



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Spruce Woods	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: And prior to orders of the day, I have a statement.

For the information of all members, due to a procedural oversight, the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) was inadvertently allowed to speak twice to a second reading of Bill 208. I apologize to the House for this error and I have discussed with the clerks, establishing further safeguards to prevent this from happening again.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: Orders of the day, House business.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, will you call this morning bill two oh—for resuming second reading debate on the following bills and in this order: Bill 208, the small—The Manitoba Small Business Month Act; Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act; and should we finish those, Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act.

The Speaker: Been announced that we will resume debate on second readings of Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); followed by debate on second reading of Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); and if we conclude that, we will then resume debate on bill thirty, the—Bill 300—I'm sorry—The Winnipeg Foundation act.

So—and just for clarification, it was orders of the day, private members' business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS****Bill 208—The Manitoba Small Business
Month Act (Commemoration of Days,
Weeks and Months Act Amended)**

The Speaker: We will now resume debate on second reading of Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), who has five minutes remaining.

Is it the will of the House for it to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Midland?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no, so the member therefore has accordingly lost that spot to speak.

Are there further members wishing to speak?

Seeing none then, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

The motion is accordingly passed.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): I'd like a recorded vote, please.

The Speaker: A recorded vote has been called. Please call in the—sorry. As per our rules, a recorded vote asked on—for on Tuesday is deferred to—until Thursday at 11:55.

**Bill 210—The Indigenous Veterans Day Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

The Speaker: So we will now go to debate on second reading of Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

Debate is open. *[interjection]* Yes, it is.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): So, obviously, I rise today in support of Bill 210. This legislation would formally recognize November 8 as Indigenous veterans day here in Manitoba.

This bill is not only a step forward toward honouring the courage and sacrifice of Indigenous veterans, but also a necessary act of reconciliation and respect. It acknowledges a long-overlooked legacy of bravery and commitment shown by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in the defence of Canada and the life as we know it here today.

I'm proud to say, in my hometown, we have the only Métis Legion branch across Canada, Legion 250. So I just want to say thank you to all the members that continue to make that possible, the board for all the great work that you do on that and, of course, all the volunteers. I think we all understand that Legions that don't have a volunteer base often find it tough to make ends meet, and it's important that we continue that tradition on of people helping out the Legion.

But, obviously, it inspired people across the country. They have received a bequeath of people that have passed away and left portions of their life insurance to it because it is the only Métis Legion across Canada, and they've been able to leverage that money in the form of grants. When we were in government, I helped get some grants for them and ensured that they could continue to be successful across servicing the southern Interlake and, well, frankly, anybody who wants to stop in there and support. I'm sure any of the businesses—the business would be appreciated to ensure that they are a continued success in the RM of St. Laurent.

Indigenous veterans have served with honour and distinction since the very earliest chapters of Canadian

military history. In fact, their military service dates back, as far as we can research, I guess, is 1759 at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. That's when Indigenous warriors fought alongside colonial forces in what is now Québec. And over the centuries, through both world wars, the Korean War, the Cold War and into modern peacekeeping and combat missions, Indigenous peoples have stood shoulder to shoulder with fellow Canadians in the fight for peace, freedom and justice.

And we have a—in St. Laurent again, but also in Oak Point, we have a road—it's called Veterans Memorial Road. And on that road, the Métis Legion, along with funding from the Red River Métis, helped put up placards or I guess they're more like flags, but each soldier on each hydro pole along that road is recognized on a hydro pole.

* (10:10)

And it's not just Indigenous veterans on that road; like, my grandfather is there as well. But it just shows—goes to show the community has not forgotten about the service that they've done over the time as we know Canada. And it's so important to continue to have those supports there and recognitions there, so none of our veterans are forgotten. So they've—it's estimated that over 12,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have served in the wars in the 20th century, and more than 500 of them gave their lives in uniform.

So these brave men and women endured unimaginable hardships on the battlefield and at home. Yet for too long, their stories have remained underrepresented in our national narrative, and that's why it's time to formally recognize November 8 as Indigenous veterans day in Manitoba, to honour their services and sacrifices and ensure they are never forgotten.

So our Legislature used to sit on November 8, and now the Rules committee got together, and I moved a motion so that we no longer sit on November 8 so us as legislatures can go out and recognize our Indigenous veterans on Indigenous Veterans Day. And I'm very pleased that that received unanimous support of the rules board, and that was something that was—we can all take pride in.

So historically, I used to have to miss the occasional one if we were on a sitting day on November 8, and predominantly it was held in Riverton or Gimli, the one in my constituency, and it would always sadden me that I—that, you know, my duties here took precedent, obviously, over that.

But now, not just myself, but any member who would like to attend is more than welcome to come and—come to that. And I've seen members attend it from both sides of the aisle, and I appreciate that dedication for Indigenous Veterans Day.

So, Honourable Speaker, Manitoba has a proud history of leadership in this regard. The very first Indigenous Veterans Day was observed on November 8 in 1993, and just one year later, 1994, Manitoba came the first province to formally recognize this day through unanimous resolution right here in the Legislature. And so thanks to those past efforts of former MLA George Hickes, today we have the opportunity to strengthen that recognition by making it a formal part of our laws.

Indigenous veterans faced unique challenges in their service. Language barriers, cultural differences and systemic discrimination often made enlistment and service more difficult than for anybody else. But these men and women brought exceptional skills rooted in their tradition: their marksmanship, stealth, navigation and survival, which made them exceptional soldiers, sailors and pilots.

Indigenous women, as well, served valiantly; many overseas as nurses, and many more at home supporting war efforts through fundraising, manufacturing and organizing within their very own communities.

During the First World War, over 4,000 Indigenous people served, many of them becoming decorated snipers and scouts, excelling at any of their traditional—because of their traditional hunting and tracking skills, and at least 50 medals for bravery were awarded to Indigenous soldiers during that conflict alone.

In the Second World War, over 3,000 First Nation individuals, and many Métis and Inuit joined the military force once again. These soldiers took on even more specialized roles, like the code talkers. I don't know if—I really, really enjoyed that movie, and it was yet to be cracked at the end of the war. They—obviously they used Indigenous languages such as Cree to rely on military communications, effectively baffling the enemy and protecting Canadian secrets.

Now I have a lot more points to put on the record here, but I see our time go so fast in this building. I do want to just recognize Sargeant Tommy Prince who's the most decorated soldier across—that we recognize and his portrait is outside of my old office, room 143. And we also have all of the books there, of the people

who served and those pages are turned every single day, used to be at 12:30, and I would go out as they were turning the pages and look at those books and as they turn the page one by one every single day.

But Sargeant Prince is just an outstanding dedication to military—not just for Manitoba, as he's a Manitoban, but for Canada and to continue to allow us to do what we do here today.

So, thank you to everyone who has served.

Thanks, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): I am so honoured to bring a few words regarding the Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act. I am so honoured to come—to have—put a few words on the record and, you know, it goes back to history. The member from Interlake-Gimli basically said that, you know, it goes far back as the history in North America.

We saw that the French and the Indigenous peoples had war with the British when it came to—and the Thirteen Colonies of the—when it came to our history, and of course the Plains of Abraham where there was historical battleground to where, you know, Québec City, when Indigenous people fought with the French and this is the opportunity to talk about the history that we have going way back to the first established of Canada.

Before the Thirteen Colonies even were established, you know, we had veterans that would go back to these different wars and it's so important to honour the contribution of Indigenous members that gave so much to this country. Remember, like, I've been honoured to have had a number of my uncles, my dad's two brothers, served in war—in World War II. My dad's oldest brother, his name was Pete [*phonetic*] Piwniuk and his other brother was Johnny Piwniuk.

Fortunately, Pete [*phonetic*] came back and he was—raised a family, contributed to our society. Unfortunately, my uncle Johnny, who was a sniper in the war, and was the best shooter out there, grew up in the same farm that I grew up and he did come back, but unfortunately, he was injured with shrapnel and he was at the breakfast table soon after he got back from war and I guess that shrapnel created a hemorrhage in his brain and he passed away. And he's right now honoured at the, like—in the gravesite in Roblin, Manitoba.

So—and I had many of other uncles. My mom's two sisters had—they were—they contributed to the war, they basically both were the Rosie the Riveters

in Thunder Bay; they were making airplanes. But their husbands were sent to war.

And so there's a lot of people in our family that contributed to our battles that we had in World War I and World War II. And I had some other uncles that were married to my aunts on my dad's side.

So, our families contribute lots to the military of World War II and I can imagine that when it came to Indigenous families, their families, their members of their families contributed to the war and they weren't honoured as much as our—like the mainstream soldiers out there.

