not the most effective way to deal with a police officer's time in a given day.

So that's one example that comes to mind. As well, I referenced the Prince Albert example earlier and looking at how different government agencies across all three orders of government can begin to work better together, recognizing that there are limited resources to deal with the challenges that we face. Whether it's dealing with policing, mental health, health care, and so on, we need to start looking at these things more comprehensively in order to more effectively use the taxpayer's dollar.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: So some of the changes we've made to the judicial system with respect to, for example, taking away the double credit for time while waiting for trial and so on.... Am I correct in reading into what you said, that anything to make the judicial system more efficient and timely would be helpful in terms of the extra work by policing to be part of that sometimes very laborious, ongoing process?

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: With all due respect, I'm not going to

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I'm not trying to put words in your mouth. But just in case they come out.

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: I'm not going to express an opinion on the specific example that you talked about. What I will say is that anything that can help the system run more efficiently, that keeps police officers on the road as opposed to sitting in courtrooms is one factor out of many that'll help us deal with this issue in our communities.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Time is money, and time is something you can't get back.

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: That's right. I'm sure that across this room, there's a wide range of opinions on how that time can be better used.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Speaking of that and best practices, lowest cost, and so on, a lot of that comes back to time. Police officers only have 24 hours a day they can work.

Do you have any specific measures that you have discussed at FCM that would point to saving police officers' time?

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: When you look at the kinds of things that police officers deal with on a daily basis in terms of addressing issues and challenges in the community, anything that can get them back on the road quicker is helpful. We've talked, for example, about some communities that have created integrated domestic violence units. In those instances, they've been able to bring various partners together to more effectively deal with the perpetrators of the crime but also to deal with victims of crime.

What's important to remember is that we as an organization aren't really focusing on the operational issues because we rely on the expertise of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the CPA, and the police boards to really focus on that kind of information. We're really looking at how to focus on roles, responsibilities, and resources. I know I keep referring to that, but I think that really is the key message from us in order to make the best use of municipal tax dollars and tax dollars from the other two orders of government.

● (0920)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Is it fair to say that as a municipality probably your biggest responsibility is to deal with the victims, your citizens? You leave the law enforcement to law enforcement, but you pick up the slack on the victims' side?

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: We deal with all aspects of it, quite frankly.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Welcome to the witnesses.

I would just like to clarify some points that were raised, starting with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I believe you have a report which no doubt you mentioned, entitled "Towards Equity and Efficiency in Policing". Is that correct?

The report apparently states that as an interim measure the Government of Canada should provide an equity and efficiency allocation to compensate municipal governments for their role in enforcing federal policing mandates, and provide sufficient funding for municipalities to meet their growing responsibilities.

In your presentation you mentioned in passing that municipalities have assumed about \$500 million in additional policing costs which I assume you attribute to federal requirements they have to meet, or the requirements in criminal law that somehow they have to meet. When you talk about that \$500 million in extra policing costs and when you seem to attribute that to a kind of federal driver, if you will, what are you saying? I'm not sure I'm clear on that \$500 million of extra costs.

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: The report covers a wide variety of factors that have contributed to that \$500 million, but part of it is addressing crimes that traditionally have fallen under federal jurisdiction: things like cybercrime, gun smuggling, the drug trade, and so on. As a result of funding changes in the RCMP and legislative requirements and so on, municipal governments have had to take on the responsibility for funding many of these issues through our municipal police forces in order to address them in our communities.

More recently, for example, since that report was originally written, I know there have been other challenges that municipalities have faced. As part of my study, last year I was out in P.E.I. where I heard from a small police force about the need to purchase a live scan unit. They've transitioned from doing manual fingerprinting to doing it all automated. In the long run it's a good thing and will likely save dollars, but for small departments that have to put out \$50,000 towards a live scan unit mid-year, it is a big issue.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I understand.

You mentioned cybercrime and gun-related issues. What about drug and gang-related crime? Are municipal police forces' responsibilities increasing in those areas because of federal legislation, and so on and so forth?

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: I think you're really getting at the crux of my point here today, which is that the lines are blurred in many of these areas in terms of which aspect of responsibility lies with which order of government. That's where we'd certainly welcome the opportunity to begin this conversation with the government, with other parties that have vested interests in this area around roles and responsibilities so that we start getting some clarity on some of these things. Ultimately that will then lead to that conversation around resources.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do you find there's a bit of a dual message? First of all, I think the government's line would probably be that the federal government is responsible for the Criminal Code, and the provinces and municipal police forces are responsible, pretty much, for all aspects of enforcement and therefore the federal government doesn't really have a major responsibility to fund policing across the land.

