



Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation #29

Policing Feasibility Study

Community Engagement Summary
June, 2026



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Project overview



Project Objectives – *How will we define success?*

The objective of this engagement is to prepare a feasibility study for the Nation to enter into an agreement with Anishinabek Police Service (“APS”) for policing services. The scope of the study will include:

- a. Community priorities for safety and associated service considerations
- b. Considerations related to governance of policing within the Nation, and the relationship between the Nation and APS
- c. Requirements for the policing complement and capabilities needed to meet priorities and service expectations
- d. Estimated annual costs to the Nation for the service
- e. Requirements for a police facility and estimated capital costs

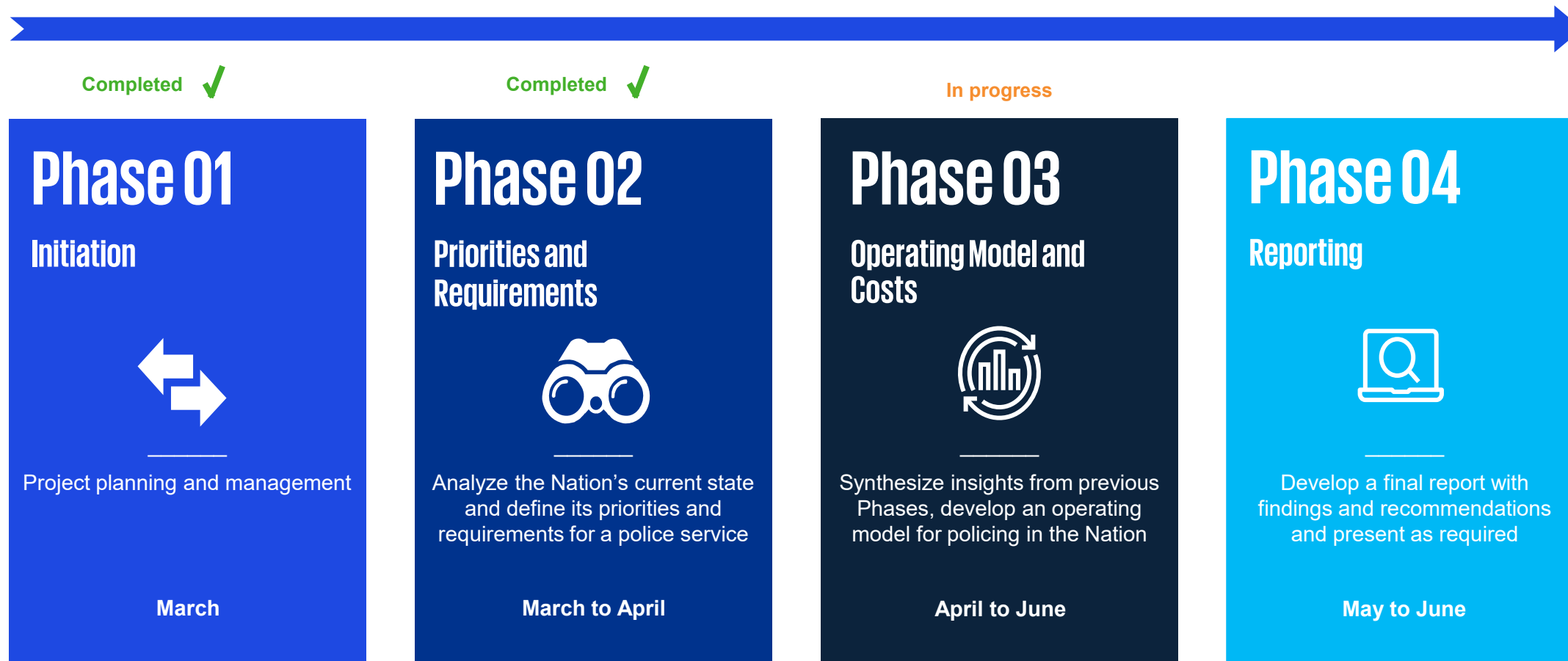


Project Drivers – *What problem are we trying to solve?*

- The Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation #29 wants future policing arrangements to better reflect community priorities, values, and expectations for safety, trust, and wellbeing.
- Council requires an objective, evidence-based foundation to support informed decision-making regarding long-term policing governance and service delivery options.
- The Nation needs greater clarity on the financial, governance, and infrastructure implications of policing services to support responsible stewardship of resources and long-term sustainability.
- Leadership seeks to meaningfully incorporate the perspectives of Nation members and community agencies to ensure future policing decisions are transparent, inclusive, and well-supported.
- The Nation seeks to frame future service options through a community-based policing lens, reflecting the distinct culture, values, and expectations of First Nations policing, and to identify practical community-based policing initiatives that strengthen trust, safety, and wellbeing.

Project phases

Our approach to the project is divided into four phases.



Review update

Document Review

This project has included a review of documents provided by the Saugeen First Nation and Ontario Provincial Police. These included:

- Security services analytics reports
- OPP statistics for the region
- Capital planning study information
- Support service agreements, etc.



Community Engagement

To date, KPMG has conducted over 20 hours of consultation, including interviews with Band Administration staff, in-person workshops with community agencies and Elders, a Town Hall session, and engagement with APS and the Ministry. These engagements have informed KPMG's understanding of the current state and helped shape considerations for the potential future state.



Survey Conducted

A survey is being conducted to further understand the community's priorities for safety, and perspectives of what effective policing looks like for the Nation.



What did we hear during our engagements?

Across engagements with Band administration, community agencies, Council, Elders, and members, participants consistently emphasized the following six priorities for improving community safety and policing in Saugeen.

01

Visible, accessible, proactive policing

Participants consistently emphasized the need for a predictable, day-to-day policing presence that is locally embedded and approachable. They contrasted routine visibility with the current experience of limited presence outside major incidents, noting that consistent visibility is essential to deterrence and rebuilding confidence.

02

Community-rooted, culturally informed, restorative policing