So this is only fitting, that we bring this bill, this private members' bill forward, to talk about the contributions of World War I, World War II, even Korean War when it came to Tommy Prince. He was in Korea and with the Canadian Light Infantry and his contribution—Prince also served as second in command of a rifle platoon and would draw upon the extension—'infantry' of experience in the World War II. So he had a long history of contributing to—when it came to the wars that we had to—battles in our country.

* (10:20)

So, Honourable Speaker, you know, it's also had the—when it came to going to school, I remember we used to have Remembrance Day services in Roblin, Manitoba. I went to school there, and I remember many of our Métis members who served in World War II were there during the Remembrance Day services. And they contributed so much to, again, to what my uncles had done. They were all on one team and they all battled the Germans, and—or the Germans or Italians or, you know, it was also the Japanese if they were on the west coast.

And so it was important that we honour our veterans no matter who they are, if they're Indigenous, family members, it's so important that we've chosen a day, November 8, to honour our Indigenous veterans that did so much for the—for our country.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And, you know, you'll see movies even in the United States where the African Americans also contributed lots to the wars, and it took years and years after that was able to be recognized as their contributions to the war. You know, you'll see military and even during the Civil War, I remember, was it—what actor, I can't remember his name—but he was acting as the basically senior officer when it came to

a Black Civil War troop, and basically were able to contribute and to help with the unions to win that war.

So, honourable Deputy Speaker, it's so important that we continue with the legacy of encouraging everyone, no matter who you are, to contribute to our country. And that's why it's so important that when we sing O Canada in this Legislature, it's so important, because, you know what, it was my ancestors, it was my uncles that were out there and my aunts, too, that actually contributed for their—our freedoms of being here, being able to express ourselves at this Legislature. And may—even know that we get heated debates here in the Legislature, we all have to respect each other. And it's so important that we continue that, we continue the honour of our veterans who contribute so much to our society to make us that we're free here.

And right now, honourable Deputy Speaker, my concern that we have right now is the world is changing out there. I'm not quite sure if it's changed for the good. You know, I also have extended family that still live in Ukraine, and I'm hopefully—that these peace talks with the President of the United States and the president of Russia and the president of Ukraine all come together to have a—cease the war, to have peace talks, to allow economic development happen in this world again.

And it's so important that—as soon as you have conflicts, you have uncertainty. And when you have uncertainty, you have—you know, we all lose. And it's so important that we as a major society now, with our major countries, our abilities to come to peace. You know, the scary pine right now is in India, in Pakistan; both have nuclear weapons right now. And the—

The Deputy Speaker: I'd ask the member to bring his comments back to the content of the bill.

Mr. Piwniuk: What I'm trying to say here is that we don't want to be in these conflicts where we have to honour our veterans. If we can eliminate that—these wars—and talk about peace time when it comes to every conflict that we have right now going on in this world right now—there's a lot of polarization out there. We see that even in the Legislature here. And the fact is what we need to do is come together. Come together and be civil to each other, to make sure that we respect each other when it comes to—in this Chamber, but also when it comes to world conflicts out there right now.

And like I said, I—hopefully we only have to honour the past wars, past conflicts, especially with our Indigenous members that served alongside many,

many of our Canadians. And then, just the statistics out there that showed that certain conflicts, there's up to 4,000 members in the Indigenous groups that served in World War II—3,000 First Nation members in 1945. On March fortieth, more than 100 of them were volunteers. By the time the end of the conflict in 1945, there was over 3,000 First Nation members and there was an unknown amount of Métis that served, and Inuit. So this just shows you how much members contributed to our conflict in World War II.

A hundred and twenty-five Indigenous people from Manitoba lost their lives during the World War II. So it's important their contributions—just like my uncles who needs to be remembered in our family, how we talk about it—the members of these 125 Indigenous people who lost—who their loved ones now have to honour them because they were—their lives were taken during World War II.

And Korean War broke out in 1950. Several hundred Indigenous people would serve Canada in uniform during this conflict, and so that was important that the contribution that Canada did and the Korean War when it came to the United Nations.

Many of them have seen actions in World War II. This return to service in Korea would see some of the bravest individuals expanding their previous duties in new ways. So it's quite impressive when it comes to—so, like I said, despite putting their lives on the line, Indigenous veterans were not always treated as heroes upon their return to Canada.

Many returned home with nothing. Some of them were forced to give up their treaty status and were not eligible to—for land grants—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Well, it's very honouring to be able to say—put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 210 that would formally recognize November 8 as Indigenous veterans day in Manitoba.

There's a lot of—are lots—lot of Indigenous veterans have served in defence of Canada since the battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759 between Great Britain and France and what, at the time, New France, present-day Quebec City is.

It's estimated, honourable Deputy Speaker, that as many as 12,000 First Nations, Métis, Inuit people served in the wars of the 20th century, and at least 500 of them lost their lives, so everyone fought together

for what they believed in, for the freedom of the country and they were side by side defending what Canada stands for.

The first Indigenous Veterans Day actually took place on November 8, 1993, and Manitoba was the first province to recognize Indigenous Veterans Day which happened on November 8, 1994. So, having this day set aside on November 8 as Indigenous veterans day in Manitoba as an annual event is well overdue.

The Manitoba Legislature unanimously recognized Aboriginal Veterans Day by private member's resolution where George Hickes, an NDP MLA, honoured the contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who serve in the Canadian military.

Indigenous veterans have actually—or have served Canada during times of war and international conflict as well as peace time, serving with honour and distinction in all branches of the Armed Forces. And I might add too that Indigenous women also contributed overseas, often as nurses, while the women at home supported war efforts by helping raise money and aiding in the manufacturing of the key materials that were so necessary, and the supplies required by Canadian troops.

Today, nearly 3,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis Canadians serve in the Canadian forces at home and overseas.

Many things unite Manitobans, and a common service to our country in times of war and conflict is one of the bonds that ties together very strongly. And it's—well, a team effort. I mean, we see that in sports and we see it in war, and even when a lot of our—a lot of the war veterans who have visited the Legislature come in, they are—it's very humbling and honouring for us within the Legislature to be able to recognize a lot of these individuals who served their country and fought for the freedom that we now have as Canadians. Manitobans should be proud of our province's Indigenous veterans.

* (10:30)

And First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Manitoba and across Canada have a long-standing—or proud tradition in military service to our country. There is—several wars have occurred in the world, and everyone played a huge part within this, and during the First World War, from 1914 to 1918, more than 4,000 Indigenous people served in uniform during the conflict.

And, you know, we've seen a number of times when Tommy Prince's family have visited the Legislature, and it's about this recognition that brings this to the forefront for all Manitobans and for all Canadians, to be able to recognize everyone who takes part.

Many Indigenous men brought valuable skills with them when they joined the military. You know, their—their being in the outdoors, them—for a number of years and things like that have definitely brought a skill set that is second to none, and other people have learned from that skill set. Patience, stealth and marksmanship were well-honoured—or well-honed traits and helped many of these soldiers become successful snipers and reconnaissance scouts to gather information on enemy positions.

Indigenous soldiers earned at least 50 decorations for bravery during the war, and that was just World War I at that. And we can look at World War II; when the second war began in September of 1939, many Indigenous people again answered the call of duty and joined the military. By March, more than 100 of them had volunteered, and by the end of the conflict in 1945, over 3,000 First Nation members had become—or, had served their country. Many Indigenous soldiers, again, served as snipers, as I had mentioned.

On the home front, Indigenous people contributed significantly to the war effort that was occurring, donating large amounts of money, clothing and food to worthy causes, and also granting the use of portions of their reserve lands to allow for construction of new airports and rifle ranges and events installations.

In the Korean War, which broke out in 1950, several hundred would—Indigenous people would serve Canada in uniform during the conflict.

So as I'm going through this you can see a great part of the history is—by the Indigenous people has contributed a lot to the freedoms that we have within this great country. Many of them had seen the action in the second war and returned to Korea, and they would see some of these brave individuals expanding on their previous duties in new ways.

And always goes back to Sergeant Tommy Prince, who was an Ojibwe from Manitoba, and he served with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in Korea. He was second in command of a rifle platoon, and would draw upon his extensive infantry experience in the Second World War.

Prince also took part in the bitter Battle of Kapyong in April of 1951, which saw his battalion

subsequently awarded the United States Presidential Unit Citation for its distinguished service, which was a very rare honour for non-American forces.

Once the war was over, despite putting their lives on the line, Indigenous veterans were not always treated, as my colleague had—from Turtle Mountain mentioned, as heroes upon their return to Canada. Many returned home with nothing. Some were forced to give up their treaty status and weren't eligible for land grants offered to non-Indigenous soldiers, while others were denied jobs and access to full veteran benefits and support programs. This discrimination made their transition to life back home even more difficult.

