

# First Nations policing program slammed by auditor general

Ottawa has spent more than \$1.7B on program since 1991

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The federal government pays about half the cost of policing for close to 400 First Nations and Inuit communities. The First Nations policing program, which started in 1991, covers the cost of about 1,250 officers, who serve more than 338,000 people. (Troy Fleece/Canadian Press)

comments

The federal First Nations policing program is bedevilled by poor allocation of money, shoddy buildings and lack of transparency, according to Auditor General Michael Ferguson.

"The program is not working as intended. We found the program is sometimes used to replace core services normally provided by the provinces," said Ferguson.

"We also noted in Ontario, the program does not ensure that policing services on First Nations reserves meet the standards that apply to police service elsewhere in the province."

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"The inevitable conclusion of the auditor general's report is that First Nation communities in Ontario do not receive the same level of policing that rest of the province does," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, in a news release issued by the two largest First Nation police services in Ontario.



Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler says the auditor general's report confirms Ontario First Nation communities don't receive the same level of policing the rest of the province does. (Jody Porter/CBC) "This report shows that First Nations have been set up for failure and the federal approach to First Nation policing is seriously flawed."

The policing program, created in 1991 to address concerns about policing in aboriginal communities, involves negotiation and funding of agreements between the federal

government, provincial or territorial governments, and First Nations and Inuit settlements.

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- [Public pension plans at risk over longer life spans, says AG](#)

Federal expenditures for the program totalled about \$1.7 billion between 1991 and 2012-13. At last count, 442 of the 593 First Nations communities across Canada were receiving services from one or more agreements funded by the program.

The program is intended to provide these communities with policing services other than those the province covers. Auditors from Ferguson's office surveyed 10 First Nations chiefs with self-administered policing services, with five saying their services had replaced provincial policing in their communities.



Auditor General Michael Ferguson found that Public Safety Canada, the department responsible for the First Nations policing program, lacks reasonable assurance that facilities in First Nations communities are adequate. (Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press)Public Safety Canada, the

department responsible for the program, lacks reasonable assurance that policing facilities in First Nations communities are adequate, the report says.

Ferguson found the department does not systematically collect information about whether facilities maintained by First Nations comply with federal building and fire codes, or applicable provincial standards.

In visiting six fly-in communities in Ontario, auditors observed instances in which officers were living in houses "that were crowded, contained mould, and were in a state of disrepair."

Other problems included holding cells that were too small, unfinished construction and a lack of reception and community meeting rooms.

Doug Palson is the chief of the Dakota Ojibway Police Service, which has detachments in six Manitoba communities.

"We did have a detachment which was essentially condemned, and we were able to work with the community, the provincial and federal government to secure enough funding to actually renovate another building for adequate detachment and properly designed holding cells, and that made a huge huge difference," Palson said.

Public Safety's practices for assessing applicants to the program, selecting recipients and allocating money were not transparent, the report says. In addition, assessments and selection decisions were not adequately documented, meaning they could be considered arbitrary.

Ferguson also found First Nations were not meaningfully included in the negotiation of agreements. For seven of nine new or renewed policing agreements examined, there was no documented evidence of the nature and extend of input by aboriginal communities.

Thirty agreement-holders had less than one month's notice to complete negotiations of agreements that were slated to expire March 31 of last year, the auditors noted.

Palson agrees with the auditor general that First Nations don't have adequate input when it comes to negotiating policing agreements. He said it's hard to run a department with short-term funding agreements.

"We're always struggling with funding levels, adequate funding. We have to ensure we can get sustained funding for the future so we can stay competitive in areas of salary, etc."

Ferguson also found that certain elements of the federal First Nations policing policy principles were not fully incorporated into agreements, and that Public Safety did not measure and report on whether the program's objectives were being achieved.

Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney agrees with Ferguson's recommendations, but said the program is working.

"[The program] has had a measurable and positive impact on safety and security of First Nation and Inuit communities, and that's why in March 2013 our government committed \$612.4 million in funding over five years for stable, sure and durable funding."

The Assembly of First Nations also expressed support for the recommendations today. In a news release, Regional Chief Cameron Alexis underlined the importance of addressing the gaps in the policing program in consultation with First Nations.

Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/first-nations-policing-program-slammed-by-auditor-general-1.2633460>

Exhibit: *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

Location/Phase: Part 2: Regina

Witness: Daniel Bellegarde

Submitted by: Big Canoe / Brass

Add'l info: P02 P02 P01 01

Date: JUN 25 2018

Initials

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