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July 5, 2022

Dear Mayor Sohi,

Thank you for your letter dated May 12, 2022 expressing concerns with downtown safety and, in particular, transit safety. We truly share your concerns, along with recently expressed concerns by many citizens, with safety in our city.

While Edmonton has actually made substantive progress in crime reduction in recent years compared with other cities in Canada, serious and tragic recent incidents are very real and demonstrate two essential needs:

- The need for long term solutions to the key social issues which drive crime rates.

Along with:

- The essential need to prevent and respond to crimes and disorders as they occur.

We will not be able to give Edmontonians the security they need, and the sense of security they require, if we don't meet both of these in a comprehensive way.

We know that safety and security are core civic values for City Council and the City Administration, just as they are for the Commission and the police service, as we work together in collaborative relationships to strengthen community safety and well being. Equally important, we know a safe transit system is critical in helping Edmonton recover from the COVID 19 pandemic as citizens begin to resume normal life, which includes moving through Edmonton on public transit.

While there remains much to do, these commitments have been recently demonstrated in a number of ways such as:

- Through City Council's approval of an expanded Transit Safety Plan on February 24, 2022, in which the police service was signatory to a tripartite agreement with City Administration and the Bent Arrow Society.
- The Edmonton Police Service signaled before the Chinatown murders that they would redeploy resources to problem areas. That plan is being implemented immediately.
- EPS has also recently created units dedicated to reducing crime and social disorder such as the HELP Teams, more PACT teams, the wicetown building/programming, Crime Suppression Units, and the Virtual Opioid Dependency Program. Many of these units and

programs leverage community partnerships to ensure a compassionate multi-disciplinary approach in interacting with Edmontonians.

- The City's Community Safety and Wellbeing Strategy, in which the police service plays a role, was approved the week of May 22 and will have a significant positive impact. This plan takes a broad view of how safety can be improved in Edmonton using a multi-disciplinary lens to make investments to address the root causes that contribute to safety concerns.

The new directions and investments by City Council and the police service are designed to tackle the root cause of social disorder and ensure there is a system meeting the needs of all Edmontonians. However, while many of these initiatives have shown promising early success (HELP, wicehtowin building/programming), the rest will need time to show the expected results.

The Commission has been proactive in this space for three years. We started by hiring a Chief with a change mandate, leading to an organizational review and restructuring of existing EPS resources. This initiative aimed to better manage service demands by balancing traditional enforcement with additional social supports. New plans and structures position the EPS as a modern police service that puts community safety and well-being at the forefront, while becoming more efficient in reducing crime and victimization.

The Commission is deeply committed to ongoing conversations with the community at large to gather their input and help build support through community partnerships. The Service's Commitment to Action Implementation Plan initiative, which was the largest engagement effort to date involving racialized and underserved communities, outlined priorities for a restorative approach for service delivery to the residents of Edmonton. This work was based upon the 2020 Community Feedback report, which saw a diverse cross-section of Edmontonians reimagine community safety and well-being and identify both challenges and opportunities for the Service.

All of this work, and progress to date, can be seen in the Service's 2021 Annual Report<sup>1</sup> which reports on the Commission approved EPS Business Plans<sup>2</sup> and Corporate Performance Framework. We recognize that both the Commission and the Service are part of a larger system, which collectively creates the safety and community wellness the public needs and recognize that our goals cannot be achieved in isolation. Many of the indicators identified in this annual report speak to Edmontonians' overall well-being and feelings of safety within the city.

I want to assure you, your Council colleagues, and the public that the Commission and the police service are deeply committed to community safety and wellbeing as evidenced by numerous and newly-developed programs implemented by the police service over the past two years such as HELP, crime disruption teams, youth engagement teams, development and creation of collaborative multi-disciplinary teams, and broad and meaningful public engagement initiatives. Moreover, being there when police partners call for assistance for outreach or for specific incidents, and being actively engaged with communities and our

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.edmontonpolice.ca/-/media/EPS%20External/Files/Reports/2021AnnualReport-Web.ashx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.edmontonpolice.ca/-/media/EPS%20External/Files/Reports/2020-2022%20Business%20Plan.ashx>

municipal partners in developing wholistic solutions, remain part of our strategic approach.

While there have been high profile and truly tragic incidents in our city in recent weeks, overall, Edmonton has seen an unprecedented reduction in crime across the city demonstrating that many of these initiatives and plans are working. However, we also know there is much to be done, especially in the areas of social supports which are so critical to crime and incident prevention. As you will see in the attachment, there are indicators that violent and disorder calls for service continue at a concerning pace on our LRT system.

The Commission is not complacent and we committed to gathering and acting on community feedback.

Answers to your specific six (6) questions are attached to this letter.

Thank you,

John McDougall, O.M.M. C.D.  
Commission Chair

Attachment