So want to—before I sum up here, I just got a couple minutes and want to look at some of the ways that they are—people are serving their country today.

Indigenous men and women have continued to proudly serve in uniform. Like as many of those who had pursued a life in the military, they've been deployed wherever they have been needed, from NATO duties in Europe during the Cold War, to service in the United Nations and other multinational peace support operations.

In more recent years, many Indigenous Canadian Armed Forces members saw duty in Afghanistan during our country's 2001-'14 military efforts.

Then the Canadian Rangers—and everybody's very familiar with the Canadian Rangers; it's closer to home. I know that several people from Swan—from my constituency in Swan River and in the valley take part in the Canadian Rangers. They go on northern excursions and, you know, they are able to deploy—or use some of their significant knowledge on the land.

They are some of the first responders that take part when it comes to rescue operations and they take it very serious, and a lot of them have already—has this background and skill set that makes them great Canadian Rangers.

A group of army reservists has acted predominantly in the North and I know some of my friends have actually gone for two weeks up in northern Manitoba and taken part in and deployed in exercises that are going to—that make them great candidates and great people to take part in Canadian Rangers.

They use their intimate knowledge of the land to help maintain national military presence in the areas, and we've even worked toward, you know, free fishing licences for people and recognized Canadian

Rangers because they're a very big part—and then there's many national memorials that have occurred—

The Deputy Speaker: And the member's time has expired.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It's certainly my pleasure today to get up and talk about Bill 210. It would establish Indigenous veterans day on November 8 each year. It's been 31 years since the resolution was passed in this House making November 8 Aboriginal Veterans Day, and I think it's about time we had a bill to honour our Indigenous veterans here in Manitoba.

I just want to talk about a few people closer to my home in the Riding Mountain constituency. I know of one fellow from Oakburn, Manitoba, Private Lussier. He was a Métis from Oakburn. He answered the call in World War II, went overseas and was killed in action. Private Lussier's picture now resides in the Prairie Mountain Regional Museum in Shoal Lake, alongside other veterans from our area that died in conflict.

We also had many, many soldiers—or residents, I guess—have Keeseekoowenin First Nation up by Elphinstone join the forces in World War II. Many of them returned home, many didn't.

The other interesting thing from our constituency is the Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron, based in Strathclair. That squadron is nearly 80 years old; one of the longest serving cadet squadrons in rural Manitoba.

Now through the years, as you can might imagine, Strathclair is a community of about 400 people and it's not getting any bigger, so the cadets come from a wide area to join the cadets to ensure that there is a squadron. And over recent years, John Bunn of the Birdtail Sioux First Nation has taken it upon himself to drive cadets each week from the Birdtail First Nation to Strathclair, a distance of about 50 miles, to ensure that they could be a part of a cadet movement.

And honourable Speaker, I want to assure you that having cadets from the First Nation—Birdtail, and also from the Keeseekoowenin First Nation—has enabled the squadron to survive.

And I think Air Cadets is a very good training for young people. They learn military discipline and things like that, but a lot of life skills; a lot of skills that are transferable as they move forward, from handling guns to learning how to fly—things like that.

* (10:40)

So I think that having young First Nations people participate in the cadet squadron certainly is a great thing for Canada, and I think it continues a tradition of Indigenous peoples serving our Canadian Armed Forces in times of war, in times of peace and in times of peacekeeping.

I'm going to talk a little bit about certain people here from Manitoba, Indigenous people that served in various wars, in peacekeeping, just to put a few names on the record here.

We have Mervin Clarke, from the Hollow Water First Nation. For more than 20 years, he served in the Canadian Forces, retiring in 1993. He was part of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He was stationed all across Canada and Germany. Even after he retired, he continued to give to his community by working for the federal government at Indigenous Services Canada.

Honourable Speaker, we have James W. Eagle of the Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation. Now that's just north of Riding Mountain National Park in the constituency of Dauphin. In his 25 years spent in the Canadian Forces, he had peacekeeping tours with NATO in Cyprus and Germany. After his retirement in 1978, Mr. Eagle went on as an activist for Indigenous issues. He was involved in the national Aboriginal veterans and was an influential figure in the Aboriginal war memorial.

We have Leon Xavier Fontaine, born in the Sagkeeng First Nation. He attended the Fort Alexander residential school and then served in the Korean War at the tender age of 19. After his injury in the war, he began lobbying for the rights of his fellow First Nations veterans who were not receiving the same rights and benefits as their non-Indigenous counterparts. Serving as the first vice-president for the Manitoba original veterans association, Mr. Fontaine also served with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and other First Nations organizations in representing First Nations veterans. For 12 years, for the annual Remembrance Day services in Ottawa, Mr. Fontaine was the Manitoba First Nations representative.

We have Sergeant Donald Vernon Houle from the Sandy Bay First Nation, which is in the constituency of Agassiz. He served for 25 years in the Canadian Armed Forces. He toured the Middle East and was stationed in Canada and all around the world. He was awarded several medals of valour.

Randi Susanne Gage, an Ojibwe woman from Winnipeg, a Vietnam-era veteran who was an

advocate for the rights of all veterans but especially Indigenous women and elderly veterans, to make sure they receive the supports they deserve. She was the founder of the day of recognition and remembrance for Aboriginal veterans in Canada, charter vice-president of the national Aboriginal veterans association of Canada and charter secretary-treasurer of the Manitoba original veterans, and recipient of the 2016 Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation for exemplary contributions to the care and well-being of veterans and to the remembrance of the contributions, sacrifices and achievements of veterans.

We have William George Mann, a direct descendant of Kakekipenace, a signatory for Treaty 1, from the Sagkeeng First Nation. Serving in Korea and the Far East he was wounded twice and was missing in action at a certain point. He was awarded several medals for his service: the oak leaf for bravery, a Korean medal, the UN medal, the Volunteer medal and the Coronation medal for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. After serving his country, he co-founded and was the first president of the Manitoba Aboriginal veterans association.

Michael Pashe, born in old Sioux Village, was in the Canadian army from 1944 to 1946. Before his army service, he attended a residential school. For his service, he received the France and Germany Star Medal and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal in clasp for his service. He later went on to be the chief of Dakota Tipi First Nation, which is situated in the constituency of Portage la Prairie. Michael Pashe was seen as a powerful voice and a role model for the Dakota nations in Manitoba.

We have Rufus Prince from the Long Plain First Nation, a Second World War veteran serving in Italy. He also attended a residential school before joining the Canadian Forces and continued on from the army as a chief of Long Plain. Rufus's accomplishments continued as he helped found the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council and the first Indigenous law enforcement agency in Canada which was the Dakota Ojibway police force in 1977.

Elliott Ratt from the Peguis First Nation served in the First World War from 1916 to '18 in the Canadian army. He returned home to Selkirk after suffering injuries from mustard gas which he later died from.

Corporal Melvin Swan, a Lake Manitoba First Nation veteran: Melvin left his abusive residential school to serve in the army at the age of 18. He served four years in Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and seven years in the military police.

He is the first First Nations individual to win a human rights case against the Canadian Forces. He filed a formal complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and took the military to court for discrimination during his military service.

He went on to start Bold Eagle in 1993, a boot camp-style program for men and women in the 16 to 29 age group. This boot camp is to help revive the warrior and rediscover themselves. It involves basic military training, which he learned specifically from being trained by the Special Air Service which he was in, in London. The military training coupled with traditional teaching and elder support for young people.

Honourable Speaker, my time is dwindling here and I still have another dozen names of Indigenous veterans who served for this great country during the wars; have served in peacekeeping and continue to serve in the Canadian forces, and I think on behalf of Manitobans we're eternally grateful for all the Indigenous people that have served and continue to serve in the Canadian forces.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'd also like to thank the member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) for bringing forward this important legislation.

Certainly it's a topic that's close to my heart, coming from a military family. And we know that Remembrance Day on November 11 honours all veterans but November 8 specifically recognizes the extraordinary and often overlooked contributions, sacrifices and challenges faced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples who have served in Canada's military.

I was interested to learn that November 8 was actually first observed here in Winnipeg in 1993. Its creation arose from a critical need to acknowledge historical oversights and ensure that the distinct stories and experiences of Indigenous veterans are given the honour and recognition that they deserve.

During the World Wars, thousands of Indigenous men and women volunteered to serve. They overcame immense barriers to do so, including language, culture, racism and travelling long distances from their remote communities to enlist.

However, the stories of Indigenous veterans are also marked by profound injustice. Upon their return home, many faced discrimination and were denied the same benefits and recognition as their non-Indigenous

counterparts. The Indian Act sometimes meant that they lost their status upon enlistment, losing their rights and connections to their communities and reserves. They were frequently excluded from land grants and the financial support that other veterans received making reintegration into civilian life incredibly difficult.

