**Enyinnah Okere, Executive Director, Value & Impact Division:**

Thank you all for joining us for this important announcement. My name is Enyinnah Okere and I'm the executive director of the value and impact division here at the EPS. These are challenging times, times that push us to rethink what we value, how we live in our communities and how we view public safety. The recent public hearings on policing highlighted the nature of police relationships with marginalized communities and the desire for change. It became clear that an equitable restorative and ongoing approach was needed to engage with these communities. Not only to help build understanding and trust, but to provide new opportunities, to discuss concerns and ways to work together today. Chief Dale McFee is announcing a commitment to action by the Edmonton police service to engage with the city's black indigenous racialized and underserved communities on improving a policing and re-imagining community safety and wellbeing. This new strategy acknowledges the current community concerns and calls for change addresses, racial injustice and advocates for the need to work collectively to build strengthen and repair police community relationships as the needs of Edmontonians change. And as the world around us changes. So too does the way the EPS operates and conducts business meaningful change requires action. And I would like to call on chief Dale McFee to pledge our commitment to just that action, to all the communities we are here to protect and serve chief McFee

**Chief Dale McFee, Edmonton Police Service:**

Racial injustice in our society is no longer a force we can collectively rationalize study, ignore or worse yet form another committee to assess, as we've seen from demonstrations around the world, including Edmonton. And we saw dozens of hours of testimony at city council demand for social justice and systemic change is absolutely necessary. This call for change covers the society as a whole, but much of it right now focuses on police services. Today, we are here to launch the Edmonton Police Service response to that demand our commitment to action, our commitment to action, not our commitment to form a committee to study what we need to do. We have all heard the call for change, and now what it requires us to face uncomfortable truths and difficult, but necessary moments. Our commitment to action outlines and addresses the significant amount of work we need to do to re-establish trust and repair critical, important relationships.

We're here to talk about a new path forward. Working in partnership with the communities most effected this path forward must lead us to an understanding of the role of our police service in the fight against systemic racism and redefine how police and other agencies contribute to community safety and wellbeing. The most important thing that I will say today is something I have said many times before, but I think it bears repeating systemic racism is a pervasive force in society, institutions, organizations, and traditions face a reckoning against that fact law enforcement played a central role in policing of the Indian act. The history of colonization, the 60 scoop residential schools as marginalized, indigenous people in our society. That legacy continues today. We recognize that we have worked to do ensure we are identifying how our current actions maybe reinforcing societal inequities and the legacy of racist legislation, policies and practices.

We must do better and we will do better. There is no place for any form of racism in policing, nor in any of our communities. Acts of racism, hatred and discrimination are unacceptable and need to be dealt with accordingly. We are here to focus on the path forward. I believe Edmonton police service ability and willingness to rise to this occasion. I believe we have a dedicated professionals who are generally wished to serve their community and make a positive impact. I must tell you having been here only a short time, I'm very, very proud and impressed with the majority of members of the Edmonton police service. And I just want to echo that again today.

We acknowledge and honor the stories and experiences that we've heard from our community members and our own employees, where our actions and our interactions of not being positives in order to be good, to be the good and just people we know ourselves to be. We must acknowledge the uncomfortable truth and ask ourselves what steps we will take each day for the EPS to hold ourselves and each other accountable. I have always been a big believer in the fact that if we make mistakes, we own our mistakes make amends and we get better for them. We know this won't be easy. We have a lot of work to do that. Our generations of marginalized people in our community that bear the mental and physical scars of actions and policies that have caused them significant harm. Many victims and advocates have barely came to us, come to us, taking it upon themselves, to bring their research and concerns forward built communities of support and even start organizations to get their point across.

