

“Believe us.”

Safer for All

**Report and Recommendations of the
Community Safety and Well-Being Task Force**

March 2021

Foreword

Compared to lots of other places in the world, Edmonton is quite a safe city. Yet not everyone in our city always feels safe. As we've seen during the past year alone, there are incidents where hate, racism and discrimination rear their ugly heads. Sometimes overtly, sometimes in disguise.

When those incidents involve people in positions of power, things get a lot more complicated. Communities are hurt. Trust is harmed. People become polarized. Some shout for funding cuts. Others shout for tougher boots on the ground. No one wins. And our city suffers.

Our Community Safety and Well-Being Task Force was asked to look at this dilemma. We spent months examining information and having conversations with experts and leaders in our city.

We found Edmonton's community safety ecosystem desperately needs to be modernized.

Our city is spending more money each year doing the same things, in the same old ways, using the same old thinking, without seeing enough change. This is frustrating people and harming public trust in key institutions.

The majority of police, peace and bylaw officers in our city are dedicated people who deeply care about the safety of Edmontonians. It is important not to judge them all based on a few "bad apples". But based on how things work right now, it is too easy for a bad apple to enter and grow in these systems.

Here are some of the systemic challenges we found:

- We estimate 32% of calls Edmonton Police Service (EPS) attends are person-in-need calls involving no crime. Our city is forcing police to step into the shoes of social workers and mental health professionals. This is unfair, ineffective and expensive.
- Training is insufficient. Inclusivity, anti-racism and other interpersonal training for police, peace and bylaw officers is ad hoc or too optional in nature. Dramatic and robust change is urgently required.
- The Edmonton Police Commission needs to provide better guidance about the kind of inclusive, anti-racist policing our city wants. And an antiquated bylaw prevents the Commission from fully reflecting the community.
- Our city's bylaws, policies and community safety institutions are criminalizing poverty. It is ineffective and inhumane and it needs to stop immediately.
- Funding for EPS has marched upward, even as funding for other services has flatlined or been cut. In recent years, City Council has provided funding to EPS regardless of its performance.

- As a city we are flying blind when it comes to community safety – especially on race-related data about interactions that police, peace and bylaw officers have with the public. This negligence must be addressed.

Virtually all of these problems have been inherited. Like weeds, they have grown into our systems over many decades due to systemic racism and systemic discrimination.

We have the power to root them out.

Our Task Force has developed recommendations that will help make Edmonton safer for everyone. Collectively, they will lead to a better ecosystem featuring, among other things:

- An independent, integrated call evaluation and dispatch centre, that sends the most appropriate service providers to the right calls.
- Comprehensive, systematic training programs for police, peace and bylaw officers that will drive fundamental culture changes that embrace and live inclusivity and anti-racism.
- Substantive changes for the Edmonton Police Commission that will result in stronger guidance to EPS and civilian oversight that more fully reflects the community.
- A new civilian oversight body for peace and bylaw officers that provides strong guidance and reflects the community.
- The professionalization of policing, with the creation of a new regulatory college covering police and peace officers.
- Changes to city bylaws and policies to stop the criminalization of poverty.
- The development of emergency shelter standards that set expectations for low-barrier shelter spaces that allow pets, partners and property.
- A freeze on funding for EPS, with increases that would have gone to EPS – estimated at **\$260 million over the next five years** – refunded back into the community to support 24/7 expansion of key social services and other community safety ecosystem needs.
- Reporting to the community every six months on the progress made in implementing our Task Force’s recommendations, to maintain forward momentum in achieving lasting community safety that is inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist.

Our city has the power to do this.

It won’t be easy. It will require courage to make changes and the right leadership to see them through.

