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April 22, 2025

The Honourable Mike Ellis, M.L.A.  
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services

**Sent via email**

Dear Minister Ellis,

Thank you for your letter dated March 21, 2024, regarding the recent changes to the Police Act. We appreciate the opportunity to share how the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) is aligning with these updates and working to enhance public safety across the city.

As the oversight body for EPS, the Edmonton Police Commission is committed to ensuring transparency, accountability, and effective policing. We are pleased to confirm that EPS's priorities closely align with the new provincial policing standards.

**Our Approach to Community Safety**

EPS's 2023–2026 Strategic Plan is the overarching strategy that guides the priority areas of focus for the Service. It is built on extensive input from the Commission, the community, government, and social service organizations. The plan focuses on five key areas:

- 1. Balancing Support and Enforcement** – Using data to ensure that individuals receive the right mix of support and enforcement to keep communities safe.
- 2. Partner and Advocate** – Working with stakeholders, including social service agencies, to improve public safety.
- 3. Connect, Share and Evolve** – Strengthening relationships with Edmontonians through outreach and education.
- 4. Innovate and Advance as One Team** – Leveraging data and technology to improve decision-making and resource allocation.
- 5. Support and Grow Diverse Talents** – Ensuring that EPS reflects the communities it serves through inclusive hiring and career development.

## What EPS is Doing Now

In response to your letter, the following sections detail the Edmonton Police Service's initiatives and actions that align with the new requirements.

### Policing Priorities

The first amendment to Section 31 of the Police Amendment Act emphasizes the importance of establishing clear priorities for the police service. By setting these priorities, the Commission ensures that EPS remains focused on the most pressing issues affecting public safety and well-being. In line with this, the following are the initiatives EPS is undertaking related to the new policing priorities:

**I. Community Safety and Crime Prevention:** *Work collaboratively with community members including businesses, government, and non-government partners to develop and enhance crime prevention efforts and community safety strategies to break the cycle of recidivism.*

The Community Safety and Crime Prevention policing priority is aligned with the EPS's strategic plan, particularly goals one and two, which emphasize balancing support and enforcement while partnering and advocating to enhance community safety.

To address this priority, EPS has two frontline bureaus: the Community Policing Bureau (CPB) and the Community Safety and Well-Being Bureau (CSWB). CPB delivers policing services aimed at maintaining peace, protecting lives & property, and preventing & investigating crimes. It operates through six patrol divisions: West, Northwest, Northeast, Downtown, Southeast, and Southwest providing round-the-clock street-level police services to the community. On the other hand, CSWB utilizes calls for service data and crime intelligence to monitor criminal activity and develop targeted solutions for preventing and addressing crime & disorder.

EPS has various initiatives focused on improving community safety and crime prevention. Multidisciplinary teams are established to provide a visible presence and proactively tackle issues related to violent and property crime, social disorder, gun violence, gang-related activities, and transit safety. Below are some examples of these initiatives:

o **Healthy Streets Operation Centre (HSOC):** HSOC community safety teams are deployed in Chinatown and Downtown to combat violent crime, property crime, and social disorder. Currently, there are three HSOC community safety teams providing coverage for eighteen hours a day, seven days a week.

o **Guns and Gangs Strategy:** In response to the increasing gun violence and gang-related crimes in Edmonton, EPS launched a new Guns & Gangs Strategy. This strategy emphasizes enhanced intelligence gathering, collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, and bolstering personnel resources within the Organized Crime Branch. With the support of provincial and federal funding, EPS established an additional Gang Suppression Team (GST) to focus on suppression and interdiction activities concerning known gang members and affiliates, providing coverage throughout the city seven days a week and a

Firearms Compliance Unit to work with the Alberta Chief Firearms Office to address the rising trend of revoked, expired, or unlicensed firearms being used to commit gun crime in Edmonton.

- o **Transit Safety Plan:** Four Transit Community Safety Teams (TRACs) made up of thirty-one officers are currently deployed to the Light Rail Transit (LRT) system to enhance transit safety with plans to increase the size of these teams up to fifty before the end of 2025.

