



COMMISSION CHAIR'S REPORT AND OPENING COMMENTS

This has been an extremely busy month for both the Commission and the Service.

The issue that is likely top of mind for most is the decision made by the Commission to direct that the [thin blue line be replaced](#) with something that better reflects the values of all Calgarians.

I want to start by saying this decision was not an expression of non-confidence in the members of the Calgary Police Service. The Commission and the community values those who serve and strongly supports the desire to both visually honour fallen officers and recognize the sacrifices made by those who serve and their families.

Calgarians and the Commission are grateful for the outstanding work the sworn and civilian members of the Service do every day to keep us safe.

As I [said to the media](#) yesterday afternoon, this conversation in Calgary has never been a question of whether police officers are wearing the symbol with good intentions or to express positive things. It was a decision we unanimously made because the symbol's meaning is mixed and is [seen differently by a significant number of people](#) in our city.

This conversation has also not been happening in isolation. Thin blue line patches have already been ordered off the uniforms of officers in Edmonton, Victoria, Ottawa, Toronto, Saint John and the RCMP. Other cities, like Saskatoon, are in the process of considering what to do on this issue.

Our conversations as a Commission have also not been rushed. Neither the leadership of the Service nor the police associations were surprised by the Commission's decision. We made it clear last fall after considering the information submitted by the Service that we were not supportive of the thin blue line being permitted on police uniforms.

While the Commission's direction on the thin blue line patch has not changed, we understand that implementing it will take some time. Effective anti-racism work and culture change requires dialogue and building buy-in. There is a lot of understandable emotion on both sides of the thin blue line discussion and we support the Chief taking a couple of weeks to work through the decision with members of the Service.



I also want to say that it is not lost on the Commission that a lawful direction is being ignored by officers. The Calgary Police Commission is an extension of Calgary's elected government, empowered by the province's elected government, to provide governance and oversight of the police on behalf of Calgarians.

It is concerning that Calgary's police officers consider it acceptable to ignore a lawful direction they personally disagree with. But it is even more concerning that senior officers in the organization are encouraging and participating in this behaviour.

While we understand that there are strong feelings around this decision and we want – as much as possible – to avoid compliance through enforcement, citizen oversight of the police is foundational to modern democracies. There will have to be accountability for undermining the lawful chain of command if this continues.

We also understand clearly from members that the tension around the thin blue line patch decision is about so much more than just the patch. We have heard that you feel unsupported, unvalued and attacked. We have also heard that there is a need for better communication and engagement between you and the Commission.

We commit to you that we will immediately start working on rebuilding the trust between you and our Commission as Calgarians are relying on us to work together to ensure our community is safe.

Finally, I want to say again that this issue is important, but it is far from the only important policing issue in our city. Our Commission is committed to seeing this decision through, but we are also focused on dealing with severe staffing shortages on the front line, ensuring safety in Calgary's transforming downtown and moving forward with the many needed reforms and improvements underway at the Calgary Police Service.

Since our last regular meeting, the Service has brought people to justice for armed carjackings of delivery trucks, attempted murder during a road rage incident, and a string of robberies and sexual assaults.

Investigators have also been working hard to bring charges in a random attack in a park and a hate crime at a church.

In response to concerns from the community, the Service adjusted their response to weekly protests in the Beltline to better manage an unprecedented situation that presented countless legal and logistical challenges. Policing protests is challenging enough in normal times, but the job is even harder in this time of high emotion and



division. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in giving Beltline residents their weekends back.

Shockingly, our city has also seen six homicides and suspicious deaths in March and April, including random attacks. These cases are heartbreaking, worrying and make us angry. While it does not bring anyone's loved ones back, we take some comfort in knowing that the Service dedicates countless hours and resources to finding those responsible and bringing them to justice.

These are just a few of the tens of thousands of calls that officers responded to this month with courage and compassion to help keep our community safe. While we are working through some deep divides right now, we must not lose sight of the outstanding work done by those who faithfully serve our city.

The Service has also continued their work on reconciliation. I was honoured to attend an Eagle Feather transfer ceremony where local Elders transferred a feather to the Service that can be used to swear oaths. Integrating Indigenous practices into the Service under the guidance and supervision of Elders is one of many ways we are seeing reconciliation.

The Service also launched a training course for all members to learn about the ways and worldview of local Indigenous Peoples. The course also covers our shared history of Treaty 7, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and intergenerational trauma. We are proud of the Service for all the work being done to build understanding between officers and the communities they serve!

On behalf of the Commission and all Calgarians, thank you to everyone who has worked so hard on these cases and initiatives. Our Commission is committed to continue working with you to ensure we are tackling the big public safety issues facing Calgary together so that we can all enjoy a safe and inclusive city.