But over time, our recommendations will result in an Edmonton that is safer for all.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Move to an independent, integrated call evaluation and dispatch model, with representation from EPS, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Edmonton Fire Rescue Services (EFRS), Community Standards and Neighbourhoods, mental health services, crisis diversion and key social service partners.
2. Expand the number and use of crisis diversion and alternative policing teams.
3. Enhance recruitment and training to build diverse, inclusive, anti-racist organizational cultures.
4. Examine and pursue ways of preventing the unnecessary use of force by police, peace and bylaw officers.
5. Identify how collective agreements are contributing to systemic bias and work to address these challenges.
6. Professionalize policing through the creation of a new regulatory college for police and peace officers.
7. Expect and instruct the Edmonton Police Commission to fully exercise its authority to provide strong guidance and oversight to EPS, in order to drive inclusivity and anti-racism in policing.
8. Change the composition and recruitment of the Edmonton Police Commission to more comprehensively reflect the community.
9. Establish mechanisms to provide community direction to peace and bylaw officers employed by the City of Edmonton.
10. Bring more transparency and independence to public complaints processes.
11. Implement measurement and reporting to drive change and encourage ongoing improvements.
12. Enact policies and standards that place focus on proactively and effectively providing support to disadvantaged Edmontonians.
13. Invest in urgently needed priorities for community safety.
14. Bring police funding into line with comparable cities and tie a portion of funding to specific performance.

We, the Community Safety and Well-Being Task Force, acknowledge the land on which we reside is Treaty Six territory. It's the traditional meeting place of diverse Indigenous peoples whose ancestors' footsteps marked this land for centuries, such as nêhiyaw (Cree), Dené, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples, and Métis.

We recognize this is a collective place many share as home. We honour and acknowledge eliminating racism and discrimination is a profound act of reconciliation. We are committed to upholding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), along with the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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Chantel Moore.
George Floyd.
Sheffield Matthews.

They are among the more recognizable and recent names of individuals whose interactions with the justice system have had tragic outcomes. Sadly, they are not alone. And sadly, too many aspects of their stories are familiar to Edmontonians from racialized communities.

We've come a long way as a society over the past couple centuries. Yet we continue to grapple with the impacts of events, policies and attitudes from long ago.

In some cases these impacts are obvious – such as overt racism, verbal and physical assaults, hate crimes, or clear threats of history repeating itself. We can see them, call them out, and work to stamp them out.

But in other cases, the impacts are more insidious. Out-of-date beliefs take root in organizations and systems, influencing the way things are done. This gets baked in. Over time, it becomes what's considered 'normal', and people in these organizations and systems act accordingly. Everyone simply does what's expected of them, without realizing how they may be harming large numbers of the population.

This hidden, systemic discrimination is harder to see, harder to call out and harder to address. Yet it lies at the heart of the problems that are causing dysfunctional and tragic interactions between police and members of our community.

Building strong and lasting community safety in Edmonton will depend on our collective determination to address systemic discrimination.

This will require rebuilding trust, by changing the way things are done – on the part of Edmonton Police Service, the Edmonton Police Commission, the City of Edmonton, and other institutions and community organizations that play roles in community safety.

Through research, analysis and conversations over many months, our Task Force has identified what changes need to be made. Some will have immediate results, while others will bring improvements over the longer term.

Together, they will help bring about an Edmonton where everyone can feel safe.

What We Were Asked To Do

About Our Task Force

During the summer of 2020, Edmonton City Council held days of virtual public hearings. In these hearings, 142 Edmontonians expressed their perspectives about racism in our city and their experiences with policing. It was clear that far too many Edmontonians do not feel safe.

As one of several lines of inquiry about community safety, Edmonton City Council decided to create the Community Safety and Well-being Task Force (our “Task Force”).

Our Task Force was given a mandate to “create actionable recommendations for Edmonton City Council regarding the future of community safety and well-being in the city that are anti-racist.”¹

Our Task Force was largely composed of diverse members of the community. It was also composed of members who were appointed by the City Manager, the Chair of the Edmonton Police Commission and the Chief of Edmonton Police Service.

Members of the Community Safety and Well-Being Task Force

Dr. Annette Trimbee, *Chair*

Evelyn Asiedu

Laila Bellony

Irfan Chaudhry

Brian Curry

Erin Davis

Vanessa Gladue

Rob Houle

Christie Pace

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Erick Ambtman/Karen MacKenzie,
Edmonton Police Commission

Salima Ebrahim, *City of Edmonton*

Dan Jones, *Edmonton Police Service*

Jaimy Miller, *City of Edmonton*

Enyinnah Okere, *Edmonton Police Service*

¹ City of Edmonton Bylaw 19407.

Our Process

Given the timelines for our work, our Task Force followed an aggressive schedule. Our initial meeting was on November 4, 2020 and we met on a weekly basis after that.