The Speaker in the Chair

So Indigenous veterans day is a crucial step in rectifying these historical wrongs. It is a day to educate ourselves and others about these hidden histories, to honour their resilience and to ensure their sacrifices are never forgotten. It's a moment to reflect on the ongoing legacy of Indigenous service and to acknowledge, with gratitude, the continued contributions of Indigenous people to the Canadian Armed Forces today.

So I would like to put a few words on the record about some of the Indigenous veterans from Manitoba that have served in the military over the years.

* (10:50)

One of those is Ernest McLeod. He was born on McLeod Island in Cross Lake, and he was a veteran of both World War II and the Korean War. In fact, a cadet corps in Cross Lake is named in his honour, the No. 38 Ernest McLeod Cross Lake Army Cadet Corps. It's one of the largest cadet corps in the province.

And the cadet organization is very important to me. I was a member of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets for most of my adolescence, and my son is currently a member of Air Cadets as well. And I remember, we always recognized Remembrance Day when I was an Air Cadet. It was a very important part of our calendar as a squadron.

But we didn't recognize Indigenous Veterans Day to the same extent, and I'm happy to report that that has changed. My son's Air Cadet squadron certainly recognizes Indigenous Veterans Day today, in 2025, and that is a step in the right direction. In fact, they recently participated in a series of events at Brookside Cemetery—would be the No Stone Left Alone foundation, which is engaging—engages youth in honouring veterans.

And Brookside's important, because it's one of the largest and most important military interment sites in all of Canada. It's a national and municipal historic site, and it's also the final resting place of many Indigenous veterans, including Sergeant Tommy Prince.

And a lot of people have mentioned Sergeant Tommy Prince here in the Legislature, and that's because he is the most decorated Indigenous veteran, I believe, in Canada's history. And he's from Manitoba, from Brokenhead First Nation, which he left to serve during the Second World War and the Korean War.

During the Second World War, he gained experience in missions like snatch patrol raids, which later benefited his service with PPCLI during the Korean War. He was second in command of a rifle platoon, and courageously led his fellow soldiers into enemy camp, where they seized two machine guns.

He also took part in the Battle of Kapyong in April 1951, which saw his battalion subsequently awarded the United States' Presidential Unit Citation for its distinguished service: a rare honour for a non-American force.

Alongside that, he was awarded the Military Medal; the American Silver Star for gallantry in the Second World War; the Korean medal; and the United Nations Service Medal for his service in the Korean War; and the Canadian service medal for voluntary service.

There are so many other Indigenous veterans from Manitoba, and I think it's worth putting a few more of their names on the record. And not all of them are men; I think it's important to note that as well. Randi Susanne Gage is a Vietnam-era veteran, and she's an advocate for the rights of all veterans, but especially Indigenous women and elderly veterans, to make sure they receive the supports they deserve.

She was the founder of the day of recognition and remembrance for Aboriginal veterans in Canada, now Indigenous Veterans Day. She was charter vice-president of the National Aboriginal Veterans Association of Canada; the charter secretary-treasurer of the Manitoba Aboriginal Veteran's Association and recipient of the 2016 Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation for exemplary contributions to the care and well-being of veterans, and to the remembrance of the contributions, sacrifices and achievements of veterans. I believe she was instrumental in the establishment of November 8 as Indigenous Veterans Day.

Rufus Prince from Long Plain First Nation was a Second World War veteran serving in Italy. Before his service he attended a residential school, and he continued on from the army as the chief of Long Plain. His accomplishments continue as he helped found the

Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council and the first Indigenous law enforcement agency in Canada, which was the Dakota Ojibway police force in 1977.

Sherri Forward started her career in the Canadian Forces as a traffic technician. She was posted in Kingston for seven years and then promoted to master corporal, and she was posted here to 17 Wing Winnipeg. There she served on a mobile air movements team, and in 2001 was deployed to Golan Heights.

Two years later, she was promoted again and was posted to Petawawa. She also toured Afghanistan as a traffic platoon warrant officer, promoted again to master warrant officer and then another promotion as the A4 logistics directorate chief warrant officer. Only two years later, she became the first female formation chief warrant officer for Joint Task Force North, located in Yellowknife.

Vince Henderson has over 42 years serving in the federal public service. He served 29 years in the Armed Forces and 13 years with First Nations and Inuit Health. From Germany to Cypress to Croatia and Afghanistan, Vince Henderson served as a medical technician and a health services administrator. He was also involved in domestic missions here at home, the Manitoba flood of the century and the Quebec ice storms.

Warrant officer Julian Houle from Ebb and Flow First Nation has been serving for over 17 years, and as of this year is posted to 1st Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery at CFB Shilo, which he joined in 2007. He helped Manitobans during the flood of 2012 and the BC wildfires in 2023. He's earned many medals to showcase his dedication to the army: the General Campaign Star for his deployment in Afghanistan; for the four trips to Latvia, he received the Special Service Medal; and for his honourable service he received the Canadian Armed Forces Decoration.

Private Arthur Meeches was from Long Plain First Nation. He's a graduate of Red River College, served a year in Korea with PPCLI's airborne unit.

My time is running short. I just want to say that I think that observing Indigenous Veterans Day is a commitment from all of us to learning more and listening to the stories of Indigenous veterans to ensure that their contributions are woven into the fabric of our national memory, not just on November 8 but every day.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act. And I'd like to thank the member from Waverley for bringing this important bill forward.

Manitobans should be very proud of our province's Indigenous veterans. I know in my constituency and across my region I've had the opportunity to meet decorated Indigenous veterans that share the pride that we all do for our province of Manitoba.

A couple of these veterans are notable members of not only their community but the entire region.

Richard Hayden of Roseau River First Nation is someone that's proud to have served for our country and to protect the freedoms that we've together been able to acquire. And that's Indigenous people who were the original people of this land together with the settlers that have come and were invited to share this as their home. Together the new settlers of our lands together with the Indigenous people have taken great pride in protecting the freedom that we've worked so hard together to acquire. Richard Hayden had come back to Roseau River First Nation and was integral in building the community that's there with the pride that we have a lot to be proud of and to care for in our country.

Another notable constituent in that First Nation community is Robbie James, someone who grew up as a military child living in Germany with his family, also a member of the Roseau River First Nation and later going on to serve in the military himself. It's—

* (11:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have seven minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 16—Public Safety Strategy Progress

The Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the one brought forward by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham). The title of the resolution is Public Safety Strategy Progress.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The honourable member for Kirkfield Park—just before I recognize you, there are some guests in the gallery that have to leave right away, so I'd like to introduce them. We have seated in the public gallery from Erickson collegiate, 20 grade 10 and 11 students under the direction of Gwen Smid. The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt).

And we all welcome you here this morning.

* * *

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): I move, seconded by the MLA from Tuxedo,

WHEREAS under the previous, failed, PC Provincial Government, crime skyrocketed in Manitoba due to its negligence; and

WHEREAS the previous, failed, PC Provincial Government were unable to address the root causes of crime in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the previous, failed, PC Provincial Government left communities in Manitoba fearing for their safety due to its failure to address rising crime; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is working to lower crime rates in the province through the Safer Neighbourhoods, Safer Downtowns Public Safety Strategy; and

WHEREAS this year, the results of those efforts have shown reductions in violent crime, crime severity and youth violent crime in Winnipeg, the first meaningful decrease in over a decade; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has led the country with its five-point bail plan and brought back the electronic monitoring program cut by the previous Provincial Government; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is working to bring law enforcement back into communities by hiring 24 new police officers this year to hit the streets and keep families safe.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to support the provincial government's public safety strategy, which is reducing crime and making our communities safer.

Motion presented.

Mr. Oxenham: I rise today to address one of the most significant concerns facing our province: the safety of our communities and the well-being of our citizens.

After just 18 months in government, our administration has begun to make meaningful progress on public safety. This progress throws into sharp relief the dismal failure of the previous PC government, which for seven and a half years allowed crime to spiral out of control while actively undermining the very systems designed to keep Manitobans safe.

When we look at the cold, hard statistics from the PC government's time in office, the picture is both clear and deeply disturbing. In 2022 alone, under their watch, attempted murders increased by a staggering 44 per cent, homicides rose by 40 per cent, firearms offences jumped by 39 per cent, vehicle thefts increased by 26 per cent, robberies went up by 21 per cent, sexual assaults by 8 per cent, breaking and entering increased by 19 per cent, frauds increased by 13 per cent.

Honourable Speaker, these aren't just numbers. Each percentage point represents the real Manitobans whose lives were shattered by violence and crime. Each statistic represents families traumatized, businesses forced to close and communities living in fear.

