



**ATTORNEY GENERAL
MINISTER OF JUSTICE**

Room 104
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3C 0V8

September 18, 2019

David Asper, Q.C.
Chairperson
Manitoba Police Commission
1802 – 155 Carlton Street
Winnipeg MB R3C 3H8

Dear Mr. Asper:

Manitoba's Policing and Public Safety Strategy includes a strong commitment to improving safety in downtown Winnipeg. In accordance with my mandate, I am directing the Manitoba Police Commission to consult with the City of Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Police Service and private sector stakeholders to identify and leverage ongoing work and to develop recommendations to make downtown Winnipeg a safer place for Manitoba families.

In 2016, the Winnipeg Police Service released their Centreline Downtown Safety Strategy, which included commitments to work with the private sector to increase foot patrols and expand camera surveillance in downtown Winnipeg. In 2018, the City of Winnipeg invested in expanding initiatives in this strategy, including decommissioning the Portage Place Shopping Centre bus shelter that had become a crime hotspot. This is incremental progress, but statistics show that much more needs to be done.

The Winnipeg Police Service's 2018 annual statistical report shows that violent crime increased by 10% in the downtown Portage Avenue Districts last year, which is a 36% increase over the five-year average. Property crime is also up by 22% in the area – a 47% increase over the five-year average. These rising crime rates have had an impact on perceptions of downtown safety. In 2017, the Winnipeg Police Service General Survey showed that 84% of Winnipeggers would feel unsafe walking downtown alone at night – including 90% of women. Our government believes that no Manitoban should feel unsafe taking their family to a Jets game or walking to their car at night.

I am asking the Manitoba Police Commission to report back with a concise set of recommendations of actions and initiatives that will reduce crime and ensure that all

Manitobans feel safe in downtown Winnipeg. Your work should be informed by successful models in other jurisdictions, including the Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District, which involves collaboration between the police and the private sector to keep their downtown safe and economically prosperous.

The Commission should consider the following measures to improve downtown safety in Winnipeg:

- Increased downtown foot patrols, including more effective use of frontline officers, cadets, other public safety resources and Downtown Business Improvement Zone ambassadors;
- The use of both City and privately owned and operated closed circuit security cameras to improve public safety in the downtown area;
- Improved lighting in areas that are perceived as unsafe by Winnipeggers and visitors;
- To ensure communication connectivity, information and data sharing between the Winnipeg Police Service, private security personnel and volunteer downtown patrols;
- Stronger enforcement of existing laws that prohibit aggressive panhandling;
- Better coordination between the Winnipeg Police Service, the private sector and the Manitoba Prosecution Service to address chronic and high-volume users of public resources and target prolific, violent and property offenders;
- Expanded community engagement, including town halls and other public education efforts promoting downtown safety initiatives.

I expect the Manitoba Police Commission to provide an initial report to government by November 17, 2019. Your report should include recommendations for action and advice as to the provincial government's role, including regulatory roles, respective provincial, municipal and private funding responsibilities, and program monitoring to strengthen safety in downtown Winnipeg.

This work is vitally important, and I want to thank you and the Manitoba Police Commission for taking on this challenge. Downtown Winnipeg is the entertainment, sports and economic hub of Manitoba, with a growing residential component, and we must do everything we can to ensure that it is a safe place for Manitobans and visitors to live, work and play.

Sincerely,

Cliff Cullen
Minister of Justice
Attorney General