

# **SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS, SAFER DOWNTOWNS.**

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## **Public Safety Strategy**

NOVEMBER 2024





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# Letter from the Minister of Justice Matt Wiebe

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As Justice Minister, what I want for my family is what I want for everyone in Manitoba: the freedom for our kids, parents and families to feel safe when we go to a Jets game or take an evening walk around our neighbourhood. But after seven years of cuts to funding for law enforcement and the community organizations that tackle the root causes of crime, Manitobans feel less safe today.

But I have hope, because as I travel around Manitoba from small towns to northern communities and around Winnipeg, I find common values. Manitobans know that to see real change we must address crime and the causes of crime. That's what this strategy is all about. Right now, we have the chance to turn things around for the better. This strategy is just the beginning, to provide a new path forward for everyone in Manitoba to feel safe.

The Public Safety Strategy is a roadmap to guide our government's response to crime:

- It is tough on crime, tackling violent crime and retail theft, and improving northern and rural safety.
- It is tough on the roots and causes of crime, recognizing we need to invest in communities through community-led justice, reconciliation and ending violence against women and girls.
- It will create pathways to success rather than pipelines to prison by empowering and supporting youth, and helping people find a good path.

We spent the first half of 2024 travelling all over Manitoba listening to our communities to understand the causes and impact of crime. We visited Flin Flon, Lac du Bonnet, Miniota, Stonewall, Swan River, Virden and Winkler to do public consultations, and we held a Public Safety Summit in Winnipeg in April with over 210 registered community members and organizations including police. We reached out to Manitoba First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and leaders to hear about the challenges their communities are facing. And we met with retail, business and labour representatives to understand how workers are impacted by crime on a daily basis. We know that Manitobans share the same values: we're tired of Band-Aid fixes and ready for real solutions. And we recognize the value of the hard work it will take to get there.

The Public Safety Strategy is a foundation: it is flexible and responsive so we can learn from our successes and meet unexpected challenges head-on. This is a complex project, but we are working together as a government, with community safety organizations, and alongside our front-line responders who spend every day seeing firsthand the safety challenges we face.

The justice system shouldn't be the end of the road for Manitobans going through difficult times. It should be the beginning of accountability and real change. And so we're committed to ensuring our justice system provides the support for those Manitobans who are ready to turn their lives around, find meaningful work and give back to their communities. We're going to stop cycles of crime by investing in restorative justice, by supporting victims and survivors and by making sure no child goes to school hungry.

This Public Safety Strategy doesn't exist on its own. It's informed by data and research on the roots and causes of crime, from law enforcement as well as community. This strategy is also informed by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG2S+) reports. And this strategy includes those who have been involved in the criminal justice system – victims, their families, professionals working in the field and Manitobans who have made good on a second chance.

Manitobans chose a government that's not afraid of the big challenges ahead. We know this is a long-term project, but we can start making real change now to keep our communities safe for everyone.



Original signed by

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**HONOURABLE MATT WIEBE,**  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General  
November 14, 2024

## A Note on Language

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Recognizing the colonial legacy within Canada and its impacts on Indigenous Peoples, it is important that the words and language used throughout this strategy are clear and consistent to foster reconciliation. “Indigenous” is an umbrella term that refers to First Nations (status and non-status), the Red River Métis and Inuit communities and groups, either collectively or separately. It is also a term used in international contexts. Although it is the preferred term for many, it can be ambiguous and does not fully represent the distinct, unique identities, contributions and regional realities of all three groups.

To reflect and remain consistent with terminology used in existing commitments and other agreements, and to respect the diversity of preferences among Indigenous Peoples, the umbrella term “Indigenous Peoples” or “Indigenous governments/communities” is still used periodically throughout the document. Effort has been made to use a distinctions-based approach and reference, wherever possible, specific First Nations, Métis, or Inuit organizations, governments and communities. This approach will be a critical path forward to further interpret and implement the initiatives under the strategy.

## Honouring Community Distinctions

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Manitoba Justice is dedicated to working with Indigenous governments on a government-to-government, nation-to-nation basis. We are committed to building partnerships and pathways forward with The Manitoba Métis Federation, The Southern Chiefs Organization (SCO), Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO), Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), and all 63 First Nation communities in Manitoba.

Manitoba Justice respects and recognizes the vital role that Indigenous organizations have in advocating and representing the interests of Indigenous People and will continue to work with them to advance reconciliation.