We acknowledge that there were past consultations where we didn't truly hear or act upon the calls or change what we were asked or what was asked of us being an antiracist and responsive police service is an incredibly multifaceted task. We become both the driver and the subject of necessary social change. It requires equitable change in our organization, in our training, in the kind of environment we provide in our workplaces in the way internal relationships work in the way we budget, but most important, it is how we establish and sustain our relationships with the community that we're here to protect and serve. I'm here to pledge my own efforts and the efforts of the entire EPS to this cause this pledge cannot merely last the month or the course of a study, or until anti-racial justice demonstrations fade away. We have a special obligation as a police service to make a permanent commitment to, for everyone in our own service, moving forward to be anti races and to be accountable against that standard.

We are a standard bear for change. I believe the members of this service will embrace this cost through difficult times. They respond, sacrifice, and bring the calm, not for acknowledgement, but rather for the understanding that they have chosen a role of service, a role which demands accountability requires the willingness to change and the understanding that we must continue to evolve. Again, we are not launching a study. We are not launching a commission or a task force. We're not writing a 30 to 90 day report. This is a perpetual commitment to evolve the way we relate and work with our community particular Indigenous, Black, racialized, and other marginalized communities who typically find themselves to be the victims of an inequitable system. But we also cannot do this again. And that's why I wanted that special acknowledgement on those people from the community that are prepared to work on the positives going forward, work with us so that we all become better.

Today, we begin a new chapter of ongoing relationship between building with these communities. I understand the skepticism, some might bring to the statement like that. What makes us different from previous efforts is that this is not a listening campaign. It's not a campaign at all. It will not end. This is part of our everyday work today. And moving forward, this is a process for us to create and hold space in perpetuity. For those we need to hear from and move beyond conversation into actionable, meaningful change that focuses on implementation again and not more study. We are not measuring success by the number of people we talk to, or the number of pages of notes taken. We are only measuring success by the amount of need to change. We were able to affect this approach. Frees us from bureaucratic thinking, gives us the space to create human solutions with our community partners. While some of these changes will take time both to understand and implement. We know that other solutions will present themselves immediately, meaning that we can start effecting change. As soon as they arise, we can start to see and collaborate on solutions in real time, learning with every initiative, gaining a deeper understanding and building a better relationship in our community with each passing data. If we get it wrong, we adjust and we make it better. We don't run to the media and criticize each other. We're in it together. We're true partners.

What else is different?

Dedicated team has been assigned to lead the EPS through this moving forward. This is not being done off the side of anyone's desk. We have smart and innovative people dedicating their efforts to this. We have an abundance of studies processes, both informal and formal engagements from past years, including our recent engagement with the lesbian gay, bisexual, trans, transgender, queer and two-spirited community. The community has been giving us information worth looking at for years. We'll be taking another look at that and understanding what solutions that yields or has yielded. We shouldn't ask the community to bring that back and submit it all over again. This includes studying and internalizing the brave statements made by members of the public at a recent city council, both good and bad. Our process to take input and provide updates will be shaped within the community to ensure that we get authentic and candid input free from fear free from reprisal and free from judgment.

This is not simply engagement. It must build to be more than that. It must build into strong, evolving and lasting partnerships, not collaboration again, but partnerships where we win and lose together, not collaboration. We get together and talk, and we do nothing. Some of this is our own to fix. We know that, but some of this requires that we work together, adapt to each other, help one another and ask each other questions in order to find the right solution, truly community based. And some of it means we might get a few things wrong, but together we will eventually get it right, because it's the only thing that makes sense. The input we receive and the partnerships we build as part of this commitment to action will primarily guide the change we make. But we will also be supported by a new advisory structure that will include:

Our Nisohkamakewin Council, which will provide guidance to the EPS. As we work implementing recommendations from Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples. In other reports, the EPS has worked with directly, just a personal comment. I've been involved in some of these inquiries and inquests for a large part of my life. And it always troubles me that yet again, we got to study it and yet there's a roadmap to do some of the things that we need to be done. A lesbian and gay, bisexual, trans, transgender, queer, and two-spirit advisory council that will continue to work with us on changes in elements, identified in our apology and consultation process with the community last year as well. We are re-imagining the Chief’s Community Council part of its new mandate will be to hold EPS accountable to the recommendations that come out of this commitment to action, as well as our previous engagement efforts that add any future work we put forward, made up of people.

