

Community Safety and Well-being

Priority Action Item Investments

RECOMMENDATION

That Community and Public Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That the 2021 Social Development operating expenditure budget be increased by \$1.4 million, on a one-time basis, to provide additional grant funding allocations to the Anti-racism Advisory Committee (\$1.174 million), the Sisters Dialogue/Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues Community Safe Walk initiative (\$45,000), The African Canadian Civic Engagement Council initiative to support community cultural and psychological safety (\$81,000), and to provide honorariums to enable citizen participation in engagement activities to advance the development of community safety and well-being actions (\$100,000), with funding from the remaining 2021 Edmonton Police Services budget held corporately in the financial strategies budget for redirection towards community safety and well-being initiatives.

Report Purpose

Council decision required

Council is being asked to approve one-time funding to support community-led initiatives to improve community safety and well-being that will ensure Edmontonians have what they need to succeed and are safe and secure in our community.

Executive Summary

- The community continues to identify opportunities to address systemic racism and improve support and services to people experiencing racism.
- The need to address the broad societal issues and better support individuals in our community is clear.
- Allocating additional funding to the community through the Anti-racism Advisory Committee grant application process is an immediate step that will help address these issues.

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- Administration acknowledges the depth and breadth of actions identified by City Council, the Community Safety and Well-being Task Force, individuals and agencies.
- Administration has identified potential areas of service improvement related to Community Safety and Well-Being. These opportunities can serve as starting points for community conversations and a co-creation process that supports this work.
- Ongoing engagement and collaboration with the community is critical to ensure that funding is directed to actions that will combat racism and result in a city that is safer for all.
- An update on the status of work already underway will be provided to Council in Q1 of 2022.

REPORT

A priority for the City of Edmonton is to operate and plan the city in a way that includes all residents and values diverse perspectives. As an organization that serves nearly one million Edmontonians, the City of Edmonton recognizes the importance of a continuous, internal and external, comprehensive approach to inclusivity, equality, and diversity.

The City's Diversity and Inclusion Framework was revitalized in late 2019 to include 75 actions that foster diversity, equity, skill, and growth across the organization. Throughout the years, the City has initiated and supported numerous transformative efforts. Increased understanding of community experiences and expectations, reports like Safer for All, and recent local and global events, have informed the City's strategic focus on creating a healthy city.

In June 2020, City Council heard from 142 individuals about their experiences with racism and policing in the City. Subsequently, City Council directed several actions to reform policing, including establishing the Community Safety and Well-Being Task Force.

The task force focused on four major areas:

- how community safety is defined
- the role of police in a safe community
- the conduct of police providing community safety
- the roles and conduct of others (peace officers) in a safe community

At the April 6/9/13, 2021, City Council meeting the task force presented its Safer for All report to City Council, which included 14 recommendations that were meant to help make Edmonton safer for everyone (April 6, 2021, Community Safety and Well-being Task Force report CR_8453). At the June 30, 2021, Community and Public Services Committee meeting, Administration presented the Safer for All Interim report: A Work Plan for Community Safety and Well-Being to Committee (June 30, 2021, Office of the City Manager report OCM00567). This report focused on the short-term actionable items within the direct control of Administration, the Edmonton Police Service and the Edmonton Police Commission. To date, nearly 70 actionable items have been identified as either currently underway or starting in 2021. As well, medium- to long-term approaches will be

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presented to City Council in the first quarter of 2022. The Safer for All work plan highlighted four areas of focus:

- Integrated System and Coordinated Response
 - Integration requires information, protocols and processes, training and education, technology and governance at the system level.
- Organizational Cultures
 - Organizational culture reflects both the individual and organization. The organization sets recruitment practices, trains and develops employees, sets expectations and steers the employee experience from onboarding to departure. How the organization sets expectations for inclusionary behaviour and how individuals respond establishes the tone for the workforce environment.
- Social Responsibility
 - Involves ongoing assessment of organizational decisions on the community and acknowledges those with power - in this case, a municipal government and a police force - have special obligations both to deliver services and make their communities better.
- Prevention and Support
 - Key partnerships are in place to provide a continuum of services that will reduce the instances where vulnerable people come into contact with the justice system when they need understanding, support and targeted services.

At the July 5/7, 2021, City Council meeting, City Council directed Administration to work with the Anti-racism Advisory Committee, additional stakeholders and the Edmonton Police Commission, to provide additional clarity and actionable data points on the tangible outcomes taken with respect to the 14 recommendations of the Safer for All report.