Do you find there's a dual message being sent when, for example, despite this message of respect for jurisdictions, the government brings in a temporary police recruitment fund which is used to fund things like the Eclipse program in Montreal, and then withdraws funding under the notion that policing is really a municipal or provincial responsibility? Aren't we getting two messages here? Doesn't that make the issue a little murkier from your perspective? On the one hand the government is saying that it's provincial and municipal, but then offers a little pot of money to help recruit police officers, and then says it won't renew it, and so on and so forth. Isn't that contradictory?

● (0925)

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: The fact that there has been a focus on this topic of economics of policing, that the national summit was brought together, and the messages from the minister indicate a willingness to begin this dialogue about roles and responsibilities.

You specifically touch on the issue of the police officer recruitment fund. It's fair to say that obviously this government recognized that there was value in supporting municipalities around this issue with the one-time fund. Clearly, municipalities saw the value that came out of the fund. Much like the discussion we're having with the government and all the political parties right now around a new long-term infrastructure plan, we're now ready to have a new phase of discussion around policing.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Don't you think that the government said we have a contribution to make, but we no longer have a contribution to make? I'm just saying that maybe it doesn't augur well for a future discussion.

How much time do I have left?

The Chair: Thirty seconds.

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: I don't want to get into a debate between the government and the opposition on this issue. My point is that we did see value in it and we see value in continuing a dialogue around what the relationship in the future needs to be like between municipalities and the government when it comes to policing.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Monsieur Rousseau, for three minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): My question is for Mr. Vrbanovic.

We can anticipate budget cuts of \$140 million at the Canada Border Services Agency and \$190 million at the RCMP. I have several municipalities along the Canada-U.S. border; my riding is close to the State of Vermont. What effect will these cuts have on public safety in these municipalities, and mainly on the downloading of responsibility to municipal and provincial police forces? What will be the cost of this?

I'd like your opinion on the matter?

[English]

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: It's fair to say that our members across the country, particularly those in border communities, are concerned when we talk about any cuts in some of these areas, particularly if any of these cuts end up playing out on our streets and in our

communities. What worries us as municipalities is that when these things happen, what role are we going to need to play in terms of filling the gaps that are a result of this, particularly in terms of our municipal forces.

It starts getting to the kind of thing that our 2008 report talked about. As various departments experience fiscal challenges and so on, how does that ultimately play out on the streets of our communities and lead us to the need to have clarity around those roles? Ultimately, how do we collectively best resource them?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Precisely, this has been a concern in my riding for a number of years; there was a murder associated with illegal immigration. A student in my riding was murdered. In my riding, immigrants sometimes cross the border running.

[English]

They're crossing a farmer's field.

[Translation]

Aside from that, municipalities do not get many services from provincial police forces. What will be the effect out in the field?

● (0930)

[English]

Mr. Berry Vrbanovic: There is a lack of clarity on what the impact is going to be on the ground on many of these issues and hence we believe there needs to be more dialogue among everyone concerned. The summit and the focus of this committee on the economics of policing is a beginning of an indication of a willingness to explore what this new relationship needs to look like going forward.

We applaud the committee for looking at this issue. We think it's the beginning of a dialogue that will ultimately help us better address these issues in our communities and keep our communities safer.

The Chair: Thank you very much to both of you for appearing before our committee. You say you applaud our committee. We want to applaud both our guests this morning for taking the time to share some of the very concerns that they have in Brooks and on Brooks council, and also in the FCM. We appreciate your testimony and we thank you for that.

Ms. Sharkey, thank you for coming in early. We certainly appreciate that as well.

We are going to suspend and allow some other witnesses to prepare to appear. We'll be back in one minute.

● (0930)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (0930)

The Chair: I'd like to call this committee back to order. As already stated, we're the public safety and national security committee. We're continuing our study on the economics of policing in Canada. For this panel, we're pleased to hear from three different witnesses.

First of all, appearing here in Ottawa in the committee room, we have Mr. Kai Liu. He is the police chief of the Cobourg Police Service. Welcome.

Testifying by video conference from Taber, Alberta, we have the chief of the Taber Police Service, Chief Alf Rudd. Welcome to you.

Appearing from Medicine Hat, Alberta, we have the chief of the Medicine Hat Police Service, Chief McGrogan.

Our committee wants to thank all three of you for appearing before us today. We'd like you to keep your opening statements to about seven or eight minutes, if that's possible.