To the greatest extent possible, we approached our work in the same spirit we would ideally like to see across our city. Ours was a forum where all voices were given equal weight and where all voices mattered – regardless of race, background, career path, or circumstance. It was a place where people could speak their minds freely, share their perspectives safely, and call things as they saw them. We did our best to represent the diversity that is Edmonton. We laid our personal truths bare. We challenged each other. We learned from each other.

Most importantly, we listened to each other. Without judgment. Without fear. Without bias.

But with compassion, humility and openness.

And in doing so, it made our work stronger.

Our Task Force was provided with a large volume of reports made to City Council by EPS, the Edmonton Police Commission and City administration. We also reviewed information from the public hearings that were held in summer 2020. These sources, along with the firsthand experiences and perspectives of Task Force members, were used to identify four major areas requiring further exploration:

- How we define community safety
- The role of police in a safe community
- The conduct of police providing community safety
- The roles and conduct of others (peace and bylaw officers) in a safe community

We established a working group for each of these four major areas. Each working group was tasked with undertaking primary and secondary research, identifying key issues, and developing proposed solutions. Those were brought back and presented to the entire Task Force for review, discussion and analysis.

Our Task Force also invited presentations from members of the community to give us insight on particular issues and topics. We were privileged to engage representatives from:

- Bear Clan Patrol
- Edmonton's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee
- REACH Edmonton
- Edmonton Police Commission
- Community Standards and Neighbourhoods Branch of the City of Edmonton
- Helpseeker

In addition, our Task Force requested written submissions from the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Police Commission, EPS, the Edmonton Police Association and Alberta Community and Social Services. These organizations were invited to provide information, comment and perspective on issues related to those explored by our Task Force's working groups.

Our Task Force thanks and appreciates all those who contributed time, information and viewpoints to our work. We are encouraged by the widespread desire for change that was expressed by many parts of the community.

Our recommendations are intended to reflect that desire for change. They are informed by evidence, premised on common sense, and collectively aimed at making Edmonton safer for all.

For the benefit of a shared understanding, we offer the following definitions for some terms we use in this report:

Anti-racism:

Anti-racism is usually structured around conscious efforts and deliberate actions to provide equitable opportunities for all people on an individual and systemic level. It can be engaged by acknowledging personal privileges, confronting acts and systems of racial discrimination, and/or working to change personal racial biases.

Defunding:

Allocating funding in preventative and community-building ways, rather than in reactive and militaristic ways. The essential idea is that investing public funds in health, education, social supports and other human development will lead to a more equitable community with less poverty, fewer health and social challenges, and less demand for law enforcement.

GBA+:

Standing for “gender-based analysis plus”, it is an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of people of all genders may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The “plus” in GBA+ acknowledges that GBA goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences. We all have multiple identity factors that intersect to make us who we are; GBA+ considers many other identity factors, such as race, ethnicity, religion, age and mental or physical disability.

Inclusivity:

The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those belonging to racial or sexual minority groups.

Unconscious bias:

Prejudice or unsupported judgments in favor of or against one thing, person, or group as compared to another, in a way that is usually considered unfair. Many researchers suggest that unconscious bias occurs automatically as the brain makes quick judgments based on past experiences and background. As a result of unconscious biases, certain people benefit and other people are penalized.

The Edmonton We Want

A Vision for Community Safety

Community safety means something unique to each of us. What one person needs to feel safe can be very different from the conditions another person needs to feel safe.

Also, **community safety isn't only about crime statistics**. Lower levels of crime do not automatically translate into safety. Prejudice and bias cause fear and harm in communities, even in the absence of criminal or bylaw offences.

With this in mind, the recommendations of our Task Force are designed to help achieve **a vision for community safety in which Edmonton:**

- provides a sense of belonging
- welcomes, values and includes all individuals of all backgrounds and circumstances
- enables people to live without fear of being harmed, targeted or othered
- enables people to fully engage with and participate in community
- supports individuals and families in overcoming homelessness, poverty, addictions and other challenges
- treats all individuals with respect and dignity
- treats all individuals equal under the law.