Who've experienced marginalization, discrimination and racism. It will work directly with EPS to shepherd necessary changes. It will include people in the business community and other communities that have equal stake. And in police procedure and operation will be, we looked at, we want diversity in action. Diversity that recognize it. It is really what it is a strength rather than a weakness. I want a strong, diverse set of people and experiences in this council. It needs new voices and faces who can make us think differently about how to approach and resolve issues. My hope is that this commitment to action will encourage those new individuals to join that council as such applications will not be open until January giving those who participate in this process. Time to think about applying for the council. As we move forward, we want to ensure we remain transparent, accountable to community on the community commitments we have made, we will be regularly communicating our progress through an online platform that will be available at epsinput.ca.

As I said before, we are committed to re-imagining and changing our role on the front end of the criminal justice system. As we work collectively to make systemic racism, systemic story, systemic change, and seek to redirect individuals who need support out of the justice system. If we get this right together, it will directly reduce the overrepresentation of black indigenous and people of color in the criminal justice system who are overrepresented by risk factors and not because of their race. And we owe that to them to give them of them that chance the murder of George Floyd, the death of George Floyd launched a movement. They remand for a demand for action that required every service. Every city to look inward and ask themselves what path they wanted to take. I'm honored to say that Edmontonians have chosen the path of equity and progress. They have called EPS to step forward, build a better and safer community as a better world with them.

Not every city can say that, that we have done that they have done that. Not every city can say they've collectively chosen a better path forward, but it's a mistake to think that this represents only a single decision point. Perhaps the most difficult part of any of this is knowing that we all must recommit to this approach each day and think critically, not only if our actions are effective, but if our actions as effective as they can be realized the collective goals we have all set, this is why I thought it was important early on. And I see Mike is now here to recognize Mike Elliott of our president of our association, Nicole Chapdelaine, as president of our senior officers association and Micki Ruth, the chair of our commission. This is probably one of the only places that I know of in Canada, where you have everybody pulling together where the collective parts are bigger than, than better than the individual parts.

It doesn't mean we just don't disagree on things, but we collectively are doing is putting our community at the center of focus in trying to be better than we are yesterday. And that's not lost. That inspires me as a police leader of what it means to be a member of EPS. It will be hard. We will be uncomfortable. Anything else? Everything that's essential often is, but we've already started just recently. We had a round table with some of the passionate community advocates to share their voices on their interactions with police. And they shared moments where they were intimidated when they felt they hadn't been given respect when they were ignored by police. It was powerful. Some pointed out moments where an officer made a difference for them actually said it was the moment of time of positive change in their life, help them turn their life around, or just told them that everything was going to be okay.

We can learn and make change from it all. And the thing about that is, is what we shared in that room was difficult stories that were sad, that were hard. They were hard to tell and we shared laughs if there's one thing that I've learned in the indigenous culture and in some of our marginalized communities, some that laughter's the universal language. And with that, everybody understands how it makes to make some. What do you feel if you see, see them smile? It probably means that you're making them comfortable. If you see them sad, it's important that you listen. We have two years, one mouth, and we need to use it proportionally through this engagement. We're looking at to hear it, all the stories of help, the stories we've caused harm things you think we need to change process. We need to introduce the programs we need to start.

We're going to take it all in. Think about it. Actively ask questions, give deeper understanding into what we do in the community. Listen to the community and truly understand and appreciate the community even more so than we do today. That's going informed the change we need to make helped shape the Edmonton police service for the future into an institution that is a true protector and essential part of supporting those simple and universal values where everyone deserves to enjoy respect no matter where, who you are, the right feel safe at all times. The fundamental equality of every person and access to jobs, justice. That is a challenge. No one will deny that, but I know that as long as we commit to remain together, communicating, sharing with an understanding each other, we will build the partnerships. We need to continue to drive progress. We'll meet that challenge. This is about our kids and our grandkids losing is not an option.