We'll begin with our police chief who is with us here, and that is Mr. Liu.

Sir.

• (0935)

Chief Kai Liu (Chief, Cobourg Police Service): Good morning, sir, and committee members.

Let me give you a bit of background of Cobourg as well as the previous service where I was the police chief for the past four years.

Having spent 22 years policing Ottawa with the Ottawa Police Service, it is always a pleasure to return to the city. For the past four years I was the chief of police for the Gananoque Police Service, a small Ontario town along the St. Lawrence River in the Thousand Islands. In September 2012 I was appointed chief of police for the Cobourg Police Service.

The town of Cobourg is well known for its quality of life, beautiful location along the shore of Lake Ontario, and close proximity to VIA Rail and Highway 401. It's approximately 20 minutes east of Oshawa. For many it has become a place of choice for retirement. In 2006 the census noted the population at 18,000, a 6% increase from 2001. Currently, in the latest census in 2011, Cobourg had a population of 18,519. The median age of the population is 46 years of age, where the Ontario median age is 39.

In Cobourg, our uniform patrol is performed by four platoons composed of five officers on a 12-hour shift rotation and supported by five criminal investigators and a community programs officer. The seniority of the 32 officers ranges from 30 years to recruit level. Civilian support complement is 13 full-time and 17 part-time employees. There are also five casual employees used for cellblock monitors when we have prisoners in our cells.

For us in Ontario the core functions and roles of policing, as mentioned before, are governed by the Ontario Police Services Act, which lists five core functions of policing that must be provided by every municipality, regardless of its size. We must meet a minimum threshold of providing adequate and effective police service in accordance with the needs of the community. The core functions are crime prevention, law enforcement, assistance to victims of crime, public order maintenance, and emergency response. The municipality is also responsible for providing the infrastructure and the administration necessary for providing adequate and effective police service.

The police services board is responsible for governance of the policing model in place in the municipality and shares, along with the municipality, the responsibility for providing adequate and effective policing service to the community. The chief of police answers directly to the board and is responsible for the administra-

tion and the day-to-day operations of the police service in such manner that meets the community needs.

As in any municipality, taxes, finance, and available grants have major implications. Cobourg is no different in this respect. The police administration has shown excellent fiscal control by being under the forecasted budget for the previous four years. In 2013 our annual operating budget is \$5.6 million. It's a 1.5% increase from 2012, which had a \$5.5 million budget.

Recent use of technology has improved operational efficiencies such as the use of in-car communication devices, a special BlackBerry that allows officers to have immediate access to CPIC information. The Cobourg Police Service has also successfully capitalized on generating revenue by providing third-party criminal record checks to help offset the rising cost of policing. In 2012 the revenue generated was just over a half a million dollars.

Further, the service is now actively investigating other opportunities for efficiencies, for example the outsourcing of our communications centre to larger police services.

Thank you.

• (0940)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Liu.

We have two Alberta police chiefs here, and I don't want to prefer one over the other, but I'll perhaps go with Chief Rudd first, please, and Mr. McGrogan after that.

Chief Alf Rudd (Chief, Taber Police Service): Thank you, committee Chair.

My comments on this subject today ironically are against a background of prosperity. The situation in Alberta includes healthy immigration, a growing economy, low taxes, rising housing costs, and a low rate of unemployment. I ask that you further consider this context. Over the past 40 years, I've had many experiences in policing, including rural, municipal, aboriginal, and international environments. The past 15 years have been from the desk of the chief. What I've concluded is that the police work is still the easy part. With some exception, it is what we collectively and consistently do very well, despite the challenges and escalating complexities presented by more sophisticated crime trends and technology. There's always been one constant, and that is this. To protect society, the police will always be required, and they must be willing and able to jump over the boards and go into the corners. This is how the core function gets done, and this cannot be forgotten in efforts to control costs or increase efficiencies. I would encourage any decision-making to take that into account and not lose sight of this core function.

Considerable time has been spent in Alberta in producing a framework to guide policing into the future. A consultative process resulted in nine comprehensive strategies for management, operations, and finances. As an example, the framework is responsible for guiding the rollout of a single-source records management system for all policing agencies in Alberta to strengthen and support another pillar of the framework, and that is taking a truly intelligence-led approach to law enforcement and community safety. The framework guided the formation and operation of a number of specialty enforcement and support units, all intended to be working in an efficient and integrated structure. All of this is then funded through the Province of Alberta, while being administered and operated by the various police and enforcement agencies which host them.