We are committed to working inclusively with all First Nation, Métis, and Inuit governments, organizations, and communities. Through this commitment, we affirm to take a distinctions-based approach, ensuring our collective work represents the unique perspectives, needs, and values of each government, nation, and community.

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# 1

## **RESPOND: Tough on Crime**

Manitobans in every part of the province deserve to feel safe in their communities. This means responding to the threats of violent crime, property damage and theft happening in our businesses, parks and backyards. Our government is keeping its promise to be tough on crime: to take back our streets from drug traffickers and organized criminals; to create safe, welcoming downtowns and public spaces; and to support our police and peace officers with the resources they need to keep our neighbourhoods safe.



## **OBJECTIVE 1.1 TACKLING VIOLENT CRIME**

### **ACHIEVEMENTS:**

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- We're making it harder to purchase machetes and other long-bladed weapons by passing The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act.
- We're keeping Manitoba streets safer targeting repeat and chronic offenders through The Bail Reform Plan by increasing supervision and investing more resources to track down offenders who violate their bail conditions.
- We're cracking down on drug traffickers and organized crime through The Unexplained Wealth Act.
- We're making it easier for police to seize vehicles with hidden compartments used exclusively to conceal and transport money, drugs, and firearms.
- We're making sure police have the resources and personnel they need to patrol our streets and keep our neighbourhoods safe.

### **OUR PLAN:**

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- Invest in safer communities through 2 per cent escalator funding for municipal law enforcement
- Modernize the Compensation for Victims of Crime Program by amending the Victims' Bill of Rights to protect victims of human trafficking and exploitation
- Keep vulnerable populations safe and make it easier to evict drug dealers by strengthening The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act and The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA)
- Commit to specialized capacity in police forces to target organized and violent crime
- Fulfill the bail reform recommendations from the National Police Federation within Manitoba's jurisdiction
- Strengthen Manitoba's impaired driving legislation with input from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
- Hold opioid companies accountable for the proliferation of drugs contributing to the addictions crisis
- Develop a new knife/machete youth crime strategy modeled on Glasgow, UK's successful public health approach ("No Knives Better Lives")
- Standardize training for police and peace officers (including cultural competencies training)
- Advocate to the federal government for Criminal Code reform on prohibited weapons

Violent crime – including homicide, aggravated assault, sexual assault and robbery – is on the rise in Manitoba and poses an immediate threat to public safety, especially to women, girls, seniors and youth. Violent crime is often tied to gang and organized crime and results in trafficked people, drugs and weapons. This strategy's "tough on crime" approach will make Manitobans safer by getting violent criminals off our streets. It targets repeat, high-risk offenders, strengthens bail reform, cracks down on organized crime and drug traffickers, and increases police training and accountability.

Many acts of violence are committed by repeat and prolific offenders who are well-known to police. Manitoba Justice will implement all the bail reform recommendations from the National Police Federation within our jurisdiction, with several underway or already complete. The Bail Reform Plan, released in February 2024, increases public safety by being tougher on repeat violent offenders, promoting confidence in the administration of justice and ensuring consistency and fairness in bail across the province.

## **OUR FIVE-POINT PLAN TO STRENGTHEN BAIL REFORM IS UNDERWAY**

- 1. We're bolstering Crown bail policies to consider the impact of bail on victims and the community**
- 2. We're tracking down offenders who violate their bail conditions by investing \$3 million for 12 new Winnipeg Police Service officers**
- 3. We're increasing police reporting capacity by investing \$514,000 for enhanced data and intelligence**
- 4. We're increasing supervision on chronic offenders by providing \$500,000 to support the Community Monitoring and Supervision Program**
- 5. We held a public safety summit in April 2024**

*" We applaud the Manitoba Government for their continued commitment to enacting smart and progressive approaches to Canada's bail system."*

– National Police Federation, August 15, 2024

Our government will protect victims of crime, including victims of trafficking and exploitation, by updating legislation like the Victims Bill of Rights.

It's time to take back our streets from the drug traffickers and organized criminals wreaking havoc on communities. We will stop the people bringing illegal and toxic drugs into our province that are fueling an addictions crisis. The Unexplained Wealth Act makes it easier for police to proactively

investigate and seize assets from the criminals who are providing the illicit drugs poisoning our communities. We will continue to weaken these criminal organizations by cracking down on toxic drugs, organized crime and money launderers.

