

## City of Edmonton Resolution

Alberta Municipalities Annual Convention 2022

May XX, 2022



**Title of Resolution:** Advancing Action on Alberta's Drug Poisoning Crisis  
**Moved by:** City of Edmonton  
**Seconded by:** (to be determined)

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**WHEREAS** 2021 was Alberta's deadliest year on record for drug poisonings with 1,758 deaths;

**WHEREAS** the devastating impacts are being felt across all communities, from big cities and suburbs to smaller remote communities; cutting across all ages, all genders, and all social strata who are at risk both in their homes and within Alberta's most vulnerable populations;

**WHEREAS** the pandemic exacerbated the drug poisoning crisis in our province with social isolation, unemployment, and mental health challenges combined with an increasingly toxic illicit drug supply and reduced capacity of services, causing drug use to be even more risky;

**WHEREAS** municipalities across the province are facing the impacts of the drug poisoning crisis with added pressures on their first responders, frontline agencies, policing, and the provincial justice and healthcare systems, including increased pressure on Emergency Medical Services' (EMS) ability to provide timely response to other ongoing emergency needs;

**WHEREAS** research has shown that a full spectrum of supports is required, from prevention and education, to harm reduction (including naloxone access and training, supervised consumption sites, and safer supply programs), to treatment and recovery, along with ongoing mental health and addictions support to reverse the devastating impacts of this crisis;

**WHEREAS** the provincial government has committed to responding to the drug poisoning crisis through increased investments in recovery-oriented care for people struggling with addiction and mental health issues, which is one tool among many that must be deployed;

**IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT** Alberta Municipalities advocate for:

- The provincial government to engage municipalities, people with lived and living experience, front-line agencies, and other partners as part of a comprehensive drug poisoning prevention strategy that includes harm reduction and recovery approaches and offers increased investments to address the urgent needs;
- The provincial government to increase its investments into affordable housing with ongoing wraparound services as part of an integrated approach for responding to the drug poisoning crisis for homeless populations with complex challenges; and
- The provincial government to immediately reinstate the inclusion of neighborhood-level data in the Alberta Substance Use Surveillance System reporting to inform a data-driven response in providing resources to sustainably implement a comprehensive drug strategy.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### 2019 Alberta Municipalities Resolution

A [resolution](#) was approved at the Fall 2019 Alberta Municipalities Annual Convention, identifying a need for provincial action to address the drug poisoning crisis, including additional strategic efforts towards supporting prevention, treatment, harm reduction and community safety.

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While the province has committed to providing increased support for treatment related services, there has been little advancement on the other required interventions such as harm reduction. As this resolution is expiring this year, a new resolution will provide Alberta Municipalities with the direction to continue advocating, particularly given the increasing deaths across Alberta.

### Government of Alberta Focused Efforts

The Government of Alberta's initial response to the 2019 Alberta Municipalities' resolution referenced previous provincial budget commitments and signaled the appointment of a Mental Health and Addictions Council that would inform the government's future actions. In March 2022, the recommendations from the Advisory Council were released, and the [report](#) acknowledged the ongoing opioid crisis and the impact it was having on various populations including children and youth, and further highlighted the important role that housing with wrap-around services can play in responding to homeless populations with addictions or mental health issues. An overarching recommendation from the report highlighted the need to:

*"Create a coordinated network providing a continuum of supports (prevention, early intervention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery) for people at risk of or suffering from addiction and mental health challenges."*

The Government's [response](#) following the release of the report centered on their efforts to build a recovery-oriented system of care through increased investments, but provided no other details on new funding or initiatives in support of prevention, harm reduction or supportive housing.

### Provincial Drug Poisoning Deaths Data

The following graphs shows a continued increase in monthly drug poisoning deaths from across the province from 2019 to 2021, as taken from the [Alberta Substance Use Surveillance System](#):