The final strategy in the framework was to devise a fair and equitable cost-sharing formula for all Albertans. This was done through a consultative process, as I pointed out. A recommendation there would be that we implement a distributed model of sharing costs among all the residents of Alberta.

We just completed a negotiation with the Taber Police Association. The process in Alberta was guided by the Police Officers Collective Bargaining Act. After two negotiations for this agency, and observing the process across the province over the past years, I believe it is fair characterization to say that this particular act ultimately and brutally forces municipalities to give in to associations, and provide them with the demands that they are asking for. This occurred during mediation with a mediator.

With a 34% increase since 2006, little if any regard has been held for extending the slightest consideration about what's fair to the municipality and its ratepayers, and I'm speaking from the perspective of a smaller community. As a result, wages account for 80% of police budgets here and across the country. It's unreasonable to think that any manipulation of our already-stressed operational funds will result in altering the course of police economics. I think a strategy here might serve us well in Alberta, which is that we collaboratively negotiate, and we may include provincially sponsored assistance in that process.

In Taber, we are experiencing robust immigration to our area from Mexico, as the Mennonites of the Mexican colonies flee drug violence. Some 15,000 to 20,000 have arrived over the past 15 years, the majority arriving in the past four years. Unfortunately, some of these people are themselves involved in the drug trade and have imported their criminal behaviour with them. Operating out of our small-town community, an hour north of the international border, a robust trafficking operation was flourishing. A joint project resulted in numerous large seizures of cocaine and conspiracy charges.

My point here is that there are cutbacks to the RCMP and a realignment of their federal services, which will have a diminishing effect on the capacity of those critical partners in fighting this problem. While savings can be realized by the federal organization in this realignment, border integrity and the activities of the international drug cartels must remain a priority.

When I began policing in Alberta in 1971, there were fewer than one million people, and we had 3,000 mental health beds. Our population today exceeds three million, and we have approximately 300 mental health beds.

● (0945)

We are continually pressured by this gap in mental health services as we deal with the social determinants of crime: addiction, mental illness, homelessness, broken families, poverty, illiteracy, and general issues of moral decay that are becoming commonplace. The job description of a police officer has had to evolve, requiring increased and specific training from the recruit training syllabus through to ongoing professional development. I'm wondering where these savings from these other ministries have gone and wonder if some of those savings cannot be realized by the policing authorities as these areas of responsibility have been transferred onto the streets for the police to deal with.

Those, gentlemen, are my five points. Thank you.

The Chair: We'll move back to Medicine Hat, to Chief McGrogan.

Chief Andy McGrogan (Chief, Medicine Hat Police Service): Good morning.

First, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak. I echo Chief Rudd's comments in many ways. We're an hour and a half apart down the Crownsnest Highway from each other.

I'll give you a little context. Medicine Hat is a city of about 62,000 folks in the southeastern corner of Alberta, somewhat isolated from bigger centres such as Calgary and Edmonton, which creates some of its own issues. The Medicine Hat Police Service has 115 authorized strength, 156 staff overall. Our budget is approximately \$20 million, \$15 million of which is paid by the taxpayer through the mill rate. The other \$5 million is paid through fine revenue and other sources, such as grants, including the federal grant.

Some of my comments today may be a little more pointed. I wanted to get to some of the issues that I think we see are affecting the economics of policing. From a federal perspective, we again recognize that policing is a provincial issue, but obviously the federal government has a large role to play in policing across the country. Every Canadian, when you're stopped by a police officer, whether it be in Newfoundland or small-town Saskatchewan, expects the same type of professional service. I think we strive to do that across the country.

Before I start talking about the some of the negatives, because we're all quick to do that, I want to say that a really good example of federal dollars in the last number of years has been the funding that the federal government has given the Police Sector Council. The Police Sector Council has built, for example, a number of core competency suites, job descriptions, in relation to our policing positions. They have been very beneficial tools for many police services that are smaller in size, including the Medicine Hat Police Service. You can imagine the type of expertise and resources something like that takes, and they have been very beneficial tools. So I just want to thank the Police Sector Council. They did not pay me for that commercial, by the way.

Some of the complexities and some of the issues that we face in a small, isolated police service involve, because of our size, the ability to build expertise and leadership in specialized training. We do depend on the federal government, through the Canadian Police College, to provide a lot of that training and we found that it has been very efficient and helpful over the years. The executive development program; the senior police administration courses; a lot of technical police training such as polygraphs, major crimes and techniques, and all that kind of thing through the Canadian Police College are essential to the development of our police officers in the city of Medicine Hat.

