

Extract: assembly documents and records, page #1929

Government of Alberta, Legislature, Alberta Hansard, November 13, 2007

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has told Albertans many times that it's committed to safe and secure communities, so it's very disturbing to hear that Alberta ranks eighth in the country in peace officers per capita. This is well below the national average. Labour shortages certainly are common in many different sectors across the province, and law enforcement is no exception.

Many police services across the province simply cannot get enough qualified people in uniform. My question to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security: what is the government doing to make sure that there are more police officers on the street?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated earlier, in the last three years we have significantly increased funding to put more police officers in Alberta. We've also committed to increasing police resources in the coming years. Last week I announced the new \$1.4 million sheriff warrant apprehension team to take criminals off the street and to keep them off. As of now we have 12 new officers out on our streets who are reducing the number of criminals who are out there.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister, then: what is the government doing to help police services recruit and retain staff as well?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, this government is fully aware of the serious problem of police recruitment and retention in Alberta, and that's why last June we brought together leaders in law enforcement in a round-table to address these concerns. Various organizations are now taking the lead on several strategies identified by the roundtable. We are committed to completing this work as soon as possible.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Coutts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then again to the same minister. This demand for police officers will mean that in the near future many young men and women will be hired to fill those vacant positions. What's the government doing to ensure that police training is consistent across the province as well?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward to develop a provincial police college in Fort Macleod, a college that will standardize training and ensure that police in our province will have the ability to work together more effectively and efficiently. We are also working behind the scenes to determine the building size and the number of students we can enrol there, and we are developing a provincial curriculum. We will be exploring revenue streams, and we are intending to release an expression-of-interest document in the near future to gauge private-sector interest in this much-needed facility.