First responders, including law enforcement, are on the front lines engaging with violent crime on a regular basis. We will make sure there are fewer violent confrontations on our streets by giving police the de-escalation tools they need to keep everyone safe.

## **OBJECTIVE 1.2**

### **PROTECTING PROPERTY AND STOPPING RETAIL THEFT**

#### **OUR PLAN**

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- Make the Retail Crime Initiative permanent by funding 12 new Winnipeg Police Service police officers committed to community policing
- Keep our neighbourhoods safe by continuing the highly successful security rebate program to homeowners and tenants
- Make it easier for private security services to renew their licences and acquire de-escalation tools by amending legislation
- Make downtown safer and support the Downtown Safety Action Plan by providing additional resources for the Downtown Community Safety Partnership and other community-led safety groups, as well as community safety officers in rural municipalities
- Improve communication and partnerships between government and retail by revitalizing the Retail Crime Task Force and adding organizations representing retail workers
- Protect workers and customers by advocating to the federal government for Criminal Code reform on organized retail theft

Manitobans deserve to feel safe and confident in their homes and places of work. But vandalism and theft are on the rise, making it increasingly difficult for us to enjoy our downtowns. Increased retail crime directly contributes to a loss of revenue and customers for business owners and creates unsafe workplaces. And the escalation of this kind of crime often serves as a gateway to more serious criminal activities. The Retail Crime Summit in October 2024 allowed the business community to share their concerns and look for new ways forward to ensure communities and businesses can thrive in Manitoba.

Retail theft and property crime are highly visible symptoms of the larger issues facing our communities. The successful Retail Theft Initiative, a partnership between the Winnipeg Police Service, the Retail Council of Canada and Winnipeg's business community aims to address the issue of shoplifting, including the threat of injury to staff and the public, and financial loss incurred by retail outlets within the city.



**FROM JUNE 8 TO OCTOBER 25, 2024, THE VIOLENT CRIME AND RETAIL THEFT INITIATIVE GENERATED:**

**769 arrests**

**8,779 engagements with business and community members**

**224 Provincial Offence Notices issued**

**\$63,331 in products recovered using investigative resources**

The revitalization of community-led policing is a positive step towards making our neighbourhoods and business centres safer through increased police visibility and building relationships. Our government will make it safer for private security and community safety hosts to do their jobs by closing legislative gaps and making sure they have the tools they need to safely act when confronted with criminal activity. Manitoba's successful \$2-million security rebate program received almost 8,800 applications and helped provide enhanced, affordable security for homeowners, tenants and small business owners, and will continue going forward to help Manitobans keep their neighbourhoods safe.

From 2016 to 2023, the Winnipeg Police Service shrunk by 55 members. We are funding 12 new police officers at the Winnipeg Police Service, who will be committed to foot patrols and community policing resources, with more in the future. Building strong, reliable relationships between our communities and local police as well as other safety groups like Bear Clan Patrol, Mama Bear Clan and SABE Peace Walkers is essential to creating welcoming, safe public spaces for all Manitobans to live and work in.

**Winnipeg's downtown is Manitoba's downtown**

Safe downtowns are downtowns that Manitobans can take pride in. The Downtown Community Safety Partnership in Winnipeg is focused on long-term solutions for the downtown community. It was expanded in summer 2024 through the Downtown Safety Action Plan, which also includes increased mental health training for community partners, increased police visibility and operating costs to N'Dinawemak, a 24-hour safe space with wraparound services for our unhoused neighbours. Our government is providing funding for downtown safety in other cities in Manitoba such as Brandon and Thompson to help them create safe, inviting downtowns. Major revitalization projects such as Portage Place and the Bay are generation-defining projects instrumental to the transformational change taking place in our downtowns.