- o **Crime Reduction Plan:** A Crime Reduction Plan has been initiated to tackle violent crime by leveraging data and intelligence to identify hotspots in the city. Appropriate resources are then deployed to mitigate crime and disorder in these areas. A pilot program focusing on six hotspots in Downtown Edmonton proved successful and this approach is being rolled out in other locations across the city.

- o **Community Safety Officer (CSO) Pilot Program:** The Community Safety Officer Initiative aims to create a new tier of sworn officers that will assist Patrol with tasks that do not require the full skillset, expertise, and authorities of a Police Officer. This initiative also seeks to establish a pathway for recruiting future police officers. EPS is currently collaborating with the Government of Alberta to incorporate CSOs into the Police Act.

**II. Recruitment, Retention and Accountability to better reflect the community:** *Police services will no longer be seen as an arm of the state but rather an extension and reflection of the community they serve. They will strive to be exemplary employers who attract and retain individuals who are accountable, ethical, innovative, driven to deliver excellent service, and representative of diverse populations. Through this paradigm shift, police services will ensure public trust is a driving factor in the decision-making process.*

This policing priority aligns with goal five of EPS's strategic plan which focuses on supporting and developing diverse talent to create a resilient organization. To address this priority, the Human Resources Division and the Training, Development, and Recruiting Division under EPS's Corporate Services Bureau actively seek out potential candidates and select the best applicants, regardless of race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic origin, etc. to ensure that both sworn members and civilian employees of the Edmonton Police Service better reflect the community they serve.

Below are examples of the various initiatives EPS is utilizing to attract and improve retention of skilled sworn members and civilians across the lifecycle of their career:

- o **Expanded Recruitment Efforts:** EPS introduced significant changes to its recruiting and training programs to strengthen its connection with the community. This includes launching a new recruitment website, conducting targeted outreach to diverse communities, and establishing the Recruit Mentoring Academy (RMA) to enhance applicants' skills and reduce barriers for underrepresented groups.

- o **Competitive Compensation and benefits:** In addition to offering an exciting and rewarding career, EPS recognizes that competitive pay and comprehensive benefits are crucial components of its recruitment and retention strategy. EPS provides salaries that are competitive within the policing sector, reflecting the skills, experience, and dedication

required of its members.

o **World class modern police training:** EPS understands that providing world-class modern police training is crucial not only for attracting new recruits but also for retaining experienced officers. EPS offers extensive training that encompasses various aspects of policing and leadership development, including community engagement, conflict resolution, and cultural competency.

o **Diverse Career Development Opportunities:** EPS fosters a stimulating environment that encourages professional growth and personal fulfillment by providing a dynamic and varied career path. EPS offers a range of roles and specializations within the organization, allowing officers to explore different areas. From community policing and investigations to specialized units such as tactical and drug enforcement, officers can find their niche and develop skills in areas that align with their interests and strengths. This variety not only keeps the work engaging but also enhances the overall effectiveness of the service.

o **Robust and fair disciplinary processes:** EPS is committed to ensuring that all disciplinary procedures are clearly defined and communicated to its members. A fair disciplinary process ensures that all officers are treated equitably, regardless of their rank or tenure. EPS prioritizes impartial investigations and consistent application of policies, which reinforces the belief that everyone is held to the same standards. This commitment to fairness helps to foster a sense of belonging and loyalty among officers, reducing turnover and promoting a positive organizational culture.

o **Internal mechanisms for wellness and complaint resolution:** EPS prioritizes the well-being of its employees by implementing robust mechanisms for wellness and complaint resolution. EPS offers a variety of wellness initiatives aimed at supporting the physical and mental health of its members. These programs include access to counseling services, stress management workshops, and fitness resources. EPS complaint resolution process is designed to be thorough and impartial, providing officers with the confidence that their concerns will be taken seriously. A clear timeline for resolution helps ensure that issues are resolved quickly, reducing potential stress and dissatisfaction.

o In 2024, a Retention Working Group made up of senior EPS leaders was established to better understand reasons for attrition and to proffer solutions for retention.