Recommended One-time Investment in Community-Led Actions

The community continues to identify opportunities to address systemic racism and improve support and services to people experiencing racism. The importance of supporting the community to address broad societal issues and to better support individuals in the community is clear. These one-time investments support Task Force Recommendation Fourteen: Bring police funding into line with comparable cities and tie a portion of funding to specific performance, specifically Action 14.3: Take the additional funding that would have gone to Edmonton Police Service under the previous funding formula, and use it to refund the community.

Recommended Actions:

1. Anti-racism Advisory Committee grant funding and engagement activities (\$1.274 million)

The Anti-racism Advisory Committee continues to provide the role of understanding the community's needs and enabling community-led actions by recommending grant funding allocations for City Council's approval. Administration recommends that one-time funding of \$1.174 million be appropriated for the Anti-racism Advisory Committee to make recommendations on how funds will be disbursed as grants to support community-led anti-racism and community safety initiatives. In addition, it is recommended to

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allocate \$100,000 for honorariums to support citizen participation in engagement activities to advance the development of community safety and well-being actions.

2. Sisters Dialogue/Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues - Community Safe Walk initiative (\$45,000)

Black, racialized and visibly Muslim women have been adversely affected by the recent ongoing incidences in Edmonton and there is an immediate need to create safe spaces and supports to ensure their safety and well-being. Due to fears for their safety, Muslim women and girls have resorted to adjusting their daily walks and/or commutes. Sisters Dialogue has successfully arranged several informal walks between allies and Muslim women. There is a need to upscale this walking service to create safe and vibrant communities where people from all backgrounds can gather in a supportive and mutually beneficial arrangement and allow Muslim women to reclaim public spaces in meaningful ways. The pilot Community Safe Walk initiative, in partnership between Sisters Dialogue, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and the City of Edmonton, is being recommended to meet these needs.

3. The African Canadian Civic Engagement Council initiative to support community cultural and psychological safety (\$81,000)

This project represents a gap in our understanding of hate-based activity in Alberta and Canada and the services that are available to victims, their families and wider ethno-cultural communities. Through mobilizing community-based, grassroots, cultural and psychological safe intervention, international best practices in victim services, racialized skilled and experienced practitioners, this initiative will provide an important step in addressing gaps from an intersectional lens of supporting communities most impacted by domestic violence, structural violence, and hate-motivated violence in Edmonton, Alberta and Canada.

Impact:

- Investing in these priorities would support the community to address the broad societal issues and better support individuals in our community
- Communities led by racialized individuals and organizations are prioritized for investment
- Investments go to community organizations led by racialized people
- Edmontonians are more aware of racism and its impact and have a greater understanding of how to take action to acknowledge and address it
- Edmontonians will be knowledgeable about the community organizations working to dismantle individual, systemic and structural racism
- Edmontonians will work together to build a diverse, inclusive and equitable city

Results:

- All applications are assessed based on impact prior to award
- Recipients will measure the impact of the project with a final report

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- Additional measures and results will be identified for projects and programs as they arise and are implemented

Next Steps and Future Service Improvements

Administration acknowledges the depth and breadth of actions identified by City Council, the task force, individuals, and agencies. Over time, when combined, these actions will result in a city that is safer for all. An update on the status of work already underway will be provided to City Council in the first quarter of 2022.

Continuing to engage with the community as work continues is critical. Administration has heard the importance of:

- data collection
- collaborative decision making with the community
- standing together for communities being targeted
- facilitation, not prescription

Administration will continue to engage with the community to identify and prioritize investment strategies. This includes working in a collaborative, decisive way with the Anti-racism Advisory Committee, additional stakeholders who may be members of racialized groups, the Edmonton Police Commission, service agencies and volunteer organizations. Starting in November 2021, Administration will initiate community conversations to:

- establish an ongoing mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the collective work
- prioritize investments from previous engagement efforts that support the community
- identify additional solutions that help individuals feel safe in Edmonton
- leverage concurrent engagement spaces with a cross-section of the community (community leaders, agencies, individuals)

Central to the upcoming engagement with the community is a commitment to the following principles:

- wisdom comes from many sources
- together we will listen, learn and lead
- meaningful change requires us to do things differently and not default to institutional behaviour that has deepened division with communities
- we may have different, but complementary, definitions of success

Based on the recommendations from the Community Safety and Well-being Task Force, Administration has identified a number of potential opportunities for future investments in service improvements. In order to stay true to the principles above, these investment ideas will be further explored and prioritized with the community. Based on these conversations, Administration will return with thoughtful, community-based and co-created recommendations for use of the \$11 million in ongoing funds held corporately starting in 2022.

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Potential areas of service improvement considered by Administration are outlined below. These opportunities are likely starting points for any community conversations on how to invest in Community Safety and Well-Being.