## **OBJECTIVE 1.3**

### **KEEPING RURAL AND NORTHERN MANITOBAN FAMILIES SAFE**

#### **OUR PLAN:**

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- Establish a new Centre for Justice in Dauphin that includes culturally appropriate supports, educational resources, and vocational training.
- Respond to complex and serious crimes in Swan River and Swan Valley by establishing a general investigative unit pilot project with the RCMP in the region
- Support Manitoba-focused RCMP recruitment to reduce the RCMP vacancy rate in the province by advocating to the federal government and supporting municipalities
- Deploy First Nation safety officers (FNSOs) and mental health workers to communities experiencing crises and provide support by establishing regional response teams
- Work with First Nations to provide self-administered policing through the Manitoba First Nations Police Service (MFNPS) and FNSO programs to more communities
- Expand supports in rural areas for people fleeing violence in collaboration with the Minister of Families and the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.
- Keep communities safer by expanding the electronic monitoring program outside of Winnipeg to rural municipalities
- Improve technological accessibility to the justice system to remote First Nations communities

Many Manitoban communities are remote and isolated, with unique public safety needs. This presents a challenge we must address: every Manitoban should have access to timely law enforcement, court access and other social services. Ensuring fair and equitable access to these services will also advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba. Women in remote regions, where access to social, economic and health supports and services are limited, experience rates of violence over four times higher than in accessible areas. The tragedies in Carman and McCreary make it clear we must act urgently.

Manitoba Justice is working on new policing models to increase regional investigative capacity and ensure local police forces have the resources they need. Public safety in remote areas depends on reliable, trusting relationships between communities, law enforcement (including the RCMP, FNSOs and the MFNPS) and emergency services that requires better co-ordination. Manitoba will continue to advocate for our fair share of federal funding through the First Nations Indigenous Policing Program.

Our government will build a new Centre for Justice in Dauphin in collaboration with Indigenous and Métis leadership. The new centre will support successful reintegration for offenders by providing culturally appropriate supports, education and vocational training. We will always support incarcerated Manitobans when they are ready to turn their lives around. When they take the first step, our government will be there to meet them.

Rural and remote areas need access to technology to access government services remotely. Our government is working with Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) to provide high-speed satellite internet systems in remote areas to make sure Indigenous communities are not cut off from these systems. Our government is creating regional mental health support teams to respond to communities in crisis to make sure no Manitoban is left isolated and alone in their time of need.

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## **HEALTH CARE IS PUBLIC SAFETY**

- **We're increasing forensic capabilities in our rural and remote communities so that victims of crime have better access to justice**
- **We are making communities safer all over the province by helping municipalities to clean up their public spaces, including supporting needle disposal programs**
- **We're increasing the number of institutional safety officers (ISOs) and security officers and improving security infrastructure at hospitals throughout the province, including Brandon and Selkirk, so it's safer for Manitobans to access health care**
- **We've expanded the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program to offer more wraparound supports for sexual assault survivors in their communities**





## 2

### **PREVENT: Pathways to success, not pipelines to prison**

Manitoba was the first jurisdiction in Canada to have a restorative justice act: an alternative approach to the traditional criminal justice system that focuses on making amends and healing harms. Restorative justice helps offenders turn their lives around and put themselves on a good path, making their communities healthier and safer. With its emphasis on community, restitution and reintegration, the principles of restorative justice have parallels with those of Indigenous justice systems, which were clearly articulated in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. Restorative justice is essential to providing transformational pathways out of the justice system towards accountability and responsibility.

## **OBJECTIVE 2.1**

### **GIVING YOUTH A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

#### **OUR PLAN:**

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- Hold a youth summit to bring young leaders together to hear their voices, empower them and to discuss solutions
- Divert youth from gangs by funding youth mentorship programs with a focus on Indigenous and newcomer youth
- Improve services at the Manitoba Youth Centre by investing in learning, literacy and recreational programming and recruiting and retaining educators
- Help connect youth with their language, culture and traditions by continued investment in healing lodges and other land-based education initiatives
- Work alongside the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning and the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism as well as Sport Manitoba to promote and expand free recreational opportunities for youth both in and out of the justice system to break down barriers to participation to a healthy lifestyle, with a particular focus on underserved youth
- Work with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to address absenteeism, including among youth in the justice system in collaboration with community as well as probation services

Youth justice in Manitoba begins with the guiding principle that healthy and safe children and youth are essential for a better future. It also recognizes that there are shared responsibilities in supporting youth, and a collaborative, co-ordinated approach across the whole of government is needed to empower youth and address their unique needs.

A steady increase in violence among youth in Manitoba since 2021 has significant impacts on community safety. Children and youth who are in search of belonging, identity and community may be more likely to engage in risk-seeking behavior. Youth are particularly vulnerable to experiencing higher rates of mental-health issues, so we need to make sure programming and supports can identify and respond to their individual risks and complex and overlapping needs. Empowering these youth means we need to find ways to harness their strengths and minimize re-offending.