**“What makes kids feel safe and good?
Feeling like they belong. That connection back
to culture and family and kinship and having
that sense of self.”**

We will know Edmonton is becoming safer when:

- Decisions about services and needs are based on evidence, not biases or stereotypes.
- Structures of power are more reflective of community, with people from diverse backgrounds and with lived experience more included in decision-making.
- An inclusive and anti-racism lens is used when developing building community, at all levels.

- Laws and policies are developed with an inclusive and anti-racist lens, and applied with equity for all.
- All residents of Edmonton have greater trust in officers and feel more comfortable communicating, cooperating and partnering with police.
- There are fewer instances of racism and discrimination in Edmonton.
- Leaders, officers and others in our community's institutions feel more comfortable holding each other accountable for racist and discriminatory actions, and institutions encourage a culture of speaking out.
- Police, other government systems and social service agencies are working together to achieve the same goals.
- Individuals have higher awareness of Charter rights, Indigenous and Treaty rights, and better understand how to assert those rights.

Our Task Force recognizes that achieving this vision will involve many partners in the community – **including police**.

There will always be a role for police.

Society is complex, and social and economic conditions are constantly evolving. So regrettably, there will always be challenges, incidents or crises in our city. When those involve real and serious public safety concerns, we will continue to depend upon police.

So the question is not whether police are important for community safety. They absolutely are.

Rather, the question is how **police and others need to approach their roles differently** in order for there to be improved and lasting community safety for everyone.

Working Proactively and Supportively

There's an old saying that if you only have a hammer, then everything will look like a nail.

We are reminded of that saying when we look at what's happening in Edmonton right now.

It appears that our city is stuck in a cycle that feels enforcement-focused and reactive. Everyone is increasingly frustrated by the situation. No one feels well understood.

For everyone to feel safe in Edmonton, we need to break that cycle and turn the model around. This means getting serious about community-building and truly "walking the talk" on concepts like partnership, inclusion and accountability.

Our Task Force sees opportunities for change in four major areas that, collectively, will help bring about a proactive, supportive model for community safety:

1. Send the most appropriate responders.

Police receive hundreds of thousands of calls each year. They currently respond to approximately half of these calls. By changing dispatch procedures and using more creative partnerships, a greater number of these calls can be diverted to others in the community. In this new model, the most appropriate responders (such as social workers or mental health professionals) respond to the situations most suited for their expertise. This enables police to handle real and serious threats to public safety.

2. Modernize the way people respond.

When police, peace and bylaw officers² respond to situations we expect them to do so professionally. In 2021, that means doing so without bias and instead with cultural competence, critical thinking, an inclusive lens and a supportive mindset that uses force as a last resort. In this new model, officers are provided with effective direction, knowledge and ongoing training so they are positioned to meet our city's expectations about inclusive and anti-racist policing. With shared expectations about how everyone 'shows up', the community safety ecosystem becomes more proactive and professionalized.

3. Build and sustain trust.

For people to feel safe in Edmonton they need to maintain trust in the institutions, systems and personnel that play roles in community safety. That trust is built and sustained day-to-day, by those on the front lines of service and those responsible for funding, direction and oversight. By making policy improvements and using more data and evidence, the system can better reflect the community. In this new model, Edmonton City Council, the City administration and the Edmonton Police Commission enable Edmontonians to have confidence that the system is inclusive, anti-racist and accountable.

4. Reduce demand for police.

We will always need police for real and serious public safety issues. But we can reduce the demand for police by addressing health and social challenges more strategically. Pockets of work are underway to better coordinate services on this front, but much more is needed. Although the Government of Alberta has a key role to play, the City of Edmonton has the ability to take greater leadership. In the ideal case, community organizations are

² In addition to peace officers, the City of Edmonton employs "municipal enforcement officers". For the sake of ease in this report, we refer to this latter category as "bylaw officers".

incentivized to provide services in ways that are inclusive, anti-racist and aligned to shared goals. Rather than relying on police to fill a vacuum, community-based services occupy more space in the overall effort to make our city safer.

Our Task Force makes recommendations in each of these areas. While recognizing that some work is already underway, our recommendations identify where and how more needs to be done - including bringing an anti-racist lens to the entire community safety ecosystem.

“Some people’s idea of safety is, ‘I don’t want to see an Indigenous person or homeless person.’

Our idea of safety is ‘I don’t want to feel attacked by that person who doesn’t want to walk on the same side of the street as me.’
That matters.”