I know that the whole RCMP model is being considered right now. I've been involved in some discussions in relation to national policing services. National policing services are extremely important to us. They're usually, as you know, provided through the RCMP. Things like, obviously, our criminal record data bank, are the types of things that can only be done federally, and we depend on them. New technologies, such as DNA and DNA banking, and all those types of things, are extremely important to us. As a small service, we could never provide that service, as you can imagine. So we are very dependent on the provincial government and the federal government.

If I was to have a wish, it would be very beneficial if the federal government and the provincial government could get together and determine exactly what the role of each is in relation to the funding of policing and what responsibilities each would take on, and make that clear throughout the provinces. I know that's a very complex wish, if we want to call it that, but it's extremely important.

A frustration I'll mention in closing—I have a number of issues here—is that one of the things I think is a really big issue is we see a lot of legislation that is passed down from the federal government that is very complex and it creates resource drains. I'll use drug recognition as an example. It's good legislation, but some of the legislation that comes down needs some framework around it, it needs some funding that comes with it, some sustainable funding. These things affect us in our operations on the street every day.

The chiefs met yesterday in Lacombe, Alberta, to discuss common issues. We all mentioned that we're kind of the hole at the bottom of the sink. When everybody goes home at four o'clock and on the weekends, we're it, and it's very complex. Just to have some form of structure around some of the issues we face would be extremely beneficial.

● (0950)

Drug traffic, as you know, is a good example of something that used to the responsibility of the RCMP. In Medicine Hat in 1980, when I started here, we had RCMP officers enforcing drugs and drug legislation. That went away; now we have teams partially provincially funded through ALERT in Alberta. They're quite effective. The funding is always rather tentative, but it's really important for us.

One area that is a major frustration for us involves the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. We have a very difficult time getting competent prosecutors in this area. It seems that usually we get lawyers who take this on, for the most part on an ad hoc basis. They're not paid very much money, and I guess you sometimes get what you pay for. It's very frustrating. We work very hard to disrupt

organized crime through drug trafficking investigations, and then we get to prosecution and there seems to be a lack of ability to prosecute, at times.

That's a bit of a frustration and an example of the type of things that we definitely depend on the federal government for.

I hope my approach was adequate. I want to thank you for allowing me to share a few of my issues.

Thanks so much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chief McGrogan, and thank you to all three of our presenters.

We're going to go into the rounds of questions. We're going to cut the first round to a five-minute round .

We'll begin with the government side, please.

Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks through you to the witnesses for appearing today.

I'll start off by saying that I hope this committee doesn't descend into the political stuff that I just heard a few minutes ago. There has been a 26% increase in CBSA officers. Some border crossings have three vehicles a day, so you have to rationalize where you put the CBSA officers.

We talk about federal responsibility concerning crime. The federal government makes criminal law in this country. Does that mean that it's responsible for paying for all the criminal enforcement?

Let's look at our Constitution; it lays down quite specifically whose responsibilities lie where. But in modern times we realize that by acting together in a cooperative stance—and I'm talking about federal, provincial, and municipal governments—we get a lot more done. And so, when in this country a few years ago we saw the need for extra police officers, because there was a need and we recognized the need, we worked with our provincial and municipal counterparts and brought in a temporary fund to assist in the recruitment and training of new officers. Note the word “assist” there. When we as a government were faced with requests from municipal governments for additional funding, we made permanent the gas tax, so municipalities get from the federal government, now every year, a guaranteed amount of money.

So let's get out of that. What I'd like to talk about in the economics of policing is not that we need more money, because there is a limit; there is a limit to how much the taxpayer can pay. When I look within Ontario, I see that in some municipalities up to 50% of the municipal budget is as a result of public safety costs.

I'm very impressed, quite frankly—and that's why I was hoping Chief Liu could be here—with some of the innovative ways the Cobourg police department has met some of the challenges they have.

Chief Liu, you talked about the criminal background checks and how you've been able to modernize them and to help with policing costs. I am hoping you can go a little bit further into that.

I also notice the increased usage in police forces in Ontario—it's no secret that for 30 years I was a police officer—of volunteers and auxiliary police officers, especially at parades, to do those jobs that can be done by trained auxiliary police officers. Cobourg is a community that has a lot of events; almost every weekend there's some kind of festival, or something is going on to enhance the life of that community. I've seen how the police have been innovative, using Segways and ATVs.