Across groups, there was strong alignment that effective policing must be culturally grounded, relationship-based, and trauma-informed, with an emphasis on discretion, de-escalation, prevention, and diversion. Participants expressed preference for approaches that reflect community values and include restorative justice.

03

Professional, ethical, and accountable policing

Participants underscored that trust depends on clear professionalism, ethical standards, and credible accountability, including transparent governance and complaint processes. Concerns about inconsistent enforcement, favoritism, and political interference reinforced the importance of safeguards that support meaningful accountability.

04

Faster response times and reliable continuity

A recurring concern was slow response times and limited backup, particularly when officers are located far from the community. This was seen as increasing risk during emergencies. Participants also emphasized the importance of consistent follow-up and timely communication, especially so residents (including Elders) understand what is happening during incidents and what actions they should take.

05

Addressing root causes

Participants consistently identified substance use, mental health crises, and related social disorder as primary drivers of safety concerns affecting homes, public spaces, and Band facilities. Many emphasized that these issues require coordinated, wraparound responses alongside policing, rather than traditional enforcement alone.

06

Stronger community safety measures

Participants described persistent concerns with non-member presence linked to drugs/criminal activity, along with perceived gaps in the enforceability of residency expectations and Band by-laws. They also pointed to a lack of lighting, speeding, and limited camera coverage as reducing safety and deterrence.

Survey responses: Important model features and themes

Survey responses collected to date highlight several consistent themes related to effective policing and community safety priorities:

Effective policing themes	Ideas to strengthen safety	Additional comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visible, proactive presence with officers out in the community, prioritizing regular patrols.• Relationship-based community engagement with officers' building trust through positive interaction and by participating in community events.• Professional, fair, and culturally informed conduct, this includes respectful, unbiased, accountable, and transparent policing supported by cultural awareness and trauma-informed approaches.• Timely enforcement and tangible outcomes. This includes officers responding quickly, enforcing laws and by-laws consistently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a local 24/7 policing presence by creating an on-reserve service with continuous patrols.• Disrupt drug activity and known high-risk locations through targeted enforcement and follow-through.• Strengthen access, traffic, and visibility controls by improving lighting, using checkpoints or monitoring at entrances, and increasing enforcement of speeding, impaired and unlicensed driving.• Expand prevention and wellbeing supports by pairing policing with education, youth/community programs, and mental health/addictions supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act urgently and ensure reliable coverage by prioritizing timely implementation, 24/7 service, and assets required to sustain operations.• Clarify priorities, roles, and accountability by defining expectations for policing, leadership, and community supports. Also strengthening oversight mechanisms.• Embed training and cultural/trauma-informed practice in officer onboarding.• Protect vulnerable people and reinforce community rules by ensuring by-laws and residency-related expectations are enforceable and consistently applied.