For seven and a half years, the PC government watched as these numbers climbed higher and higher and the response was woefully inadequate. What makes this record even more shocking is that it wasn't simply the result of neglect; it was a predictable outcome of deliberate policy choices. Year after year, the PC government froze funding to every law enforcement agency in Manitoba, not just in Winnipeg but across the entire province. The Brandon Police Service, Manitoba First Nations Police Service, Altona Police Service, Ste. Anne police service, Victoria police service, Springfield Police Services and Winkler Police Service all saw their funding frozen or cut while crime rates soared.

Perhaps most telling is that under their watch, there was a net loss of 55 Winnipeg Police Service officers, even as Winnipeg's population grew substantially. How can any government claim to be tough on crime while allowing police forces to shrink as communities grow?

The PCs talk tough on crime with slogans like jail not bail, but their actions told a different story. They closed the Dauphin jail; they shut down the Agassiz Youth Centre; they eliminated 56 beds at Milner correctional centre, the second largest facility in

Manitoba. Their rhetoric didn't match their actions and Manitobans paid the price.

In northern Manitoba, they left the justice system gasping for support, overwhelmed by the lack of Justice staff. They eliminated valuable resources like video conferencing for bail hearings, forcing people to sit behind bars for days, creating massive backlogs in the northern justice system and trying to—up valuable manpower and resources.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the previous government's approach was their dismissive attitude towards evidence-based solutions and community input. When stakeholders approached them about holding a public safety summit, do you know what their minister of Justice called the idea? A get-together with coffee and doughnuts. That flippant response exemplifies their entire approach to public safety.

Mr. Diljeet Brar, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The PC government refused to support restorative justice, choosing instead to eliminate the Restorative Resolutions program, denying Manitoba offenders alternatives that could've given them the second chance at becoming productive members of society.

Instead of listening to community organizations and those struggling to support Manitobans, they ignored requests to create safe consumption sites, questioning their effectiveness despite evidence to the contrary. For years, they ignored sound advice from experts and closed their eyes to solutions that would provide Manitobans with stable housing, food stability, addictions support and mental health services. And rather than collaborating with law enforcement, they picked fights with officials like the chief of police.

Finally, honourable Speaker, as Professor Kelly Gorkoff from the University of Winnipeg aptly noted, the Conservative legacy is what is responsible for this difference in perception of crime, but Manitobans also voted out that rhetoric and will hopefully adopt an orientation to crime prevention that will help Manitobans reduce their fear of crime.

Honourable Speaker—honourable deputy Speaker, the contrast could not be clearer. After only 18 months in government, we're already seeing our investments paying off with measurable improvements in crime statistics across Winnipeg. The Winnipeg police 'serted' data confirms that we've been working toward a safer Manitoba for all.

In the seven and a half years of the previous failed PC government, the members opposite failed to address the rising crime rates in Manitoba. They left behind a legacy of neglect that harmed our communities and eroded public trust, but that era is behind us now. Through our public safety initiatives that are tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, we're making our communities safer so that families can live a good life.

We understand that true public safety requires both immediate action against criminal behaviour and long-term solutions that address the root causes. We're making progress on our public safety strategy and the recent Winnipeg Police Service crime statistics 'reflect' that progress.

This is just the beginning, honourable Speaker. We remain committed to listening to all Manitobans, working 'collaborty' with all stakeholders and building a province where everyone can thrive without fear.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Before we proceed further, we have some guests in the gallery. We have seated in the public gallery, from a home-school group, 20 students under the direction of Brigitte Tétreault, and they are guests of the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler).

We welcome you to the gallery.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open to questions.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I want to thank the member for bringing this resolution forward. It gives an opportunity to put some words on the record.

The first question I have is, under the Kinew government, Winnipeg has the highest rate of violent crime at 675 crimes per 100,000 people, more than twice the national average of 262.

Does the MLA consider the double—that double the violent crime rate a success?

* (11:10)

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker—deputy Speaker, the failed PC government refused to address the root causes of crime in our communities, instead of—placing the blame on Manitobans for their phony excuses.

Honourable Speaker, I worked under the previous PC government and I saw the cuts, I felt the freezes and it was really tough on the front line.

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): Manitobans deserve to feel safe in their communities, but under the previous failed PC government, crime rates skyrocketed. Families and businesses were left to feel unsafe.

Can my colleague please share with the House how this has changed since the people of Manitoba elected our NDP government?

Mr. Oxenham: I'd like to thank my colleague for the great question.

New Winnipeg Police Service data for 2024 shows an improvement in crime stats under our NDP government. For the first time in four years, under our NDP government, violent crime and crime severity are down by 1.4 and 5.2 per cent respectively. That's the first meaningful decline in violent crime in Winnipeg in a decade, honourable deputy Speaker.

Our public safety strategy is showing real results for Manitobans and we'll continue to work to ensure that all families and businesses feel safe in their communities.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): The number of reported assaults against police and other peace officers in Winnipeg has climbed three years in a row to a recent high. A new WPS statistical report said 421 assaults against peace officers were recorded in 2024, up from 388 in 2023.

What is the NDP doing to protect police from this violence?

Mr. Oxenham: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

Honourable Speaker, we know that there's safety in numbers and we're hiring more police officers, whereas where the previous government was concerned we saw freezing and, in fact, we had a net loss of 55 Winnipeg Police Service officers.

So we're moving the needle forward, honourable Speaker.

MLA Corbett: Part of our NDP government's public safety strategy includes strengthening Manitoba's impaired driving legislation with input from Mothers Against Drunk Driving, also known as MADD.

Can my colleague please share with the House how we have followed through on this commitment?

Mr. Oxenham: Thank you to my colleague for that very important question.

We are improving road safety and making our communities safer by introducing legislation alongside MADD to strengthen licensing consequences for impaired drivers. This legislation will increase the automatic driver's licence suspension for a second conviction when a driver is convicted of an impaired driving or refusal offence that causes bodily harm or death.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I'm glad that the member for Kirkfield Park brought up the saying there is safety in numbers, because the numbers are showing that this is an unsafe government and an unsafe justice system under this government.

Drug-impaired driving and impaired driving has increased over this past year. As a matter of fact, drug-impaired driving went up 785.7 per cent under this government.

Can the member for Kirkfield Park answer why he thinks his government is doing a good job when it comes to impaired driving?

Mr. Oxenham: Honourable Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question and, actually, thank our Justice Minister for the hard work and the emotional labour of working with families who were touched by impaired driving and working with MADD Canada to develop a strategy to address the serious crime of drinking and driving.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

MLA Corbett: In August of 2024, our government reinstated the electronic monitoring program in Winnipeg after it was cut by Heather Stefanson.

Our team committed to expanding the electronic monitoring program outside of Winnipeg and enhancing protection order enforcement in rural areas as part as our—as part of our public safety strategy.

Can my colleague please share with the House how we have followed through on this commitment?

Mr. Oxenham: Again, I thank my colleague for the question.

We know that crime is impacting families across Manitoba. And with the success of our electronic monitoring program in Winnipeg, our government expanded the electronic monitoring program to rural communities, along with widening the eligibility criteria to support survivors of intimate partner violence in November of 2024.

Mr. Perchotte: As the member from Kirkfield Park mentioned in his opening statement, he said that the funding to Ste. Anne was decreased under the PC government. But yet, on July 17, 2023, SteinbachOnline reports a \$178,000 increase to Ste. Anne law enforcement and a further increase across municipal policing of thirteen point seven.

Why did the member conveniently leave this out?

Mr. Oxenham: Thank you to the member for that question.

You know, Budget 2024 has a historic 28 per cent increase to law enforcement. Building on that, in Budget 2025, by providing 2 per cent stable, predictable escalator funding, which equals \$1.1 million in funding for municipalities through the Urban Policing Grant and Public Safety basket to increase community safety across Manitoba.

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker—honourable deputy Speaker, oh—[*interjection*]

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): My apologies.

The honourable member for Transcona (MLA Corbett).

MLA Corbett: Part of our government's public safety strategy includes hiring 100 new mental health workers as a wraparound support to work alongside first responders to strengthen mental health supports for both adults and youth, starting with 25 workers by the end of March.

Can my colleague please share with the House the progress we have made on this commitment?

Mr. Oxenham: Thank you, again, to my colleague for the question.

Budget 2025 invests \$3.8 million for 35 new mental health workers, including three to work alongside first responders, ensuring that Manitobans in crisis get the support they need while helping law enforcement handle the medical health-related calls.

MLA Bereza: I find it quite—I find it quite different that there's a resolution coming forward, Public Safety Strategy Progress, when this current government

twice voted against the resolution for Justice for Jordyn.

How did they expect this resolution to be passed when they can't even stand for Justice for Jordyn?