Chief, could you talk to us about new and innovative ways that you have been able to look for additional sources of income within your budget? You mentioned BlackBerrys and how modern technology has assisted your department in doing more efficiently the job that you have to do.

• (0955)

Chief Kai Liu: Maybe let me start with this. Approximately four years ago the total police budget accounted for 30% of Cobourg's tax base. Today we've been able to chip away at it and reduce it slightly down to 27% for 2013.

The Cobourg Police Service does use volunteers extensively at many of its community events throughout the summer. From Labour Day to Thanksgiving there is a festival of some sort in the town. We have a permanent trailer at our beachfront, which is manned by volunteers, and so that saves us a lot of police officer resources.

Additionally, to further help reduce the costs of policing, we have been very successful in partnering with the RCMP, as they control the CPIC database, and in conducting third-party criminal record checks. Third-party criminal record checks are requested by large corporations. Whenever they hire somebody, whether in P.E.I. or British Columbia, the Town of Cobourg will provide the criminal record checks for that particular employee, and we generate revenue for that. That revenue is put directly back into the police budget.

Additionally, on the use of technology, because we were somewhat behind in Cobourg, we have skipped the laptops in the police cars and have now transitioned from having no technology in our police cars to having the BlackBerry. This is a special BlackBerry that has CPIC capability as well as record management capability. Now, when the officers are free to walk through parking lots and/or when they're conducting foot patrol, they can readily use the BlackBerry, where once they had to be tied to a police car or police station.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Our five minutes is up.

We'll now move over to Mr. Rafferty, please.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you all three for being here today. I'll try to get a question for each of you in this five minutes that I have.

Chief Rudd, it's you first. Populations are shifting right across the country. We heard from the witness from Brooks, Alberta, the deputy mayor, who's tying in an increase in domestic violence with foreign temporary workers and their families arriving in her community.

My question is not especially about that, but it's about first nations populations. We know that urban first nations populations are growing right across the country. I wonder if you can share some

strategies that you're using with the shifting population, or with foreign temporary workers or any shifting population you may want to key in on.

What strategies are you using to deal with the changing police work, but still maintaining your budgets?

Chief Alf Rudd: Thank you. That's a good question, Mr. Rafferty.

Of course, we've formed a lot of joint committees. We've collaborated with the other agencies that come into contact with the population, and I can speak referencing specifically the Mennonite influx that we've had into the community. They are illiterate because of some of their beliefs and followings, and that's caused a great concern because it's difficult to find employment for them. We're primarily an agricultural area and there is a lot of work here, and that's what actually brings them here. We've put together a number of committees that strive to have them adapt a little more easily to the flow of things here.

We've integrated some into our victim services unit so we can provide services to them. Domestic violence is an issue and to combat that we've had to bring them on board with us. These things are working, and haven't come with any costs at all. They're free. It's just a matter of getting together and developing plans to integrate them into the education system and to have them understand what the laws of the land are so they don't come in conflict with them.

• (1000)

Mr. John Rafferty: Okay. Thank you, Chief Rudd, for that answer.

Chief McGrogan, you mentioned briefly in your comments federal legislation with no funding attached and the issues that this causes in your particular community. Funnily enough, we're having that discussion now in the House concerning the witness protection program. There are some changes coming to that legislation, which are welcomed, but there is no funding attached, the minister has said.

I wonder if you would like to expand on that particular issue.

Chief Andy McGrogan: Yes, thank you.

Provincially, they're working on witness protection legislation, as well. Again, the chiefs across the province are concerned about the costs that are involved. Right now we're looking at how to absorb those costs. If you look at a community such as ours, the protection of one witness, if funded through the municipality, has a major impact on our budget.

We're watching this legislation and really trying to determine where it's going to unfold at this time. We have people, of course, who are involved in the committees, discussing the various potential outcomes in relation to that.

We know it is important to protect witnesses. We totally understand that. How it's going to impact us financially, of course, is our biggest concern.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you.

Do I still have a moment here?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. John Rafferty: Still with you, Chief McGrogan, on the same question of shifting populations that I had for Chief Rudd, policing is changing. Police officers on the street are being used for other things now, perhaps the same kind of call over and over again. In terms of these shifting populations, I wonder if you could perhaps share some of the strategies you're using, in particular, in reference to first nations communities as that urban population continues to increase.

Chief Andy McGrogan: One of the things we did, which probably sounds quite operational in nature and which is not a new thing, was implement a priority street crimes unit to go after some of that low-hanging fruit that continually—those calls that you mentioned—repeat over and over again. It's more of a directed policing approach to some of the issues we have, almost like a harm reduction team, more or less, where they're out in the community trying to prevent issues before they happen.

