

More money promised for Native Policing

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OHSWEKEN — The federal government will double its spending on native policing over the next five years, Indian Affairs Minister Tom Siddon said Thursday.

Ottawa will provide an additional \$116.8 million — about \$23 million a year — to help native communities design and operate policing services to meet their own needs, he said.

Mr. Siddon, speaking to a crowd in Veteran's Park in Ohsweken, said he is concerned "about the inadequacy and inconsistency of policing in Indian communities" across Canada.

"On-reserve policing must be adapted to and reflect the special cultural needs and the sensitivities of native communities, taking into account their history and language and customs."

In order to meet that goal, bands must have greater control over their policing services, said Mr. Siddon.

Specific arrangements will be worked out between federal, provincial and Indian governments, and funding will be shared almost equally by the federal and provincial governments.

The Six Nations reserve has the only independent native police force in Canada.

Waiting long time

"We've been waiting a long time for this" announcement, said Chief Coun. William Montour.

"Hopefully, we will now be able to reach the level of service which we have aspired to."

He said Six Nations needs funding for 11 more officers, which would almost double the current size of the force.

At present, the federal government spends about \$18 million a year on native policing. There are about 700 native officers across the country who are funded, at least in part, by Ottawa. They have varying degrees of responsibility, ranging from a full provincial police officer status, to that of a band officer having authority only over band bylaws.