Appendix



Summary of band administration perspectives

Our discussions with key community members have revealed the below themes:

1

Slow Response Times

Reliance on OPP officers who are often located 20–60 minutes away results in delayed response times, undermining safety and public confidence. The lack of immediate response or backup increases vulnerability, particularly during emergencies and high-risk situations. Frontline staff in social services, education, and community programs face heightened safety risks, with incidents involving aggression, intoxication, and threats occurring frequently.

2

Lack of Trust and Community Connection

There is a lack of trust in current policing, driven by limited visibility, unfamiliar officers, and perceptions of over-policing. Community members emphasized the importance of officers being known, approachable, and engaged, with regular interaction viewed as critical. The previous APS model was viewed more positively due to stronger relationships and officer familiarity.

3

Need for Community-Based and Culturally Aligned Policing

Community members expressed a strong preference for policing that reflects the community's culture and values. This includes hiring Indigenous or community-connected officers and delivering culturally informed services. There is interest in creating employment and training opportunities for community members within policing including co-op programs, youth engagement, and recruitment pathways.

4

Insufficient Proactive and Preventative Policing

Current policing is largely reactive with little focus on prevention, visibility, or relationship-building. Community members highlighted the need for regular patrols, community engagement, and early intervention. There is also a desire for trauma-informed and empathetic approaches rather than purely enforcement-based responses.

5

Safety Concerns and Coordinated Response Times

Drug activity, the opioid crisis, and related mental health challenges were consistently identified as major safety issues. These concerns impact multiple service areas including health, social services, and public safety. Members emphasized the need for coordinated responses beyond enforcement.

6

Challenges with Non-Members and Community Safety

The presence of non-members, particularly those associated with drugs or criminal activity, is a significant concern. Current approaches to managing or removing these individuals are viewed as ineffective. Members noted gaps in enforcing residency and band by-laws, largely due to limited police presence and capacity constraints within community support services.

7

Gaps in Coordination, Communication, and Follow-Up

There are significant gaps in communication between police, community services, and leadership. Stakeholders noted lack of follow-up after incidents and poor coordination across agencies. Jurisdictional complexities (i.e. schools off-reserve) further complicate responses.

8

Governance, Accountability, and Local Oversight

Stakeholders emphasized the need for policing services to be accountable to Chief and Council. Previous models lacked clear mechanisms for addressing complaints or influencing priorities. There is a desire for structured governance, reporting, and local input into policing decisions. Accountability is key to rebuilding trust.

Summary of community agency perspectives

01

Current policing is viewed as reactive and lacking sustained presence

Across community members, staff, Council, and agencies, policing was consistently described as reactive and incident-driven. Police presence is most noticeable during major events – often involving multiple vehicles and officers – which can feel overwhelming and traumatic, particularly for children and families. Outside of these incidents, participants noted long stretches with little to no visible policing, contributing to a perception that enforcement is inconsistent and deterrence is weak.

02

Drugs, mental health, and social disorder are the primary safety drivers

Participants identified substance use, mental health crises, vandalism, homelessness, and unsafe behaviour as the most significant contributors to community safety concerns. These issues affect not only private residences, but also Band buildings, childcare centres, schools, and public spaces. Staff and agencies described frequent encounters with individuals in crisis without adequate support or timely assistance.

03

Broad support for community-based and trauma-informed policing

There was strong alignment across groups that effective policing in Saugeen must be culturally informed, relationship-based, and trauma-aware. Participants emphasized the importance of officers understanding family dynamics, community history, and the impacts of intergenerational trauma. Many contrasted this with experiences of rigid enforcement that escalated situations or retraumatized individuals.