Thank you.

Mr. Oxenham: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

It's a very emotional topic, understandably, and like I said before, our Justice Minister has done a fantastic job meeting with the families, talking with MADD Canada and working with communities to come up with solutions together.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): The floor is now open for debate.

* (11:20)

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I'm very proud to stand and rise today and speak on this resolution.

The member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham) has brought a resolution calling on the public safety strategy progress. And I see this as not much more than an ability to try to pat themselves on the back for work that has not been completed.

I take a look at the resolution on face value and I think that we certainly need to do more in our communities to protect all of our citizens. Regardless of their station in life, where they are, everybody has a right to be in our society and live free of being attacked and have any—have their property stolen or their ID stolen or many different things.

And I remember as a young child growing up, we lived in several areas within the city. And when we were in St. James, we moved from St. James over to Tyndall Park when I was around four years old, just before my fifth birthday, and we never had our doors locked. Neighbours looked out for each other; it was a wonderful community. And it still is a wonderful community and the people there are amazing. But unfortunately, crime has increased.

And throughout decades that I've been alive, crime continues to increase and we haven't grabbed a handle on how to rein in crime. And, as a matter of fact, it's actually getting worse. We're taking criminals

and we're saying, you know what, our judicial system is so backed up we don't have room to deal with you, so we're going to send you back on the street and please behave. We want you to behave out there on bail, and then you'll come and face the courts and face your crimes.

But the reality, it's not working. The people are realizing that the justice system is failing most of Manitobans. And people go out and they continue to commit crimes, and they commit crimes throughout the city and the crimes, they escalate in small, petty property crimes and shoplifting, which is detrimental to businesses and people and their livelihoods, but they get to—further up to assaults and home invasions.

And as a child, we moved from Tyndall Park; we moved over to North Kildonan. And I remember we were having a weekend, were getting some of our old friends to come over and we were—and it was the kids at home and we're all in the basement—we had a beautiful rec room down there—and we're playing games and listening to stereos.

And we could hear somebody upstairs, and we thought it was our parents coming home. And when we got upstairs, there was nobody there and we looked around and the stereo was gone, the TV was on the floor. And we called the police and they came by and they never found the person. But we did discover that, recently, two people in the area had had firewood delivered for the winter season and, ironically, both those places were burglarized.

So my point is that crime is escalating, and there needs to be a deterrent to crime. And the deterrent to anything is a consequence to that. And when you take a look at what's happening here around Winnipeg, the consequences of crime are not—of the actions of crime are not going against the people who perpetrate those crimes, but the consequences of the crime are being directly resulted in the businesses, the families, the people that crimes happen suffer from those crimes. And it happens continually.

Under this NDP government, we have seen 7-Elevens closing their doors throughout the city. Now, 7-Eleven is a convenience store, and once we remove the convenience from the neighbourhood, people need to go outside that neighbourhood, and it becomes very inconvenient for people to do that.

But the stores are closing not because the people don't want to shop there. It's because the store owners—the people running the stores—no longer want to face violence, to have the windows smashed or their

products stolen, to be assaulted or to be threatened on a daily basis.

So we need to find a way to reduce crime, and reducing crime has to come from the Justice Department.

Now the Justice Department says, listen, crimes—the law is a federal matter. But we have a right here and we have an obligation to represent the people in our communities and say, well, then, the federal government isn't doing enough and we need to tell them. We need to lobby them as legislatures and say that is not correct. We need to protect the citizens who voted us to be here. We need to move forward.

And to put information on the record or to miss information—to say things like, you know, the Sainte-Anne Police Service was cut under the PCs, when in fact it received an increase of \$178,000 and the same year, the municipal policing received \$13.7-million increase. To omit those is try to put a false narrative out there of how something looks.

If we want to debate the facts, let's do it, let's debate them. Crime is in trouble. We have a problem in our communities and it's not just from one area of the community, it's all areas. I spent a fair amount of time up in northern Manitoba, up in Snow Lake in particular, in my previous role as a business owner putting up buildings. And Snow Lake was a step back in time in a community. I would arrive there, everybody in the community was more welcoming to see you, you immediately met friends and the doors were left open if we were out working late. And, ironically enough, we would actually stay in the customers' homes. They would say, listen, the mining community is really busy right now, there's probably not going to be rooms. I've got a couple of rooms here, we'll put you up.

And that's when public polices their own safety. And that's what we need to do here. We need to make sure that as citizens we step forward, but we also call on the government to make sure that things are correct. And in Snow Lake, it was a community that I had when I was a little boy. Doors were unlocked, people were watching out for each other, people would come by and ask you how your day was, what's going on, where are you from, do you know anybody else in the community and they invite you over for supper, ironically, by the end of the day.

When you take a look at what we have an opportunity to do here, to actually make an impact on safety, we have to put partisanship aside, we have to take a

look at what we were elected to do here as members that were sent here to represent the communities throughout this beautiful province. And the most important thing that we can do is make sure that we have justice, and not blame people and point fingers. But we really need to come together to make sure that justice happens for everybody.

Just last week I spoke in this House, and I spoke something from my heart, and I spoke about how my uncle was killed by a drunk driver, and how it affected my family—my parents, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins—for generations. For decades we've lived without my uncle.

And as I mentioned, I tried to find out in court records and stuff what happened and if anybody was held accountable and I couldn't find that information. But I know that also in the same day, we were talking about justice for Jordyn and we had a tremendous opportunity here to come together and say, yes, you know what? I don't claim to know everything. I'm pretty sure I did a good job, but, you know what, setting something out for a second opinion doesn't hurt. Let's get it out there, let's get a second opinion on here and we'll just find out what they have to say. It doesn't take a genius to figure it out.

I do a lot of designing. I design products, I design buildings, I design renovations, I design all kinds of things. But before I represent that, I will sit down to the person that I'm designing it for or somebody else and say, hey, take a look at this, what do you think? Give me a second opinion. That's not happening here.

We had an opportunity, and to see the family after, how devastated they were to find out once again, they're fighting for justice in a system that is not giving justice. Somebody was culpable in being an accessory to the death of Jordyn Reimer and the police department wanted to pursue charges, but somehow charges were never followed up on.

And then when they were asked to be done, I just have an independent review. Again they were told, no thanks, we know best. Well, that's where we're failing. We're failing Manitobans because they didn't send us here for what we know, they sent us here to represent them. And when Manitobans come here in droves and say, we need action, this is our opportunity to do it. And I just want to say, here's an opportunity to put some things on the record.

* (11:30)

Thank you.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record. I wanted to begin by thanking the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham) for bringing this resolution forward. I think it's an important opportunity for us to talk about the work that's being done.

I think it's also an opportunity for us to talk about the work that continues to be done and needs to be done in the future. We certainly know that there's a lot of work ahead. But I think the member for Kirkfield Park has done a great job of representing his constituents, you know, who, like, I think all of our constituents, they want to see action. They want to see progress, and they want to see something being done. Not just words, not just, you know, not just rhetoric, but actual concrete action that they know is making a difference in their communities.

And so, as I said, while I, you know, fully appreciate the fact that we are not by any means saying that everything has been accomplished. There's a lot more to do, of course, honourable Speaker, but I think it's an important opportunity for us to talk about what we have done and to talk to our constituents and address their concerns.

I also wanted to just quickly acknowledge the words of the member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte). You know, again, he talked about the work not being completed and in that way I think we're in agreement. In fact, a lot of what he said, you know, it made sense. People are concerned, they're frustrated. There's fear in community, and people want to hear about the work that's being done in the provincial government.

Of course, you know, there's always going to be disagreement about exact specifics around the initiatives that we're taking. That's why it was so important for us to lay everything out in our public safety strategy. And, you know, maybe not a normal course of action for a department to be transparent in that way, but we felt it was important to let Manitobans know that there are standards that we're going to hold ourselves accountable to; we're going to take action and we're going to meet these milestones.

We're going to make sure that people know that we're taking action because as the member for Selkirk said, he said, you know, it's been a decade of crime getting worse, of things getting worse and worse and worse, and we know that under the previous PC government, there was a lot of talk. There was a lot of, you know, rhetoric. There was a lot of slogans or, you

know, big pronouncements, and yet the actual work of getting action was just not taken.

And I think that's where it's important to start, just as a sort of a laying the groundwork and the basis; the member opposite knows that there were seven and a half years of freezes to law enforcement, and that's across the province; it's in the city of Winnipeg; it's every major city in our province; that's every town; that's the North; that's every single place across our province. They saw a flatlining of the funding that was made available to them.