1. Address the needs and service gaps for Indigenous Edmontonians, particularly those experiencing homelessness

Administration has previously identified how the lack of trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and low-barrier emergency shelter options in Edmonton has contributed to a rise in homeless encampments across the city. Available shelter services are not accessible to many Indigenous peoples, especially those with historic or intergenerational trauma or complex health needs. Multiple reports identify the need for investment in housing and emergency shelters for Indigenous people in Canada, including, most recently, the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls.

Impact:

- Support an additional 120-200 Indigenous people per year to secure permanent housing
- Increase the availability of culturally appropriate and trauma-informed services for Indigenous people, including access to shelter
- Individuals have a greater sense of agency to collaborate with service providers on their journey to well-being
- Recognize the unique experiences of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness and provide Indigenous-led support to (re)connect with their cultural practices.

Result:

- Decrease in the number of people living in encampments
- Increase in the number of Indigenous people securing permanent housing
- Those served report an improvement in wellbeing

2. Transform our approaches to addressing encampments

The number of people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton has more than doubled since 2019. According to Homeward Trust's By Name List - a real-time list of people currently experiencing homelessness - the number of people experiencing homelessness has grown from 1,350 in December 2019, to 2,792 in October 2021. In addition, there has been an increase in encampments in most parts of the city. Currently, close to 800 people are estimated to be unsheltered on any given night. So far this year, Administration has responded to 5,034 complaints regarding encampments, up from 2,171 in 2018. The City of Edmonton bears most of the costs associated with encampment investigation, closure and clean-up. As the volume of complaints rises and resources are redirected to dedicated teams to meet demand, costs grow and other services are under-resourced.

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Administration contracts a team of nine outreach workers who, supported by approximately six other sector staff from different agencies (contracted by Homeward Trust), represent the entirety of the social service housing-focused response to encampments. While this team's work and approaches are effective, they are not adequately resourced to address the volume of encampments or the complexity of health challenges encampment residents face. These individuals require significant care and support to resolve their homelessness.

Enforcement-based responses are limited because they do not address the root causes of encampments and do not support individuals in a sustained resolution of their homelessness. As a result, encampment closures frequently displace individuals before they can obtain the support they need to become housed and move encampments from one location to another.

Impact:

- Increase in social service responses to encampment residents
- House 250 more people per year
- Support up to 700 individuals per year
- Increased communication and support to neighbourhoods impacted by encampments through faster response times and improved resolution

Results:

- Increased number of people from encampments that transition to housing
- Respond to residents that are impacted by nearby encampments within 24 hours of receiving the complaint
- Increase the uptake of housing in relation to referrals to housing

3. Transform our approach to bylaw enforcement

Although sometimes manifesting in problem behaviour or social disorder, core concerns such as housing, mental health, and substance use often contribute to instances that result in interactions with peace officers. The alternative response involves providing a person-centred and trauma-informed approach to current social issues rather than traditional enforcement. This approach is guided by values of dignity and respect, providing coordinated care, and delivered through a compassionate, trauma-informed, and human-centred lens.

Impact:

- Increased sense of safety and belonging in public spaces for marginalized people and other citizens
- Connect marginalized people to resources that support their basic needs and well-being as well as long-term, stable supports
- Reduce the need for enforcement responses

Results:

- Increase number of total engagements where people are made aware of or physically connected to agencies, services, or resources by type
- Increase the number of engagements where people report their needs have been met

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- Decrease the number of engagements requiring enforcement

4. Enhance 24/7 crisis and outreach support

Outreach and emergency shelters are critical entry points into the homeless-serving system of care. As a result, people who become or are already experiencing homelessness are likely to connect with one of these essential services. If these services are not working well (e.g. not housing-focused) or not resourced appropriately, people will experience difficulty accessing the help they need when they need it, which makes their homelessness more difficult to resolve over time.

Enhancing 24/7 crisis and outreach support is a proactive action that compliments and augments the Human-centred Engagement Liaison Partnership response program being led by the Edmonton Police Service. Currently, several different outreach teams are working to support people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton, all with different focuses and mandates.

Crisis and outreach support could be further improved by working with the existing outreach teams and gathering client perspectives to evaluate currently available services and identify gaps. Coordination of the outreach team's activities could be explored to address these gaps proactively and further ensure that citizens requiring services receive the right resources, from the right provider, at the right time.