**III. Standardized Intelligence Sharing and Data Driven Policing using Predictive Analytics:** *Collaborate with other law enforcement agencies to facilitate the sharing of intelligence and information to utilize data and predictive analytics to inform policing strategies and resource allocation.*

This policing priority aligns with goal four of EPS's strategic plan which focuses on innovating and advancing as one team. EPS's Innovation and Information Bureau (I&IB) is the steward of information & technology processes and systems for stakeholders to mobilize police services while bolstering information collection and enhancing the capacity of members. I&IB enables members to leverage innovation and evidence-based data to prevent crime and reduce calls for service, while maintaining a secure physical and digital environment.

Below are examples of EPS's recent initiatives in intelligence sharing, data-driven policing and predictive analytics:

- o **Organized Crime Hub:** A central hub is being stood-up to improve intelligence sharing across the frontline to help address violence and gang related crimes. Intelligence generated will be shared with relevant law enforcement partners including Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT), Calgary Police Service, Criminal Intelligence Service of Alberta (CISA) to enable them to act against the same or similar criminal groups operating in their jurisdictions. EPS has received support for this initiative from the provincial and federal governments through the Gun and Gang Violence Action Fund (GGVAF).

- o **Community Safety Data Portal:** A public platform that provides real-time crime and safety data for Edmontonians. The portal offers increased transparency into policing activities and encourages public engagement towards building safer communities.

- o **Digital Evidence Management (DEMD):** DEMD will implement upgraded technology along with supporting business processes and standards to enhance the management and disclosure of digital evidence, reflecting the increasing reliance on digital formats. The transition to cloud-based Digital Evidence Management is currently underway, facilitating the storage and collection of all video evidence collected from Body Worn Cameras and other sources.

- o **Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) Framework:** To understand the role of artificial intelligence within EPS, a responsible AI framework has been established. A Technology & Data Literacy initiative is also being implemented to prepare the organization for the adoption of AI. Currently, various AI use cases for EPS are being studied, and the Policy and Service Directive for AI utilization is nearing completion.

**IV. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** *By encouraging understanding and awareness, police services shall foster an environment of equity, diversity, and inclusion, leading to more effective community policing practices.*

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policing priority aligns with EPS's strategic goals three and five, which focus on connecting with the community and fostering diverse talent. The Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights (EIHR) Branch, located within the Office of the Chief, is dedicated to ensuring equitable access to services for all Edmontonians, regardless of identity factors. This commitment reflects EPS's aim to cultivate a diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment where all employees (civilian and sworn), along with contractors and volunteers, can contribute meaningfully to the EPS vision.

Examples of EDI initiatives at EPS include:

- o **Commitment to Action (C2A):** EPS Commitment to Action initiative is designed to address systemic issues within policing and enhance accountability, transparency, and community engagement. EPS held various community consultations to gather feedback and foster dialogue about policing issues, ensuring that community voices are heard in shaping policies. The Commitment to Action Implementation roadmap details the progress

of the initiatives and projects from the six priorities identified in the plan to address the community's needs.

o **EDI Trainings:** EPS provides Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training for all new recruits and throughout the organization. In 2024, twenty-eight (28) training sessions were conducted, reaching over nine hundred and twenty-five (925) participants on topics such as the Kairos Blanket Exercise, Historical Trauma in Newcomer and Emerging Communities, Managing Bias: From Awareness to Action, Understanding the 2SLGBTQ+ Community, and Victim-Offender Overlap.

o **Community Experiential Learning Shifts (CELS):** These are experiential learnings for EPS new recruits. EPS's partnership with social agencies enables new recruits undergo a field placement with these agencies to engage and participate in activities aimed to build relationships with community members to better understand trauma informed approaches.

o **Community Events:** Every year, EPS plans and coordinates various community events with a focus on building awareness and strengthening relationships between EPS and the diverse groups in Edmonton. Some of the events coordinated are the Black History Month Showcase, Chief's Iftar, Chief's Pride Breakfast, Hand in Hand: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Oskayak Police Academy, Community After Incident Response (CAIR) event in partnership with City of Edmonton, ASSET Mapping between Beats and Community members, and Town Hall with South Asian Community.

o **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Framework:** EPS's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Framework 2022 emphasizes key areas to foster a culture of belonging within the organization. It focuses on talent recruitment, promotion, and retention to enhance organizational diversity; education and training to deepen understanding and practices of equity; and fostering a culture of practice to ensure the sustainability of EDI initiatives. These strategic focus areas were selected for their capacity to drive meaningful change and transformative impact, supporting EPS in achieving its equity, diversity, and inclusion goals across the organization.