Now he wants to talk about this imaginary influx of funding that was coming. Just trust us; we didn't do anything for seven and a half years, he says, but in this budget, we promise we're going to do that. Well, of course, what did we do when we took government? We went to Treasury Board, we said, well, this is great. I know you've accounted for all of this, let's get to work. And they said, no. None of it was accounted for. None of it was actually budgeted for.

This was back of a napkin. That's maybe being generous. I think it was out of one side of the mouth, honourable Speaker; while Manitobans were asking for real action, they saw nothing from the previous government.

So, flatlining for seven and a half years; this was our starting point. What we were able to do is immediately offer a 28 per cent increase to law enforcement. That's huge. I mean, that is a game changer.

Of course, you know, law enforcement said that's only starting to make up for the damage that's been done under the previous government. What else can you offer? How can we work together going forward? And that's why it was important for us to bake in a 2 per cent escalator. That's now been implemented in Budget '25, and that will be going forward.

And so that's kind of the basis for the work that we wanted to do with law enforcement, but we didn't stop there. Of course we went to law enforcement. We said: What are the major issues that you need to address right here and right now, and how can we support that? And that's why, for instance, with the City of Winnipeg, we saw that they said, well, we need more officers. We saw 55 officers lost under the previous government.

Now, what can we do, how can we start to repair that damage? We offered them 12 new officers who came on in the fall, 12 new officers going forward here in the city of Winnipeg. That's in addition to the overtime project that we initiated here, that's the retail

crime initiative, that was specific dollars flowing to do that kind of community policing that communities have been asking us for.

And then on top of that, of course we're working with the DCSP; we're working with Bear Clan; we're working with so many community partners who are offering those supports to law enforcement to make sure that that's there.

Of course, that's in the city of Winnipeg, but we didn't stop there. We went to the city of Brandon, offered additional funding there. We went to the city of Thompson, we offered additional funding there.

All of this to sort of, you know, stop the crisis that had been left to us by the former government. And we knew that that was only the first step, and that's why the public safety strategy started to build out a more comprehensive and long-term strategy for, you know, for our path forward.

Now, what—how did—maybe I'll just back up and just let the people of Manitoba know exactly how we came to the public safety strategy, because, of course, under the previous government, they didn't do any consultations, they—I don't know what they did. They certainly didn't talk to the public. Their doors were always closed, always locked.

And we've taken a different approach. We've opened up our doors, but more importantly, we actually went outside of the building. You know, we went outside of the Perimeter. We travelled across the whole province, and we made sure that we had that community involvement, that we had, you know, an engagement with the public in a way that hadn't been done in years to gather information about what the specific issues were. Of course, we know there's broader issues at—that are sort of all over the province, but we knew that we would be able to hear specifics about what the challenges are in Swan River, what the challenges are in the North, what the challenges are in Brandon or Portage or other places across the province.

And we heard from those communities, and what we heard was we have specific initiatives that, when partnered with the provincial government, can make a real difference. For example, one of the initiatives that we funded immediately was the General Investigation Section, or GIS, additional capacity for law enforcement in the Swan Valley. Now, this was—again, it's not—I'm taking no credit for this, honourable Speaker, because this came from the RMs surrounding Swan River, the town of Swan River, and then, you know,

bringing in the provincial government to say, if you support this, we can build this extra capacity.

That's what we did in last year's budget, but now, we've expanded that. We're doing a crime suppression unit in the city of Thompson. That was another example of where we can find partnerships. We found partnerships with First Nations, honourable Speaker. Now, we're building out the First Nation Safety Officer Program; that has been a real success. We're coupling that with the funding and the support for the CSOs, the community safety officers. I know the Minister of Health is doing great work with the institutional safety officers, but now we're building that out to include First Nations police as well, and we're—you know, a major investment here in this year's budget.

This is about partnerships, and that's the kind of work that we feel can have the biggest impact. The member opposite talked about, you know, community involvement. I think that is key to this, the—you know, making sure that people feel they're part of the solution. That's why our security rebate was a big success. In fact, it was a—too big of a success, it—you know, money went out the door so quickly, we had to triple the amount of money that we had for that program. But, more importantly, we've now committed to extending that this—again, this year, and we're now working with retailers.

The member opposite talks about the impact to retail. Well, of course, the members opposite did nothing—seven and a half years, never—they closed their doors; they wouldn't listen to anyone. We sat down with Restaurants Canada; we sat down with the business council; we down with folks in the industry. In fact, we have an advisory committee that is helping us to find solutions and what they said is a direct funding for security rebate: \$10 million. This is a massive increase to make sure that they have the supports.

All of this to say, honourable Speaker, there's lots being—of work being done in our department, but I just have to make sure that we also mention the incredible work that's being done in the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, the amazing work that's being done in the Department of Education, the amazing work that's being done in Families and Health; the list goes on and on.

Because this is a whole of government approach when it comes to public safety. Every investment that we make, for instance, with Nello's Law, to make sure that we're feeding kids in school, that's going to

benefit all of us in the long run, so we know that this isn't just about, you know, the here and now. Although, even in the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, 100 mental health workers that will be coming online to make sure that we're supporting law enforcement. These are just a few of the examples of the work that we are doing, and there's more—so much more. Organized crime; we're doing so much work. I mean, honestly, honourable Speaker, I could take the rest of the morning.

What I think, though, I'd like to end on, is just to, again, thank the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham), thank every single member on the government side who has stood lock-step in—with the Department of Justice in dealing with these issues that they're hearing from their constituents. Not walking away. Not making pronouncements and then walking away and never doing anything about it. Not talking about bail and then, you know, doing absolutely nothing. Cutting the electronic monitoring program. I mean, you know, this was the example that the previous government had left us.

* (11:40)

We're taking a different approach and when it—it includes all the communities around here and includes every single member on this team. I know that there's lots of work to be done ahead, but I also know that we're starting to see progress, we're starting to make a difference and if we continue on this path, we're going to continue to make our communities safer.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): As you know, that's an inspiring talk that we just listened to, filled with I don't know what. We talk about promises and we talk about making announcements and walking away, according to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe). That just happened in Swan River. He made an announcement to start a GIS program, but to date that program has not been initiated. No boots on the ground, no GIS unit in sight: an open announcement that he talked about, walked away and there's no action being taken.

So that's just one example of how this Justice Minister is being extremely hypocritical when he talks about what has been completed by this government in the years prior. He talks about leaving the doors open now. Well, the only doors he's leaving open are those of his constituency and those of Manitobans, because B and Es are up 30 per cent here in Winnipeg over the last year, under this government.

And I'm going to talk a lot today about statistics, because the member for Kirkfield Park brought up statistics and the failed Justice Minister talks about statistics. So I'm going to focus on WPS statistics that have recently been released. And I know that's not something that the minister wants me to bring up; he's probably there right now, he's actually nodding, saying please don't go—you're—he knows that he's used the statistics as a little bit of a slippery slope, because sometimes statistics, you have to be careful how you employ them and they took three little snippets out of a report that talk about areas that show slight improvement.

However, what they don't talk about is that the total crime is up 8 per cent over the last year, under this government, in Winnipeg alone. That's 2,986 more reported crimes under this government touting a tough on crime and a tough on the root causes of crime, when nothing is being done that's tangible. We're seeing huge increases in the number of reported crimes as well as crimes against people.

So let's talk a little bit about assaults. Assaults against police officers have rose 8.5 per cent in the last year under this government, a government who doesn't respect policing and who have members on the record who have—want to defund police. And then they talk about wanting to respect police. Well, that again, honourable deputy Speaker, is extremely hypocritical of a government who likes to defund police.

Just two weeks ago, in the Brandon Correctional Centre an officer was violently attacked and stabbed while working, protecting us as society for an inmate who was locked up. And combine this with the increase on assaults to police officers and I don't know what this government is doing to protect those who protect us.

The Speaker in the Chair

Sexual assaults with a weapon or causing bodily harm: up 75 per cent under this government, another huge increase. We're talking about vulnerable human beings who need to be protected, yet a 75 per cent increase to these vulnerable individuals under this government's watch.

I'm concerned when the member for Kirkfield Park stated in his opening address that this is just the beginning. Because we're seeing, after 18 months, what's happening under this government, and if this is just the beginning, where is this headed? Where is this headed? Are we looking at more increases in violent

crime, such as attempted murder that's up 27 per cent over this last year?

And I know the Justice Minister saw these statistics but he refuses to acknowledge them; he refuses to address them. He's more concerned about his image and about announcements and photo ops than he is about solving crime and helping law enforcement and the justice system.

Shoplifting: up 41 per cent. He talks about an initiative to help with shoplifting and spending \$1.9 million here on an effort in overtime to arrest shoplifters. What he did under that plan, Honourable Speaker, is he drove the criminals out into the rural areas and made sure that the crime was displaced into other areas outside of downtown Winnipeg into some of the other areas that the majority of the NDP bench represent. And they're seeing an increase in all of their areas, and I know at their caucus table they're saying: What are you doing here? What's happening here? Why are you sending all these criminals to our area?