To protect youth, we must break the cycles of violence that are a result of adverse childhood experiences. Trauma has serious, generational impacts on individuals, families and communities. Trauma-informed approaches prioritize safety, trust, collaboration and empowerment, and are based in the complex histories of individuals and communities. Community- and family-centred responses provide youth with the wraparound resources they need to have a positive future.





Manitoba's Universal School Food Program is a promise that kids in our province will never have to learn on an empty stomach. The chance to eat a healthy meal at school also will give vulnerable kids a safe place to eat every day. Feeding students at school is a commitment that will make sure every Manitoba kid can concentrate, learn and reach their full potential.

Keeping vulnerable young people out of gangs will keep them out of the justice system. We need to make connections with at-risk kids early to help them make good decisions for a brighter future. We also need to make sure youth have access to all the supports, activities and resources they need. This is especially true of newcomer children, who may not know how to find these resources in their community. More outreach workers to counsel and connect with youth, increased mental health supports, patrol teams to operate at certain locations at peak times, emergency response services available for youth and increased resources for free recreational activities will all provide realistic, tangible alternatives to gangs.

There are several existing, successful programs in Manitoba that keep youth out of the justice system or work to support youth to exit it. The Integrated Youth Services (IYS) model creates one-stop shops providing wraparound services for youth. Common elements include integrated and co-located mental health, substance use, primary care, education, employment/training, housing and other community and social services in a single, easy-to-access, youth-friendly, walk-in location.

**The Manitoba government has partnered with community organizations to establish youth mentoring sites in underserved areas of the province including Selkirk, Portage La Prairie, Swan River, The Pas and downtown Winnipeg. The sites are a targeted response to prevent homelessness for youth who were in or are transitioning out of the Child and Family Services (CFS) system. Each site provides youth advocates, access to services, supports and benefits available to youth exiting the system, as well as cultural programming and activities. Preference was given to Indigenous-led or Indigenous-partnered organizations to host the sites. A sixth site will be opening in Manitoba's north.**



## **OBJECTIVE 2.2**

### **PREVENT RE-OFFENDING AND SUPPORT REINTEGRATION**

#### **OUR PLAN:**

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- Expand restorative justice programs by building on the success of previous work in and with communities
- Support adult literacy in corrections by expanding library and education programs
- Increase job training and trades programs in provincial correctional facilities
- Help people leaving corrections with obtaining identification and other essential documents by collaborating with community organizations
- Provide individuals exiting the justice system with access to housing and other supports upon release from custody by co-operating with Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness and community organizations
- Continue to support the establishment and operation of therapeutic communities in corrections



Many people deserve a second chance. It's critical that folks leaving custody and ready to turn their life around have a toolbox that ensures their successful reintegration back home and keeps them from re-offending. These transitional supports can be basic but life-saving. Making sure people leaving the system have access to training and educational opportunities, cultural programming and healing, mental health and treatment supports, and transitional housing supports their best chance at avoiding homelessness and reoffending and gives them an opportunity to set their life on the right course to get back into their communities.

Manitoba's groundbreaking restorative justice programming, the first of its kind in Canada, was cut in 2017. This government believes the success of Manitoba's restorative justice programs speak for themselves – thousands of cases annually were diverted from the traditional court process, and programming was successful in reducing overall recidivism rates for participants by 32 per cent.

It takes time and support for people leaving custody to learn how to re-enter society. This is even harder when grappling with issues like addictions. This means that in addition to making sure folks have enough food, a roof over their head and a job, they may also need to go through substance use treatment. Manitoba Justice is working in partnership with municipal and First Nations leaders to

establish and support sobering centres that provide culturally relevant case management and mental health support. Healing lodges also provide dedicated substance use treatment resources in correctional centres for offenders.

Increasing public safety means reducing recidivism (the rate of re-offending that sends people back to prison). In Manitoba, this means ensuring time spent in corrections is an opportunity for crisis intervention. Provincial correctional facilities provide a variety of evidence-based rehabilitative programs, including therapeutic communities, as well as programs for anger management, domestic violence, addictions, criminal thinking and positive parenting. Increasing programming and supports in prisons to include adult literacy, jobs training, and trades programs have both immediate and long-term effects: they make sure that people leaving the justice system have the opportunity for a real pathway to success in their communities, including a home and a job.