o **Chief's EDI Committee:** As part of senior leadership's commitment to support a culture of equity and inclusion by addressing systemic barriers within EPS, the Chief's EDI Committee was established to provide an avenue of two-way communication for underrepresented groups and their allies with EPS's top leadership. The EDI Committee bolsters the work of existing Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) such as, the Racial Equity Employee Resource Group (REERG), Women in Policing Working Group (WIP), 2SLGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group, and the Diverse Abilities Employees Resource Group (DAERG) for persons with disabilities.

o **Language Interpret App:** The Interpret Manager app provides immediate interpretation support for frontline members when language barriers arise during initial interactions with the public. Currently, all frontline units are approved to use the app, with potential for future expansion. Available in over 200 languages, the app is designed to streamline communication and enhance service delivery by enabling officers to quickly respond to calls and assist citizens, eliminating the need to wait for an interpreter to arrive on scene. This not only improves efficiency for officers but also reduces wait times for the public.

o **Community Councils:** EPS works in collaboration with its three Community Advisory Councils to address new and emerging trends and issues of vulnerability that guide police in addressing issues with vulnerable and underserved communities in the city.

o **Nisohkamâkewin Council:** this advisory council relies on the expertise and experiences of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Communities in Edmonton to address the inequalities and barriers in policing that Indigenous peoples face.

o **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Council:** this council involves members who advocate for sexual and gender diverse communities. SOGIE works to advocate and shape a police service that better contributes and supports members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Edmonton.

o **Chief's Community Council:** this council consists of community members whose voices, opinions and experiences assist in shaping the policies and practices of EPS to better serve members of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), underserved, and diverse communities.

**V. Complex Issues and Social Disorder with a recovery-oriented lens:** *Police will develop and deploy innovative approaches to complex issues and social disorder, such as mental health and addictions, through collaboration and integration between policing and its government and non-government partners.*

EPS's Community Safety and Well-being Bureau (CSWB) works to achieve goal one in the strategic plan, to ensure that EPS balances traditional enforcement with community safety and well-being and providing support and the right kind of help for the vulnerable who do not need to be in the justice system.

Below are examples of EPS's initiatives in addressing complex issues and social disorder in Edmonton:

o **The Police and Crisis Team (PACT):** is a partnership between EPS and Alberta Health Services, Access 24/7. PACT responds to calls for service involving adults experiencing complex mental health and/or addictions related crises, where there is known or potential escalated risk of harm. Through funding from the Government of Alberta Urban Strategies Grant, EPS is rolling out an enhanced service delivery model with twenty-two (22) additional mental health clinicians to support frontline members responding to mental health and addictions calls for service.

o **The Youth Police and Crisis Team (Y: PACT):** is a partnership with Alberta Health Services (AHS). Y: PACT provides support for police officers responding to events involving young people experiencing complex mental health and/or substance use concerns, with the goal of diverting youth from the Emergency Department and providing wrap around supports for them and their families (prevention, intervention, and stabilization). Young people are provided with a family-focused intervention, ensuring a path to success for the youth and their families.

o **EPS Offender Management Program:** this program focuses on Edmonton's most

prolific and persistent offenders who are responsible for the most harm to communities by offering diversion support to those who want the organization's assistance in finding a new positive path out of the offender lifestyle. This includes collaboration with external partners to provide all-around case planning.

o **EPS Youth Programs:** Edmonton Police Service offers a range of youth-focused programs designed to prevent crime, support at-risk individuals, and foster positive relationships with law enforcement. The **Diversion First** program diverts youth aged 12-17 away from the traditional criminal justice system, offering them community-based services to address underlying issues like family conflict, substance abuse, and mental health concerns. The **School Resource Officer (SRO)** program places EPS officers in schools to act as mentors and educators, fostering positive relationships with students and staff; after being reinstated in 2024, Phase 1 of the program deployed six SROs to public schools in February 2025. The **Y-50** program targets youth at high risk of criminal activity by offering mentorship, life skills, and job-readiness training. Each year, 50 of the most violent and prolific youth offenders are identified for close supervision and directed towards rehabilitation and reintegration services. Also, the **Mentorship and Gang Solutions (MAGS)** program works with youth involved or at risk of joining gangs, offering mentorship and a holistic support network, including social services and mental health professionals, to help them navigate challenges such as peer pressure, substance abuse, and family issues while providing alternatives to gang life.