Importantly, we envision all of our recommendations will be implemented using a GBA+ lens.

This approach will help guard against any ‘change being worse than the disease’ and, instead, further improve the likelihood of us achieving lasting, meaningful improvement in Edmonton’s community safety ecosystem.

Send the Most Appropriate Responders

Each year, tens of thousands of calls are received each year by EPS' Emergency Communications Centre. These calls are triaged such that police respond to approximately half of them. According to EPS figures, police were dispatched to 192,521 out of 385,034 calls received through the Centre during 2019.

Currently, police find themselves responding to a wide variety of calls. These can range from serious crimes to what EPS refers to as “social disorder” calls – which is a very poorly named group of calls that have to do with people needing assistance, including:

- A call about an intoxicated person
- A check on a person's welfare
- A concern about a person's mental health.

For the purposes of this report, we will refer to these as “person-in-need” calls. In 2019, EPS officers responded to 48,810 of these calls.

In many cases EPS responds to a call because, based on the information taken from a caller, there appears to be a serious public safety issue that requires police involvement. But data shows this is not always the case. A sizable number of calls turn out to be person-in-need calls rather than serious crimes. For example, 15,409 calls that police went to in 2019 turned out to be person-in-need calls. So in actuality, EPS responded to 62,219 person-in-need calls during 2019.

It is also the case, however, that a person-in-need call can turn out to involve a crime. In 2019, for example, a total of 3,077 person-in-need calls were found to involve an occurrence of crime, 63% of which were non-violent crime. (Half of these non-violent crimes were mischief, breach of recognizance, shoplifting \$5000 or under, and possession of methamphetamine.) Accounting for this brings down the actual number of person-in-need calls to 61,142 during 2019.

To the extent 2019 can be considered a representative year, this means **32% of calls that EPS currently attends are person-in-need calls involving no crime.**

“Where is the dignity in being taken away in a police car when you are in a mental health crisis?”

Consequently, EPS is attending to thousands of health and social services issues. Our city is using police as a “catch all”, forcing them to step into the shoes of social workers or mental

health professionals. This is unfair to the police, ineffective for the community needing assistance, and an incredibly expensive way to do things.

Instead, our systems should have the most appropriate responders attend calls for service. Over thirty percent of the time, that is not the police.

Granted, we have the benefit of hindsight in saying this. In real time, situations can be fluid and can escalate. But throwing up our hands and saying, “It’s too complicated,” is a cop-out. It is neither acceptable nor good policy. Edmontonians deserve better from their leaders.

This does not mean that police will stop showing up to all of these situations. When there is a valid public safety issue, police need to attend – and do so with respect, dignity and compassion for the people they encounter. But as a city we should be aiming to divert more person-in-need calls to more appropriate responders. Data indicates there is room to do so.

Recommendation One

Move to an independent, integrated call evaluation and dispatch model, with representation from EPS, EMS, EFRS, Community Standards and Neighbourhoods, mental health services, crisis diversion and key social service partners.

Everything begins with a call.

There are many different places that Edmontonians can call for assistance. The most familiar, of course, is 911. For non-emergencies there is also 211 (crisis diversion), #377 (non-emergency) and 311 (City information), to name just a few.

Practically speaking, it is not realistic to expect Edmontonians to always know or remember which number to call in a given circumstance.

If we want the most appropriate providers to respond to situations, then there needs to be a rethinking about how calls for service are evaluated, triaged and dispatched.

Considerable effort already goes into triaging 911 calls and dispatching responses amongst EPS, EFRS and EMS.

Our city must broaden this coordination. A number of other providers who can respond to low risk person-in-need calls need to be made part of an integrated call evaluation and dispatch model. These include:

- Mental health services
- Crisis diversion services (e.g., the 211 service) and
- Other social services.

The Community Standards and Neighbourhoods branch of the City of Edmonton also needs to be part of integrated call evaluation and dispatch. This branch is responsible for employing peace officers and municipal officers who can address a range of low-risk bylaw and other compliance issues.

With this shift, calls can be evaluated and triaged more holistically and effectively. This will help ensure the most appropriate responder is dispatched.