Community organizations such as Thunderwing and the Bilal Community and Family Centre offer wraparound supports that provide ex-offenders what they need to pursue their future. Increasing transitional supports as individuals make their way back to their communities will ensure a lower rate of individuals returning to the justice system and directly contribute to safer and healthier communities.





### 3

## **INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES: Tough on the roots and causes of crime**

Public safety begins with building resilience in communities to address the roots and causes of crime. Crime is a symptom of a system full of disadvantages and disparity. Manitoba's Public Safety Strategy is informed by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, by the 231 Calls for Justice from the MMIWG National Inquiry and the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These reports recognize the lasting traumatic impact of colonization on Indigenous Nations and People and their communities. Investing in these communities will have a direct impact on their safe future.



## **OBJECTIVE 3.1**

### **ADVANCE INDIGENOUS JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION**

#### **OUR PLAN:**

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- Develop an Indigenous Justice Action Plan in collaboration with First Nations, Red River Métis, and Inuit representatives.
- Increase funding and training opportunities for First Nations police officers and First Nation safety officers programs
- Build on a successful pilot project (Manto Sipi) to enforce band council resolutions and extend it to more communities
- Support and incorporate sentencing circles as an alternative to mainstream justice responses
- Provide trauma-informed healing for offenders with substance abuse issues by establishing and supporting healing lodges
- Better serve Inuit people involved in the justice system by continuing to support the federal pilot project for an Inuit court worker and Gladue report writer
- Incorporate and recognize First Nations, Red River Métis and Inuit customs and traditions in the justice system

The overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system is a dark legacy of systemic racism and colonization. Manitoba's colonial history has had a lasting, traumatic impact on Indigenous Nations and Peoples, who are not only disproportionately affected by violence in our province but overrepresented in the justice system.

There is a way forward. Indigenous insights of justice are based in healing, wellness, balance and community. The principles of restorative justice – that crime is fundamentally a violation of people and interpersonal relationships, that offenders should be provided the opportunity to take accountability for their actions, and that wrongs can be put right through healing – are inherently connected to Indigenous understandings of justice. Our government is committed to advancing the principles of restorative justice knowing it is one part of the path forward to ensuring all communities are safe.

The justice system has a fundamental role in advancing truth and reconciliation. Our government knows that this is best accomplished by building strong, meaningful relationships and through nation-to-nation collaboration with First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments, associations and organizations. Indigenous governments and communities are best positioned to understand the unique circumstances and needs of their own people.

There are four Indigenous committees and councils within Manitoba Justice that support the department's work: the Indigenous Justice Elders Advisory Council provides cultural guidance and traditional wisdom; the Indigenous Leaders in Justice Council provides advice to Manitoba Justice's Executive Management Committee (EMC) and hosts educational and cultural gatherings for Justice employees; and the Métis Justice Steering Committee and the First Nation Steering Committee, both of which discuss justice issues and initiatives with their respective government and organizational leaders.

Manitoba is working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and communities to develop an Indigenous Justice Action Plan. This plan's co-ordinated approach is focused on establishing and strengthening reciprocal and respectful relationships with Indigenous leaders and their organizations, including rights holder organizations (RHOs), knowledge holders, communities, the Indigenous Justice Elders Advisory Council and Manitoba Justice employees. The action plan will also establish accountability mechanisms for advancing reconciliation. It aims to improve public safety in Indigenous communities; reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous People in the criminal justice system; improve outcomes; expand community justice; and advance recommendations from the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI), the Calls for Justice and the Calls to Action. Manitoba's Indigenous Justice Action Plan will be in alignment with Canada's Indigenous Justice Strategy, which considers the distinctions between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

There are several effective programs in place that help Indigenous Peoples. The Indigenous Court Worker Program in Manitoba helps Indigenous Peoples navigate the justice system by attending court with them, explaining their rights and providing translation services. They also ensure the court understands the circumstances of the individual attending court.

The Restorative Justice Branch works closely with First Nations across Manitoba to provide resources for community justice workers (CJWs), who help all affected parties in a case by providing culturally relevant restorative justice programming. The Manitoba Métis Federation's Métis Community Justice Program (MCJP) is a court-diversion program that aims to deliver culturally appropriate justice alternatives diverting Métis people from the mainstream justice system. Manitoba Justice is supporting a pilot project funded by the federal government for an Inuit family court worker and Inuit Gladue report writer, who will provide supports to the Inuit community in Manitoba navigating the court system. These are only a few of the examples of justice programs that support First Nations, Red River Métis, and Inuit people in the justice system.

