

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

For Immediate Release

## **POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY COALITION**

Over 90 community based organizations in Winnipeg have come together to affirm their support for the Black Lives Matter Movement and a set of recommendations to achieve substantial change. They are adding their voices to growing calls from Black and Indigenous leaders for meaningful action to address police violence and systemic racism. Racial profiling and the disproportionate use of deadly force against Black and Indigenous community members have been compounded by the lack of community resources to address poverty, addictions, and mental health issues. Acknowledgements of systemic racism by government leaders and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) as well as the stated commitment to bias-free policing by the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) must be accompanied by immediate and concrete actions to address long standing community concerns about police accountability and the allocation of resources. These actions must be undertaken through collaborative engagement with Black and Indigenous led organizations and the communities they represent.

"The matter of police accountability is not a new issue so we are frustrated by the lack of tangible action. The revolution has been televised, we have now organized, and are prepared to mobilize. We now need those that wield the power to initiate changes, to act in the favour of justice for ALL." Rhonda Thompson, Black History Month Celebration Committee (BHMCC) Inc.

"The overwhelmingly positive response we received from a broad range of community organizations who endorsed the recommendations is a city-wide outcry for immediate and profound change." Louise Simbandumwe, Co-Director, SEED Winnipeg.

"Part of making Winnipeg their new home is feeling safe; regrettably many newcomers, especially youth, have experienced hostility from some members of the Winnipeg Police Service. Our efforts to address these concerns has not led to change. Everyone deserves to feel safe in our community. Everyone's call for help should be answered promptly and by individuals who have both the skills needed to intervene in the situation and the compassion to do so respectfully." Dorota Blumczynska, Executive Director, IRCOM

"We continue to over invest in policing and prisons to address our failures to ensure that everyone as equal and equitable opportunities to live their best life. At 304 million for the Winnipeg Police Service and well over 2 billion a year in provincial Corrections alone, and we have still tragically seen a rise in violent crime, we have to ask ourselves: "What is our 'endgame'? Is what we are doing, working? Kate Kehler, Executive Director, SPCW

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**BACKGROUND ATTACHED**