Impacts:

- Citizens requiring service have access to the services needed 24/7
- Services meet the needs of those accessing care
- Service providers collectively identify and address gaps in care
- Opportunity to deliver proactive care in advance of a need for crisis response
- Reduced demand for enforcement services and interactions with the justice system
- People without housing have a choice over the kind of outreach support they most need for their situation

Results:

- Percent change in the number of calls for service responded to and/or resolved
- Number of outreach activities outside of regular agency hours

5. Sustained and ongoing investment in community-led actions

Sustained, ongoing investment in the community is needed to address the longer-term actions required to achieve a city that is anti-racist. Building on the inaugural year of the City of Edmonton's Anti-racism Grants Program, the Anti-racism Advisory Committee is positioned to assist in advancing efforts that bring various stakeholders together. Building a transformative framework for a co-created action plan from the recommendations in the Safer for All report could result in an equitable and inclusive Edmonton through community-led initiatives. The Anti-racism Advisory Committee continues to provide the role of understanding the community's needs and enabling community-led actions by allocating grant funding to the community

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Impact:

- Communities and organizations led by racialized people are prioritized for investment
- Edmontonians are more aware of racism and its impact and have a greater understanding of how to take action to address it
- Edmontonians will be knowledgeable of the community organizations working to dismantle individual, systemic and structural racism
- Edmontonians will work together to build a diverse, inclusive and equitable city

Results:

- All grant applications are assessed based on impact before the grant award
- Grant recipients are expected to measure the impact of the project with a final report
- Percent increase in grants awarded and utilized
- Additional measures and results will be identified for projects and programs as they arise and are implemented

Budget/Financial Implications

During the Fall 2020 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment process in December 2020, City Council approved a reduction in the Edmonton Police Services budget from 2021 levels by \$11 million on an ongoing basis, with \$5.5 million reallocated and held corporately in each of 2021 and 2022. Of the \$5.5 million in funding that was held corporately in 2021, \$3.75 million was allocated to Community Investment Operating Grants and \$300,000 was allocated to the task force for administrative costs, \$1.45 million remains unallocated. Administration recommends that \$1.174 million be used to provide additional grant funding allocations to the Anti-racism Advisory Committee, \$45,000 be used to fund the Sisters Dialogue/Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues Community Safe Walk initiative, \$81,000 be used to fund the African Canadian Civic Engagement Council initiative to support community cultural and psychological safety, \$100,000 for honorariums to support citizen participation in engagement activities that will advance identification of community safety and well-being actions.

Administration will return in the first quarter of 2022, following further engagement and collaboration with the agencies and residents impacted by potential investment decisions, with thoughtful, community-based and co-created recommendations for use of the \$11 million in ongoing funds held corporately starting in 2022.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Community insights informed the identification of the priority action items at many points and from many sources, including:

- 2020 non-statutory public hearings on the Edmonton Police Commission
- Community Safety and Well-being Task Force report
- Citizen communications to City Council and Administration
- Anti-racism Advisory Committee
- Feedback gathered at City Council and committee meetings

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Central to the allocation of funds and upcoming engagement is a commitment to:

- relationship-building
- respect and reconciliation
- distributed power
- honouring community-based expertise

Previous engagement conducted by Administration with Indigenous Edmontonians and stakeholders for the City Plan affirmed the need to provide additional access to services and housing for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton. Administration heard many ideas expressed by the community that reflect a desire for change that supports an anti-racist community.

The opportunities identified will require further conversation with the community to allow their insights to inform and shape the next steps.

GBA+

GBA+ analysis allows those involved to examine how the work will impact diverse groups and identify measures to ensure equity. The GBA+ process involves reflection, research, engagement, findings, recommendations, implementation and evaluation. In many ways, the public hearings in 2020 and the Safer for All report called for City Council and Administration to participate in most of these steps.

Youth, grassroots and non-profit organizations led by or working to support racialized people often face increased barriers to accessing and applying for grant funding. These barriers might include limited time available for grant writing due to competing community priorities or smaller operational budgets, impacting their ability to hire staff with specific expertise in grant writing. Given these barriers, implementing a traditional grant program without additional support, flexibility or prioritization would likely negatively impact those applicants.

In designing the Anti-racism Grants Program, clear efforts were made to mitigate or remove barriers to ensure equity and support equality of outcomes for applicants. These efforts included:

- Application process
 - meeting with applicants virtually, via email or by phone to answer questions about the grant program and the application process
 - providing transcription services to applicants upon request
 - flexibility around timelines for the provision of supporting documents upon request
 - providing standby support until midnight on the closing date
 - assessing late applications on a case-by-case basis
- Grant review process
 - ensuring that all review panel members were aware of and adhered to the review process confidentiality and conflict of interest statement
 - utilizing an evaluation tool (a scoring rubric) to ensure consistent and fair assessment of each application
- Recommendation process

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- providing priority to organizations that demonstrated that they were led by racialized individuals, had an operating budget under \$250,000 per year, had not received prior City of Edmonton funding, and/or demonstrated the involvement of partner organizations from other diverse communities (intersectionality)