We must find alternative, culturally appropriate and safe ways to respond to the needs of Indigenous people and divert those in crisis away from jails and emergency departments. Continued and expanded investments in healing lodges and sobering centres throughout the province support and promote trauma-informed healing for Indigenous offenders with substance use issues. Sentencing circles embrace traditional practices of Indigenous justice by providing opportunities to make amends, empower victims and community members, and build capacity to resolve conflict by addressing the intergenerational impacts of colonization and the loss of Indigenous culture, customs and traditions.



Winnipeg has the largest Indigenous population of any urban centre in Canada. Manitoba Justice will co-operate with organizations that assist Indigenous families and individuals in their urban living transition by providing wraparound resources, such as supportive employment opportunities, housing and shelter, and cultural connections.

Our government, guided by The Path to Reconciliation Act, recognizes the need for systemic reform of the justice system and reaffirms our commitment to meaningful reconciliation by strengthening Indigenous nationhood through self-government and determination. We are committed to finding pathways to support and implement Indigenous-led initiatives that support public safety, healthy communities and self-determination.

## **OBJECTIVE 3.2**

### **PROMOTE COMMUNITY-LED JUSTICE**

#### **OUR PLAN:**

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- Support the use of community prosecutors in the court system
- Look to establish a new community or problem-solving court in Manitoba
- Hire 100 mental health workers to work alongside first responders to strengthen mental health supports for both adults and youth
- Review The Intoxicated Persons Detention Act and The Mental Health Act
- Increase service coordination and communication to help individuals in the justice system navigate the available integrated supports in their communities
- Continue to support dedicated resources for crown attorneys working on hate crimes.

Healthy communities are at the heart of public safety. People in our communities who are struggling with unemployment, poverty, substance abuse and mental health challenges are more likely to fall through the cracks and end up in the justice system. Breaking the cycle of crime will require a real commitment towards a co-ordinated goal, from all the involved agencies and organizations.

Community courts (or community hubs) have a proven track record of increasing public safety in the communities they serve by focusing on the most vulnerable individuals and families and working to transition them out of the justice system and back into their lives. Our government will develop community-level approaches to public safety issues, including using community prosecutors as well as establishing community courts. Community courts bring together a variety of wraparound services to create centralized, accessible centres that co-ordinate access to safe and affordable housing and transitions from homelessness, mental health treatment and support, substance use treatment and services, accessible and early intervention and prevention support for youth including recreational and employment opportunities, and support for vulnerable families and for children transitioning from Child and Family Services (CFS). Co-ordination is central to help folks find and use the services they need.



The Manitoba government recognizes that different communities across the province have different needs, which is why we support municipalities like Brandon, Dauphin, Portage La Prairie, The Pas, Selkirk, Steinbach, Swan River and Thompson to develop their own community safety and well-being plans (CSWPs). These plans proactively identify local risks and the unique local circumstances and needs of residents using evidence-based responses. These have shown to help reduce violence and provide community-specific response to conflict.

A police response is not always required or appropriate every time someone has a mental health crisis. Manitoba Justice, Manitoba Families and Manitoba Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (HAH) are collaborating to hire 100 mental health workers to work alongside law enforcement throughout the province. This investment will provide real relief to first responders. It's only by working together that we can begin to address issues that exacerbate a crisis in mental health, including the risk of homelessness, addiction and food insecurity.

Manitoba's Homelessness Strategy will work to provide more affordable, stable housing for vulnerable persons and support for transition from homelessness. It provides a wide range of subsidized housing throughout the province and partners with other governments and community organizations to create safe and affordable housing.

Our government knows that public safety is rooted in the strength of our communities. Understanding the causes of crime is a long-term project that can only be accomplished through a co-ordinated, joint effort between government departments, Indigenous governments, communities and community organizations, and their partner agencies. Ensuring vulnerable individuals have the upstream supports they need will directly impact a lower likelihood of ending up in the justice system. Together, we are better positioned to ensure a safer future for every Manitoban.