One of the things we're doing now, in a proactive sense, in a big way, is going after offenders who are on release conditions, ensuring that they're keeping their release conditions. It used to be that if we happened upon them, we'd deal with them. That proactive approach, we feel, has really helped to reduce crime in our community.

Like the person from Brooks, we have a lot of residents in Medicine Hat, being an hour from Brooks, who are from different nations. The Sudanese community has grown in Medicine Hat. It presents challenges similar to the challenges that Chief Rudd spoke of. Again, it's trying to get our community officers into those communities and building relationships with the community leaders. As all of you know, the forming of relationships in our community is a big step towards helping to prevent stuff before it happens. We hope that we're doing a good job proactively in that regard.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Our time is up.

We'll go back to Mr. LaVar Payne, please.

• (1005)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thanks to all the chiefs for coming. It's good to see you, Andy and Alf. I have a couple of questions for you.

I'll start with you, Andy, in terms of your police service there and your business plan. Maybe you could tell us how you've restructured your plan, and if so, without cutting, particularly front-line officers.

Chief Andy McGrogan: In the last three years we've actually reduced our strength by one. We've found that we have adequate strength. Some of the realignment that we discussed was front-end loading our response folks. We've actually added supervisors to the street. We have a lot of young officers. We have two patrol sergeants on each team now, which really helps to serve the public better. They're on top of calls more. The priority street crime unit works closely with patrols.

We're trying to move from a reactive approach to a proactive approach. We have our patrols, of course; there are going to be calls that come in for service that we deal with. But we really want to get out in front of crime by being proactive in our approach to it.

Mr. LaVar Payne: I'm just curious, Andy. What's the percentage of cost in terms of the city budget for policing? Do you know that number?

Chief Andy McGrogan: Yes. It is similar to that of Cobourg. It's around 27%. In a recent budget submission.... We keep hearing that our costs are escalating, compared with other departments in the city. We found that in 1984 the police service represented 15.7% of the cost of all the city departments, and in 2013 we're exactly the same; we're at 15.7%. But the overall cost is about 27%.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thanks.

Alf, thanks for coming. You talked a bit about relationships and your local organizations, stressing mental health. Do you have teams that work together on those areas?

Chief Alf Rudd: Yes. We sit collaboratively with the services in the community.

But the issue that Andy has already pointed out is the after-hours business, when it falls to us. Like I say, there are fewer numbers of mental health facilities and beds. We deal with people where it's a transport situation. We run them into the nearest facility, tying up our resources, and often there are not sufficient services there for them.

This is a problem that's going on across the province, and probably elsewhere as well. It's very difficult to contend with, but we hold hands with our partners here to do the best we can.

Mr. LaVar Payne: In terms of the costs to the Town of Taber, I'm wondering what the percentage of the Taber budget is for policing.

Chief Alf Rudd: We're at 24% of the tax roll. With the overall budget, taking into account the revenues, grants, etc., we're at about 12% of the overall town budget.

Mr. LaVar Payne: I'd like to clarify one thing for my colleague across the way. The issues are not around the temporary foreign workers, but actually the immigration. Particularly in Brooks, there are at least 85 different nations. These are people who are coming from those nations to Brooks. It's immigration, and it does take time for some of their families to come. I wanted to point that out.

Going back to Andy, could you discuss your auxiliary program and why you implemented it? Are you seeing any benefits, particularly monetary, from that?

Chief Andy McGrogan: Absolutely. We are. We've had an auxiliary police program since the mid-nineties. We have about 12 to 15 officers coming and going. It's a great program, in many ways. First, they serve the community by coming out and assisting our officers. It's that extra set of hands on the street. Also, those folks are all members of our community, so they go back to their places of work and talk about the stuff that goes on after four o'clock, which a lot in our communities are not aware of.

We have found it has been a great relationship builder, a great recruitment tool, and it has also saved us money. I look at things like our yearly stampede—our exhibition, the stampede parade, etc—that really tax our resources, and they come out in full complement and do a great job in assisting us.

In our business plan moving forward, we're looking at bringing that whole volunteer piece up to another level and utilizing more members of our community in other ways. Right now, we have victim assistants who volunteer, and we have auxiliaries. We want to expand that by quite a bit, to assist us in our policing efforts in the community.