We recommend the following be done:

- 1.1 Make the dispatch model independent from police.** We understand funding for a co-located space has already been provided, and the development of a business case for an integrated dispatch model is already underway. We believe it is important for the new integrated model to be managed and operated independent from EPS. This change would reflect the reality that police are one of many providers, rather than the central provider. Independence would better enable the integrated dispatch model to evaluate calls in a holistic and objective way, helping ensure that the most appropriate providers are dispatched to calls.
- 1.2 Make the shift before the end of 2021.** It is reasonable to have the integrated model operational by the end of this year. This initiative is one that can have impact in the community relatively quickly, and delays are not necessary.
- 1.3 Calls must be handled with empathy and compassion.** For a person who is vulnerable or part of a racialized community, contacting authorities can be a daunting prospect that puts them at risk of psychological harm or trauma. The tone and approach of that first point of contact can make a world of difference in terms of helping people in Edmonton feel safer.
- 1.4 Individuals who receive the calls must have training in unconscious bias, inclusive language, cultural awareness, and dealing with persons in crisis.** This will help ensure calls are handled with empathy and compassion. Getting the staffing of this function right is absolutely critical. As much as possible, those in charge of the integrated model need to ensure that people with dangerous biases are not hired or assigned to receive calls.

1.5 Regular auditing of calls needs to be undertaken. The personnel responsible for call evaluation and dispatch must undertake their duties without unconscious bias and with anti-discrimination and anti-racist lenses. To help ensure this is happening, it makes sense to undertake regular auditing of calls. The result of the auditing can enable those managing the dispatch model to intervene and take remedial action if it is determined that calls are not happening in anti-racist and anti-discriminatory ways or that bias is creeping into call evaluation and dispatch.

1.6 Embed mental health professionals. Having mental health professionals embedded in the co-located call centre will help with call evaluation.

Incoming Referral Source	8am-5pm Number	Percentage 1	9pm-3am Number	Percentage 2	% Change Night vs Day
211	2948	79.2%	3594	69.8%	-9.4%
Emergency Medical Service	279	7.5%	451	8.8%	1.3%
Edmonton Police Service	129	3.5%	205	4.0%	0.5%
Outreach Contact	82	2.2%	106	2.1%	-0.1%
Transit Peace Officer	62	1.7%	232	4.5%	2.8%
Security/Peace Officers	50	1.3%	190	3.7%	2.3%
Internal Referral	44	1.2%	26	0.5%	-0.7%
Client Self-Referral	42	1.1%	137	2.7%	1.5%
Community Agency	31	0.8%	12	0.2%	-0.6%
EMS - City Centre Paramedic Response Unit	5	0.1%	4	0.1%	-0.1%
Hospital	0	0%	3	0.1%	0.1%
Other	20	0.5%	117	2.3%	1.7%
Unknown	31	0.8%	71	1.4%	0.5%
TOTAL	3723	100%	5148	100%	0%

Source: REACH Edmonton. Success from the “Just Call 211 Press #3” campaign continues to inform Edmontonians to call 211 for non-emergency crisis situations. This table demonstrates that the majority of program referrals now come from 211 (75%) over the course of a day. The top four referral sources for 211 are private citizens, community agencies, private businesses and self-referrals (clients).

“There are lots of people who don’t even bother calling 911 or police because they don’t feel safe doing so. Lots goes unreported.”

Recommendation Two

Expand the number and use of crisis diversion and alternative policing teams.

There is work underway at EPS aimed at diverting disadvantaged and vulnerable people away from the criminal justice system and towards health and social supports. One initiative is the creation of a new Community Safety and Well-being Bureau (CSWB) within EPS. This is intended to build on other efforts EPS has been pursuing, including:

- The Police and Crisis Team (PACT), which pairs officers with a mental health therapist to assess a person’s mental health needs and determine how best to take action.
- The Heavy Users of Service (HUoS) program, which has used community collaboration since 2013 to assist highly vulnerable Edmontonians with complex needs get connected to medical, addiction, mental health, housing and other assistance.
- The Human-Centred Engagement and Liaison Partnership (HELP) Unit, which has police officers work in partnership with Boyle Street Community Services navigators to help connect individuals with appropriate services before they get caught up in the criminal justice system.

This is the right direction. More is needed.

Our city also needs more alternatives that are not led by or directly involve EPS resources. It is not fair to rely on EPS as a “catch-all” for health and social service issues. And it is not needed.

