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INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION UNIT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APPOINTED

Zane Tessler to Lead Unit: Swan

Manitoba has taken the next step in ensuring stronger oversight and more transparent investigations of major incidents and criminal allegations involving police officers with the appointment of Zane Tessler as the first executive director of the Independent Investigation Unit (IIU), Justice Minister Andrew Swan announced today.

"A civilian-led investigation unit is a cornerstone of the Police Services Act and the IIU needs an experienced and respected leader," said Swan. "Zane Tessler has dedicated his career to the law and with more than three decades of service as a Crown attorney and defence counsel, he has a wealth of knowledge and experience that will aid him tremendously as he sets up the new unit."

Tessler was called to the Manitoba Bar in 1980 and spent the first 18 years of his legal career as a criminal defence lawyer. He joined Manitoba Justice's Prosecution Service in 1998 and has conducted prosecutions of serious and complex matters across the province. Most recently, he held the position of supervising senior Crown attorney responsible for the management and development of new prosecutors. Tessler has taken a leading role in national and international working groups, developing policies to prevent wrongful convictions and regularly presents on aspects of the law to police, lawyers and university students.

Tessler's initial task will be to make the IIU operational by establishing necessary policies and regulations, and hiring investigators.

"The IIU will play an important part in reinforcing the confidence of Manitobans in our police services," said Tessler. "I look forward to this exciting opportunity."

Manitoba's Police Services Act created the most comprehensive investigation model in Canada to deal with incidents involving police, both on and off duty, said Swan. The IIU will have provincewide jurisdiction over police including First Nations, RCMP and municipal police. Investigations will be mandatory when fatal force or serious injury incidents occur and the unit will be able to take over any other investigation it considers advisable.

The new Police Services Act was drafted following the recommendations of the Taman Inquiry, an extensive review of best practices in other jurisdictions and consultations on key issues with the public, community groups, police chiefs, police associations, First Nations, Aboriginal and municipal leaders and organizations, and other stakeholders.