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## OPENING STATEMENT FROM COMMISSION CHAIR SHAWN CORNETT

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For those not familiar with our role, the Calgary Police Commission is a body of community members appointed by City Council to provide independent citizen governance and oversight of the Calgary Police Service on behalf of all Calgarians.

To protect the political neutrality of the police, Alberta's Police Act requires that the police chief report directly to us and that we give direction to the Service through the chief, police policies, monitoring of the complaints process, and approval of how the police budget is spent.

To open our meeting, I would like to acknowledge that this call is taking place on the traditional territory of the Nittsitapi, made up of the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations; the Iyarhe Nakoda First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. These are the people who made a treaty with the Crown forming Treaty 7 territory. The city of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.

We are committed to doing our part to address the inequity and intergenerational trauma caused by past and current wrongs to support reconciliation with all Indigenous people in our community.

The Calgary Police Commission also condemns racism and prejudice in all forms and is committed to being anti-racist. We stand in solidarity with our colleagues, families and citizens who are Black, Indigenous or other People of Colour.

Our Commission has just had a private discussion with the Service about the plans to respond to the ongoing protests in the Beltline, especially for this weekend. That portion of the meeting allowed us to discuss sensitive information about the planned police operations.

We also recognize that many residents and businesses in the Beltline have felt left in the dark on the police approach to these protests and want to know there is a plan to end the disruptions in their community. This public presentation is aimed at providing what information to the public the police can without impacting the effectiveness of planned police responses.

Over this week, our Commission has received over 400 written submissions on the protests. Many have clearly outlined the impact these protests are having on local businesses and



residents. We hear you and we want to make it end. Your community has experienced a disproportionate impact from these protests. It cannot continue.

We have also heard from countless Calgarians who are concerned about protecting their rights to protest and freely assemble. The Commission supports your rights, but freedom also comes with a responsibility to others in your community. Holding protests that obstruct traffic, produce noise and disrupt the same neighbourhood week after week only continually punishes people who have as much control as you over the things you are protesting.

It is not a responsible use of your freedom.

The situation we are in is unprecedented and very complex, both from a legal perspective and from a policing perspective. Typically protests requiring police intervention are violent or are permanently occupying a public space. A protest that causes temporary but regular disruptions is a new challenge to address.

Members of the Calgary Police Service have tried various methods of addressing these protests over the years, including ticketing, negotiation and limiting access to planned protest areas. All of these approaches have not stopped the protestors and in some cases created concerns of even worse impacts on the community as frustrated crowds move to places that are even more disruptive or unsafe.

We will only find a solution to this issue by working together. The police absolutely have a big role to play as the lead law enforcement agency, but different levels of government, community members and protestors all also need to be part of the solution if we are going to avoid volatile, open conflict in Calgary's streets.

The Service has a job to do this weekend and while it is fair to ask tough questions about the approach taken to date – questions that our Commission is asking ourselves – we also need to support the Service as they work to pull all the levers they can to resolve this situation.

These are challenging times in our city. The pandemic has taken a toll on everyone and has left deep divides. It has been hard on businesses, residents, leaders and those who have served as police officers during this time.

The Service has been working all week on a new plan to address the protests, given the escalations we saw last weekend. They are also working closely with The City and provincial partners to find long-term solutions. They have heard clearly that a new approach is needed, and our Commission will ensure that a new approach is used.