For example, the existing 24/7 Crisis Diversion initiative is a partnership involving REACH Edmonton, Boyle Street Community Services, the Canadian Mental Health Association-Edmonton Region and Hope Mission. This program sends crisis diversion teams to help Edmontonians who are in distress or vulnerable.

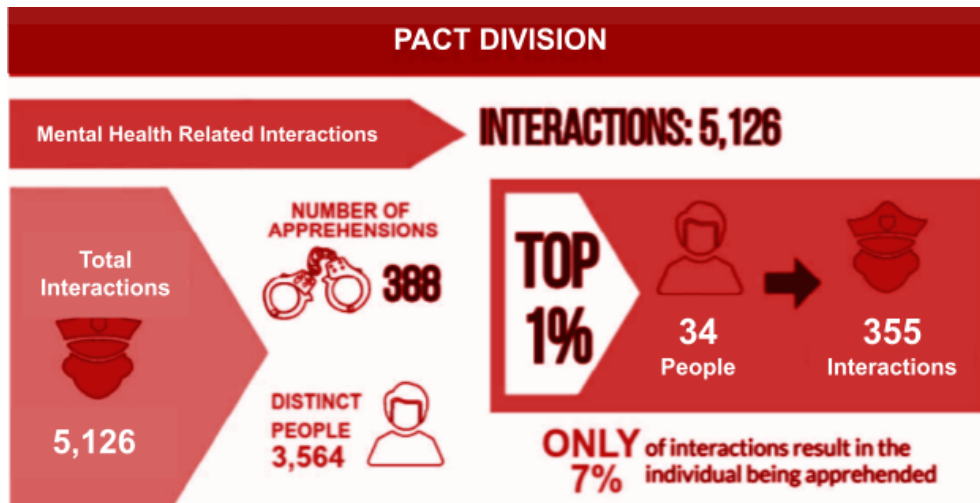
\$1.91 **SOCIAL RETURN
ON INVESTMENT**


36 min EPS saves an average
of 36 minutes per
event when calls are
diverted to 24/7 CD.

Source: REACH Edmonton 2020 Business Plan

Our city is also home to Bear Clan Patrol Edmonton Beaver Hills House. Modeled on a program in Winnipeg, this involves volunteers who walk a regular patrol. They provide outreach, connect people with support, and help keep the peace. In doing so, they provide a sense of safety and belonging to community members, working in a non-threatening, non-violent, non-judgmental and compassionate way.

- 2.1 Dedicate a portion of EPS' existing funding to pursuing more initiatives through its Community Safety and Well-being Bureau.** Programs such as PACT and HELP are positive steps that can help enhance community safety. Accordingly, a portion of the existing funding provided by City Council to EPS should be tied to the expansion of such initiatives under EPS' new CSWB. Later in this report, under Recommendation 14, we discuss linking EPS funding to performance expectations; the expansion of EPS CSWB initiatives is an example of this.)
- 2.2 Provide funding to expand community-led alternatives not led by EPS.** Supporting more efforts by 24/7 Crisis Diversion and the Bear Clan Patrol, and supporting other alternative models, will give our city more options for responding to person-in-need calls and other situations. This would serve to refund and invest in the community, while expanding the diversity of the community safety ecosystem.
- 2.3 Review city-funded social service agencies.** In tandem with expanding the range of policing alternatives, it makes sense to review the mandates and impacts of social service agencies that are currently receiving funding from the City of Edmonton. There may be value in rationalizing where funds are currently being deployed and addressing mandates in order to better align the efforts of various providers who have roles in the community safety ecosystem.



Source: Edmonton Police Services report. Analysis of the Delivery of Social Services Type Events by Edmonton Police Service- Responding to Social Disorder & Mental Health Calls for Service

Stories from Edmonton Streets

During our Task Force's months together, a number of incidents occurred on our city's streets that brought the importance of our work into sharp focus. These incidents serve as opportunities to reflect on how things need to improve – and how our recommendations will help make that happen.

On February 15, 2021, in the midst of minus 30 temperatures, EPS officers were caught on camera evicting members of the Bear Clan Patrol from a downtown LRT station. At the time, members of the community group were providing food and hot coffee to a number of individuals experiencing homelessness, who were also evicted from the LRT station and sent out into the cold. Their food was thrown in the garbage. One man was tossed out into the life-threatening weather with only one shoe. There are no indications that anyone asked whether the people who had been in the LRT station had anywhere else to go.