But further, it's out into the rural areas where there's been an increase, and I believe I read somewhere upwards of 400 per cent in rural areas. And you look at a place like MacGregor that recently experienced what they did with armed criminals coming into farmyards, into areas where people have homes, where they were being pointed—guns—firearms being pointed at.

And I can mention, actually, because I spoke with the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) last year when he phoned me and said: What can I do about this issue I'm facing? Where he had a person pull a gun on him after doing property crimes in his area. And you know what happened is the RCMP took quite a while to show up because there's no staffing, Honourable Speaker; there's no staffing.

And under this NDP government, they've allowed the staffing to go down so low that they can't respond to crimes. And what's this Justice Minister's answer? Let's fund a tactical response team or an ERT team for the RCMP. Let's spend \$3.8 million on that. Let's spend another one-point-whatever million on the comm centre, the communication centre.

You know what? Both of these are needed. Having worked in law enforcement, I understand that both of these areas are needed, but the call centre now will be staffed up enough to take all the calls that come in instead of putting them on hold and say, you know what? We'll try and send somebody out to you, but you know what? This Justice Minister hasn't provided

us any additional staffing on the front lines so we won't be able to attend for that. You know what? If we have to, if there's an emergency situation, we'll muster our ERT team, and we'll be there in eight to 10 hours because we have no boots on the ground to attend to your real crimes in progress.

So, again, window dressing, Honourable Speaker, is what's being offered by this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe); announcements and then run away because there's nothing that's concrete that's going to help the rural individuals that are suffering incredible under this neglectful Minister of Justice.

Total youth crime in Winnipeg Police Service's annual report: up 4.9 per cent. Youth property crime: up 5.7 per cent; shoplifting: up 50 per cent; break and enters: up 30 per cent.

Now, let's talk about one area that's near and dear to us on this side of the House and that's impaired driving. Impaired driving by alcohol: up 24.1 per cent under this Minister of Justice and 785.7 per cent impaired by drugs under this NDP government, this Minister of Justice; 785.7 per cent. Let that sink in, Manitobans, of the efforts and the work that's being done by this NDP government.

* (11:50)

So we bring forward a resolution, Justice for Jordyn, to make sure that the life of Jordyn Reimer and the family of Jordyn Reimer is respected, so that we can see justice for Jordyn—true justice for Jordyn. As the NDP talks about being tough on impaired driving, this is one way that we could be tough on impaired driving and look at the accomplice who was involved in this. All it would take is one signature, Honourable Speaker. One signature; I'll supply the pen; I'll supply the paper; one signature for this Justice Minister to do the right thing and to have the courage to write that letter and ask for a second opinion.

So thank you for the opportunity, Honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): It is always such a great privilege and honour to rise up in this Chamber on behalf of my constituents of Kildonan-River East. And unlike some folks, particularly the members opposite, I never forget that it is a right and privilege to stand in this House, and I'm standing up on behalf of my constituents that elected me here to this Chamber.

There lately has been just a total lack of decorum here, and last year, right after the election, on both

sides of the floor, we called ourselves class of 2023. There was a record number of new elected officials, and we vowed that we would try to do better than the previous, you know—what was acceptable and, like, the standard—low standard of no parliamentary behaviour here.

And lately there have been people that have just gone too far in another direction. Last week there was folks mentioning people's families, and that is just absolutely never acceptable, and I encourage all—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the member to 'prease' make her comments related to the resolution before us today, and to also not speak about matters that have been taken under advisement.

Mrs. Schott: Yes, thank you, Honourable Speaker, for your guidance.

One thing that wasn't mentioned last week in the remarks is that someone from over there in Brandon West owes members in this Chamber an apology. So I absolutely will keep my remarks relevant, but I needed that on the record because of how low the standard was last week.

You know, in each of our communities, we have an obligation to work with our neighbours and listen to them, and not shy away from tough questions and comments when they let us know what's going on in our respective communities. And, you know, after only 18 months in government, we're starting to see our investments paying off with an improvement in crime statistics in Winnipeg.

And those numbers don't lie. That is because we are listening to our neighbours. We're listening to the experts in the different fields, and we're working collaboratively with all levels of government and not playing politics and fighting with the federal government or the City; we're just all rolling up our sleeves and doing that great work together.

In seven and a half years of the previous failed PC government, the members opposite failed to address the rising crime rates in Manitoba. We all heard that at the doorstep during the last election, and we've made daily commitments to doing better for our communities.

Through our public safety initiatives that are tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, we're making our commitment safer so that families can live a good life. We're making progress on our

public safety strategy and the recent Winnipeg Police Service crime statistics reflect that.

So, you know, on top of our commitment to reducing crime in Manitoba, we're also working hard, like some of my colleagues mentioned, to tackle the causes of crime at the root. For years I worked in drop-in centres for youth and children, and I know that these types of programming make a real difference in our communities. Neighbours at the doorstep and community functions have mentioned that to me and really appreciate our investments to preventative measures.

You know, we don't shy away, like I mentioned, from these tough conversations, and we work—we're willing to work with anyone and everyone to make progress on this file. One thing that might—some of my colleagues have mentioned, but I just want to reinforce, the importance of—to keep kids learning and in school.

We created the universal school nutrition program so that no child goes hungry at school. And this isn't just a matter of, you know, feeding children in school. This is a matter of ensuring the attendance rates are better and that we eliminate barriers for children all across Manitoba.

You know, when I worked as an educational assistant in a high school here in Winnipeg, there were some students that, I just felt like every day were just lost in the shuffle. People would walk by and not—weren't sure quite how to engage, to get the students to come in and be part of our school community. But then if you go and try and meet them where they're at, just like, you know, any conversation with any neighbours in our province, it turns out that they didn't have breakfast or they—sometimes they hadn't had a meal in quite some time if it had been the start of the school week.

And so this school nutrition program is an absolute game changer and it is going to help us with the public safety file all across Manitoba because we've already seen better rates of attendance with students. We're hearing that directly from educators all across Manitoba. And we want to support these young folks so that they are attending school and are succeeding and not getting lost in our communities.

So we created a Your Way Home strategy which also gets folks living in encampments into housing

with wrap-around supports. So we definitely see that these preventative government measures and, you know, meeting folks where they're at is really making a difference and it is part of getting to the root causes of crime.

Our government is a listening government. We've heard from the people of Manitoba loud and clear that after enduring seven and a half years of rising crime under the failed members opposite that they wanted a change. And that's why those folks are sitting on that side of the Chamber now.

In the past 18 months, our team has been working hard at creating better communities for all Manitobans, like how we restricted the sale of long-bladed weapons in Manitoba through bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act. And some retailers have actually banned that in—like, the sale of that in all of their stores, not just the recommendations that were made.

Our motto is to be tough on crime but also tough on the root causes of crime, like I mentioned, so we can permanently lower the crime rate here in Manitoba. After 18 months, we're starting to see the real progress and right now our Premier (Mr. Kinew) is leading other premiers and from all territories and provinces to urge the federal government to take further action on bail.

You know, we're not just throwing up our hands and saying this isn't in our jurisdiction, we have no capacity here or picking fights with other levels of government, which we saw previously from the members opposite. We are, like I said, rolling up our sleeves, working with all levels of government and, you know, being a leader in other jurisdictions.

We're going to keep on working towards this goal, because on this side of the House we are listening. The failed PC government refused to address the root causes of crime in their communities.

Instead of putting the blame on Manitobans and calling them phony excuses, the PCs left the northern justice system gasping for support, overwhelmed by the lack of employed Justice-based staff. And they eliminated valuable resources like video conferencing for bail hearings.

I'm just so grateful for the opportunity to stand in this House, Honourable Speaker, and, like mentioned,

I never take for granted that all of us are here because of our respective community members that elected us to this Chamber, and everyone should be doing better.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record.

When I look at this resolution, Public Safety Strategy Progress, I think there's something missing, here. And I could be wrong, but should this not be public safety non-progress, is what I'm thinking, but let's look at some of the facts here.

September 2024, public safety poll, 66 per cent believe crime is worse in Winnipeg compared to 29 per cent who says it stayed the same; 3 per cent say it has gotten better.

The number of reported assaults against police and other peace officers in Winnipeg has climbed three years in a row to a recent high.

Winnipeg violent Crime Severity Index, a measurement that considers the volume and seriousness of crimes and average court sentences, was 203.7. This is among the highest in Canada and higher than the national index of 99.5 in 2023, the latest Statistics Canada data shows.

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have eight minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 o'clock, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 today.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

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