## **OBJECTIVE 3.3**

### **ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

#### **OUR PLAN:**

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- Increase the availability of supports through Victim Services including specialized Victim Services workers, a regional domestic violence specialist, and expanded partnerships with regional community-based organizations for victims of crime and intimate partner violence (IPV)
- Expand community and family information liaison programming for families of MMIWG2S+ including Inuit, and include an Indigenous Victim Services Unit
- Provide survivors of IPV with notification when an alleged abuser breaches their conditions by expanding the electronic monitoring program
- Co-ordinate with Manitoba Families, Manitoba's Emergency Management Organization (EMO) and community partners on a Red Dress Alert system
- Make it easier for victims of IPV to obtain protection orders
- Increase training of judicial candidates and judicial justices of the peace on IPV, coercive control in relationships and the experience of 2SLGBTQIA+ in the justice system
- Proclaim Clare's Law – The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act
- Enhance protection order enforcement in rural areas by co-operating with RCMP and municipal police forces
- Provide upstream support for 2SLGBTQIA+ people who are disproportionately impacted by violent crime, with a focus on youth in cooperation with the Minister of Families and the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care
- Reduce incarceration and recidivism of women and girls in the justice system by supporting an interdepartmental working group
- Support survivors and their families by continuing to partner with Manitoba Families and the federal government on the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence

Women and girls are more often the targets of crime, and most often targeted by someone they know. Women are more likely to experience violent crimes, including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, intimate partner homicides, forcible confinement and harassment, than men, who are overwhelmingly the perpetrators. Gender-based violence disproportionately affects those who are already facing marginalization, including newcomer and Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Manitoba.



Our government will work across departments and with community to prevent gender-based violence and support Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2Spirit Peoples Plus (MMIWG2S+). We will support these families to end the cycle of violence and make the province safer for all Manitobans by supporting early intervention, stopping family violence, ending human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and ensuring victims and their families receive the necessary supports to address the MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice.

The traumatic legacy of colonialism continues to disproportionately affect Indigenous women, including the intergenerational impacts of residential schools, socio-economic marginalization, and violence. Our government's new Strategy to Protect and Empower Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2Spirit Peoples focuses on actions across government in priority areas empowering Indigenous women, girls, 2Spirit and gender-diverse relatives and their families to live lives rich with opportunities, safe from harm and free from violence.

We will also reduce incarceration and recidivism of women and girls in the justice system. Women leaving the system often require support and assistance not just from government but from their communities, especially during crucial points of reintegration. Female offenders are likely to have experienced trauma or violence themselves.

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## **ONGOING ACHIEVEMENTS:**

- **Amended The Intimate Image Protection Act (renamed The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act) to include images and videos that are created by artificial intelligence – the first legislation of its kind in Canada**
- **Created a specialized Victim Services Worker with a caseload focused on survivors of sexual violence in the Victim Services Branch**
- **Expanding the Family Resolution Service's out-of-court resolution services**
- **Enhancing opportunities for Protection Order Designate training**
- **Re-establishing the Manitoba Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, which has been inactive for at least 5 years**
- **Amended The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act in August 2024**
- **Increased co-ordination and prioritized the well-being of chronic missing persons through the new Missing Persons Response Team**

Our government will make sure that women, girls and gender-diverse people throughout the province are supported and protected from gender-based violence and safe to pursue their lives free from fear. We need to make sure every girl in our province can grow up safely in her community.



## CONCLUSION

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Violence and violent crime affect communities across Manitoba. In our downtowns and inner cities and across our rural and northern regions, it is increasingly a concern for people. It occurs between strangers and it occurs between intimate partners. It is complicated by poverty, low educational attainment, substance abuse and mental illness. It has many expressions, from gun violence to drug trafficking to child exploitation. It affects both offenders and their victims. It affects Indigenous People disproportionately. It is rising among youth.

But there is a way forward. It will take time, commitment and a belief that every Manitoban deserves something better. We can be both tough on crime while also committing to long-term change. We know that both police and community mental health workers are working side-by-side on the front line of a crisis. And we believe that justice isn't about the end of the road, but a starting point for a better future.

This Public Safety Strategy is our promise to turn things around in Manitoba. It is a commitment that every Manitoban has the right to live safely in their neighbourhoods and communities. Our government is not afraid to rise to this challenge. We know the way forward is by investing in people while keeping offenders accountable. It starts here, by building safer and healthier communities.