o **Human-centered Engagement and Liaison Partnership (HELP):** HELP adopts a human-centered approach, focusing on a vulnerable person's day-to-day needs and challenges to connect and transition them to better-suited community support services. HELP in partnership with The Mustard Seed, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, George Spady Society, and Radius Community Health & Healing work collaboratively to navigate vulnerable individuals with the greatest risk of victimization and offending, to appropriate support providers before they get entrenched in the judicial system of arrest, remand, and release cycle.

o **Encampment Response:** EPS has stood up a joint, expedited approach to dismantling encampments. EPS is working with the City of Edmonton and the Government of Alberta to close all encampments citywide, connecting residents to wrap-around services at the provincial government's Navigation and Support Centre, and addressing the criminal element taking advantage of individuals and the unsafe conditions in encampments. Many areas across the Service have been engaged in this work, including the High-Risk Encampment Teams (HRET), HSOC, HELP, Patrol and Beats.

## **Community Safety Plan**

The second amendment to Section 31 of the Police Amendment Act underscores the importance of developing a community safety plan in collaboration with the police service. This amendment mandates that the police commission work closely with community agencies to create a comprehensive approach to public safety.

The Edmonton Police Commission, and the Edmonton Police Service, are committed to implementing the community safety plans identified in the policing priorities, and engaging



the community through continuous feedback sessions, citizen annual surveys, and partnerships to ensure that the needs and concerns of our communities are at the forefront of our policing strategies.

As the Chair of the Edmonton Police Commission, I want to emphasize our commitment to enhancing community safety through continuous feedback from the public. We gather this input through public sessions, correspondence from Edmontonians, and public complaints, all designed to foster transparency and engagement between the Edmonton Police Service and the community they serve. Our public sessions serve as a vital platform for community members to voice their concerns and share insights directly related to safety issues. During these sessions, we discuss community safety strategies, police initiatives, and the progress of various EPS programs aimed at improving public safety. These interactions not only inform our work but also ensure that community voices play a crucial role in shaping our efforts to create a safer Edmonton for everyone.

Continuing our focus on community safety in Edmonton, the Edmonton Police Service, in the last three years has conducted an annual citizen perception survey. This survey measures the public's confidence in our police service, their feelings of safety, and satisfaction with police response times. The insights gained from this survey are instrumental in refining EPS plans and continuously improving safety in our community. In Q4 2024, EPS conducted extensive community engagement sessions, where residents emphasized the need for greater police visibility and responsiveness. To improve real-time feedback, EPS has also introduced Zencity, an AI-powered tool that gathers public sentiment and helps shape response strategies.

### **A Diversity and Inclusion Plan**

As part of the Commission's commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in EPS, we are guided by the third amendment in Section 31 of the Police Amendment Act, which mandates that a police commission shall develop a diversity and inclusion plan in conjunction with the police service.

At the Commission's request, the EPS is in the process of redeveloping its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Framework to better reflect a policing perspective and address the gaps identified in the previous framework. We are pleased to report that key milestones have already been achieved, including the completion of an internal assessment of current EDI practices and policies, as well as Phase 1 (Research) of the new EDI Framework. The second and third phases (Development and Engagement) are currently underway, and we anticipate that the final plan will be presented to the Commission by June 2025.

### **Conclusion**

The Edmonton Police Commission fully supports the new requirements established in Section 31 of the Police Amendment Act for setting policing priorities and developing community safety and diversity and inclusion plans. We recognize the vital role these initiatives play in building trust and fostering collaboration between the Edmonton Police Service and the communities it serves.

Your continued leadership and support remain invaluable as we strive to create a cohesive community in Edmonton that embraces the core values of safety, respect, and inclusion for all. Together, we can make a significant difference in the lives of Edmontonians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Henderson".

**Ben Henderson, Chair**  
**Edmonton Police Commission**

cc: Curtis Zablocki, Acting Deputy Minister, Public Safety and Emergency Services