04

Youth prevention and engagement are seen as critical to long-term safety

Participants raised concerns about past experiences with favoritism, inconsistent enforcement, and political interference in policing. There was clear support for policing structures that are operationally independent from Council, supported by transparent governance, clear complaint processes, and consistent accountability mechanisms. Participants emphasized that trust cannot be rebuilt without credible safeguards.

05

Strong emphasis on governance, accountability, and independence

Participants raised concerns about past experiences with favoritism, inconsistent enforcement, and political interference in policing. There was clear support for policing structures that are operationally independent from Council, supported by transparent governance, clear complaint processes, and consistent accountability mechanisms. Participants emphasized that trust cannot be rebuilt without credible safeguards.

06

Infrastructure, enforcement, and environmental safety gaps

Participants identified several physical and enforcement-related gaps contributing to safety concerns, including inadequate lighting, speeding and traffic violations, lack of traffic enforcement, limited cameras, and insufficient monitoring of Band facilities. Limited enforcement was described as creating a perception that unsafe behaviors are tolerated, further eroding deterrence.

Summary of Council perspectives

01

Restoring community-based policing and relationships

Council members consistently emphasized that their primary community safety priority is restoring policing that is embedded in, and familiar with, the community. Participants contrasted a community-based police presence with the current OPP model, which was described as reactive and transactional. Knowing officers by name and having regular interaction were viewed as foundational to effective policing, particularly for youth and families.

02

Drugs, guns, and youth safety as central community safety concerns

Council identified drugs and firearms as among the most serious threats to community safety, particularly in relation to youth and vulnerable individuals. Participants expressed concern that drug houses, trafficking, and weapons are destabilizing the community and placing residents at risk. At the same time, Council emphasized the importance of ensuring that youth do not grow up associating police solely with fear.

03

Need for visible, proactive, and predictable police presence

Council members repeatedly returned to the importance of visibility and availability. They noted that under the current model, police may arrive in large numbers during incidents but are otherwise absent from daily community life. This episodic presence was described as potentially traumatic and ineffective in building confidence. Council emphasized the value of proactive patrols, relationship-building, and responsiveness as indicators of policing effectiveness.

04

Clear governance structures with accountability

Council spent significant time reflecting on governance challenges experienced in the past. Members emphasized the need to strike a careful balance between accountability and operational independence. There was strong agreement that Council must have visibility into priorities, performance, and community safety outcomes, but should not be involved in day-to-day policing decisions. Past issues were attributed not to the absence of governance structures, but to unclear roles, bypassed processes, and untested systems.

05

Emphasis on trauma-informed, discretion-based policing approaches

Council members strongly articulated a preference for trauma-informed policing that emphasizes discretion, de-escalation, and guidance rather than default enforcement. Participants described how rigid, charge-driven responses can retraumatize individuals and families, particularly in an Indigenous context. Council emphasized the importance of officers who can help guide individuals back toward stability without criminalization.

06

Strong interest in prevention, youth engagement, and upstream interventions

Council placed significant emphasis on prevention, particularly through youth engagement and early intervention. Participants cited past programs such as Side Cops and youth outreach as effective in building trust, accountability, and positive life outcomes. Council members framed prevention as a long-term investment in community safety, noting that early support for youth can reduce future involvement in crime, addiction, and mental health crises.

Summary of Elder perspectives

Summary



Heightened feelings of being unsafe and vulnerable

Elders consistently described a strong sense of fear and vulnerability within their own homes and neighbourhoods. These feelings were most acute at night and were amplified by living alone, limited lighting, and uncertainty about what to do during safety incidents. Participants described not knowing who to call, hesitating to answer doors, and feeling unable to seek help without drawing attention to themselves. For Elders with hearing impairments or mobility limitations, these concerns were further intensified.



Lack of clear and timely communication during safety incidents

Elders repeatedly emphasized that when incidents occur in the community, they often receive little to no information about what is happening, whether they are at risk, or what actions they should take. Participants described situations where roads were closed or police were active nearby, yet no one came door-to-door or provided clear messaging. Overall, follow-up after incidents from police, housing, or other services were described as inconsistent or absent.