• (1010)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, it looks like you will conclude the questioning today. You have five minutes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I just want to get back to this issue of what's federal and what's provincial. Perhaps some members may not want to delve into this but one of the reasons we're here doing this study is to really try to figure these things out. All the witnesses are correct in saying that policing has become extremely complex and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities was correct in saying that it's become a grey zone. I'm just interested in getting your opinion on to what extent the federal government should be getting perhaps more involved and what should be falling more to local authorities, be it local policing authorities or municipal authorities.

We had the deputy mayor of Brooks telling us that they have quite innovatively shifted some of the responsibilities that the RCMP previously had to city employees. For example, now there's a crime prevention coordinator within the city, a diversity coordinator, and so on. I'm just trying to get your sense as officers who are in the day-to-day business of policing and who have to respond to changes in legislative requirements and so forth. How do you see this split in responsibility for policing? This is not in the Constitution. The Constitution didn't foresee that policing in the world would become so complicated over 100 years from the time it was created.

What is your sense about where the federal government's role should stop and where it should become a local matter? Should the federal government or the RCMP be solely concerned about coordination, analysis, creation of databases, and so on and so forth, and providing that kind of technical assistance, or is there a bigger role for the federal government?

Chief McGrogan, do you have an opinion on this?

Chief Andy McGrogan: As I mentioned earlier, there are things that the federal government almost, I won't say needs to do, but there's almost a sense that you're the only one that can from a federal perspective look after the database issues. You know, those things that affect our whole country.

I'll go back to the Police Sector Council and the great work they did that was funded federally. That's the type of thing that assists police services greatly.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: What was that? I missed that, we were cut off for a bit. What did you say helped you greatly?

Chief Andy McGrogan: I mentioned in my introduction the funding that the federal government gave the Police Sector Council and I mentioned the suite of police competencies, job descriptions, and that whole piece of work that was put together. That to me is a great example of where the federal government.... You're looking at what I think every Canadian wants: the same level of professionalism across the country for our police officers.

I think the RCMP have adopted a lot of the National Police Services issues, like a criminal records bag, for instance. Who would have foreseen that back when the Constitution was first put together, who other than the federal government is going to coordinate the country-wide criminal records? I think those types of things—I don't want to say you're stuck with—but it's so important that they be looked from a federal perspective.

I'll let some others comment.

The Chair: Chief Rudd, and then Chief Liu.

Chief Alf Rudd: I'll focus my response on the “boots on the ground” aspect of that. We're big partners with the RCMP when it comes to combatting the larger problem of drug trafficking. Criminals don't base themselves out of Taber so much as they travel through, travel around, and touch down once in a while here. Drugs transport through here and move off to bigger centres and bigger organized crime groups. Without that partnership and the ability for the RCMP to continue providing that partnership, these larger investigations, although we initiate them and have the problem, we don't have the capacity to deal with them. So from the lower level you go from the National Police Services which Andy's touched on, and then you come down to the boots on the ground and maintaining that, I guess if you will, Big Brother partnership, that's valuable to us here.

• (1015)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's an interesting comment—

The Chair: No, there's no more time—but I do want to hear Chief Liu on that as well, just very quickly.

Chief Kai Liu: Just very quickly, I believe that for the front-line officers there's only one taxpayer. As chief of police, when I'm looking at developing my budget, there isn't federal money, there isn't provincial money. Essentially, I'm given a certain amount and I have to make do. I have to be innovative and develop partnerships with my neighbouring police services, the Ontario Provincial Police and Port Hope Police Services.

I think we need to accept some of our own responsibilities in developing our day-to-day operational money and move forward from there—

The Chair: Thank you. I'm sorry if I cut you off—I was enjoying what you were saying there—but I think we do have to conclude here. Our time is up.

I want to thank both Chief McGrogan and Chief Rudd from Alberta, joining us via teleconference, and also Chief Liu for appearing before us today.

This study will continue for some time. I know that all levels of government, municipal, provincial, and federal, are taken with the complex issues around the economics of policing. I want to thank you for your input today.

I would also say that in regard to some of questions you've been asked today—and I apologize, because our time today was cut somewhat short—you might think later of some way in which you could expand on an answer or give us other ideas. Sometimes after a day or two, you think, “Oh, man, I wish I'd answered it that way” or, “Here's another opportunity. Why didn't I say that?” Perhaps you wouldn't mind just forwarding some of that, through our clerk, to our committee. It will be given to each member as if you had presented it here.

Again, to the Alberta chiefs and also to Chief Liu, thank you so much.

We will conclude this part of the meeting. I'll ask the committee to remain behind. We have an in camera session.

Thank you very much.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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