Strong preference for local, visible, and familiar policing

Elders frequently compared current conditions with past periods when policing was local and embedded in the community. When APS or local security was present, Elders recalled seeing officers regularly, recognizing them by name, and feeling reassured by their visibility. This routine presence was viewed as both a deterrent to crime and a source of comfort. By contrast, the current model was viewed as distant and impersonal.



Ongoing concerns about drugs, trespassing, and targeting of Elders

Participants raised repeated concerns about drug activity, trespassing, break-ins, illegal dumping, and unfamiliar individuals moving through residential areas. Elders expressed a belief that they are particularly vulnerable to being targeted for theft or intimidation. The presence of non-members engaged in drug activity was described as disheartening and destabilizing, with limited confidence that current policing arrangements can proactively address these issues.



Desire for compassionate, discretion-based, and crisis-focused responses

Elders expressed frustration with enforcement-only approaches, particularly when individuals are experiencing mental health or addiction-related distress. Participants described situations where they wanted help for someone in crisis but felt that calling police would automatically lead to charges or escalation. In contrast, they recalled past experiences where officers exercised discretion, knew the individuals involved, and focused on resolving situations safely.



Need for safety supports beyond traditional policing

Several Elders suggested that safety could be improved through layered supports such as wellness checks, peacekeepers, auxiliary roles, or dedicated on-site presence at Elder facilities. The COVID period, when additional security was present, was frequently cited as a time when Elders felt safer. These discussions reflected a desire for consistent, non-intrusive support that prioritizes Elder wellbeing rather than enforcement.

Summary of in-person community discussions

Summary



Day-to-day safety concerns and community conditions

Participants described feeling unsafe due to strangers and unknown vehicles, people moving around at unusual hours, and drug-related activity (including needles and suspected dealers). Concerns also included ATVs operating at all times and squatters entering the community, which were seen as contributing to disorder and unpredictability. Limited infrastructure (e.g., internet connectivity and camera capability) was noted as a constraint on deterrence and situational awareness.



Police visibility, response, and follow-through

A consistent theme was the desire for more visible policing, including foot patrols, alongside improved response and dispatch times. Participants also emphasized that policing effectiveness depends on reliable follow-up after incidents are reported, not only initial attendance. Youth similarly linked feeling safe to timely response and meaningful follow-through, reinforcing that service quality is judged over the full lifecycle of a call.



Trust, relationships, and cultural safety were seen as core to effective policing

Many comments highlighted that trust is built when officers know the people, build relationships, and demonstrate cultural understanding in everyday interactions. Participants and youth both pointed to the need for culturally informed policing and a reduction of “us-versus-them dynamics” so members feel comfortable calling police when needed. The discussion also referenced approaches grounded in community values (e.g., Anishinaabe Law and teachings) as part of what “effective” policing should look like.



Proportional response, de-escalation, and trauma-informed practice

Participants raised concerns about a perceived over-response (e.g., multiple vehicles attending minor incidents) and situations where police actions amplify trauma rather than provide support. There was strong emphasis on de-escalation skills, understanding cultural context, and trauma-informed training as essential competencies. Youth echoed these points by identifying de-escalation and relationship-building as key elements of safety and appropriate response.



Accountability, professional conduct, and clear boundaries

Accountability and professionalism were repeatedly identified as non-negotiables, including expectations for transparent conduct and clear standards of behaviour. Participants explicitly called for boundaries such as police not being involved in politics and maintaining professional conduct while on duty.



Wraparound supports, prevention, and youth-centred programming

Participants emphasized that safety is strengthened when policing is paired with diversion and rehabilitation programs, restorative justice approaches, and supports tailored to Elders and youth. Youth described turning to trusted parties and valued proactive, positive engagement (e.g., officers knowing youth by name, meet-and-greets, and early relationship-building). They also identified practical supports such as detox spaces, security system assistance, and programming that addresses root causes rather than relying solely on enforcement.



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