The disturbing incident raised several questions. Why were EPS police officers attending at all, rather than Transit Peace Officers? Why weren't the people in the LRT station offered or connected with shelter options? Though the officers were lawfully placed they acted without compassion or empathy and negatively impacted vulnerable Edmontonians. Is that how our city wants policing to happen? If not, then what should be done as a consequence? And why were individuals seeking shelter in an LRT station in the first place? Was there no suitable shelter space made available to them? There were failings in virtually every part of our community safety ecosystem that night.

Implementation of our Task Force's recommendations could help prevent a similar incident from occurring in the future, by way of the following:

- Low-barrier emergency shelter space would be available to the individuals experiencing homelessness.
- The community services ecosystem would be better positioned in the first place for cold weather emergencies, including inclusive and anti-racist policies set by the City of Edmonton.
- A crisis diversion team, social service worker, or some other alternative responder would attend the situation instead of asking EPS police officers to attend.

Anti-racism, care and compassion would hallmark the response, with the individuals in the LRT station connected with appropriate services and supports through a 'warm hand-off'.

Modernize the Way People Respond

Police, peace and bylaw officers are working in a city that is more diverse than ever before, populated by residents with a rich mix of languages, cultures, backgrounds and circumstances.

Officers will encounter individuals who have experienced war, famine or terrible treatment by authorities. They will encounter individuals who are experiencing the impacts of trauma, including intergenerational trauma. They will encounter individuals who have experienced racism and discrimination every day of their lives.

Today's officers must be able to appreciate the circumstances of others whose experiences differ from the white middle-class experience.

They must have the direction, support and training to take modern, anti-racist approaches to their work. That includes undertaking their duties without unconscious bias. It also means taking a phrase from the book of physicians—"first, do no harm"—when interacting with any person.

Getting there requires that we have organizational cultures that are truly inclusive. With true inclusion, an organization's leaders and members can better see the full range of perspectives on an issue. They can guard against unconscious bias. They can recognize racism when they see it and take anti-racist actions.

“There's no relief such as ‘Oh, thank God the police are here.’ That never crosses my mind.”

In the twenty-first century, our city's police, peace and bylaw officers also need to approach their jobs through a fundamentally different lens.

Our city risks falling into a trap where officers are seen as enforcers who step in to bring us a safe community – swooping in when needed to restore order to a lawless land.

In reality, police, peace and bylaw officers are just some of the many players in our community who need to work in partnership to promote safety and well-being.

It is true these officers have tools that others do not have – such as powers to carry weapons and use force. And we need them to use those powers when there are serious risks to public safety. But most of the time, our officers do not need to use those unique powers. Most of the time we need them working in proactive, supportive roles.

An individual on the street suffering from substance use disorder does not need an enforcer swooping in to enforce a public intoxication law. They need a supportive hand who can meet them where they are at, suggest services appropriate for their situation, respect their agency as an individual, and help them access whichever services and supports they choose.

A homeless individual taking shelter in an LRT station against minus 30 temperatures does not need an enforcer swooping in to enforce a loitering bylaw and sending them out into the cold. They need a supportive hand who can help them safely access an emergency shelter.

A middle-class person walking down the street or walking in the LRT station might think the enforcer is what's needed, but that doesn't make it right. Nor is it effective.

Our city must modernize the way that people respond to situations. This will require dedicated efforts that will, over time, make a lasting culture shift in how Edmonton works to enhance community safety and well-being.

Recommendation Three

Enhance recruitment and training to build diverse, inclusive, anti-racist organizational cultures.

The systemic discrimination that is baked into our public institutions has influenced things over many, many years. It will require years of systematic and dedicated efforts to root it out.

Awareness is one of the first and most important steps, and it comes when organizations and people embrace inclusion.

That means more than having a diverse group of faces around the table. It is about having a diversity of voices that are heard and respected.

True inclusion is about appreciating that people from different communities have different life experiences, being cognizant of this when making decisions and taking actions, and being open to and welcoming of a variety of different voices and perspectives.

It means having a wider range of sight – one that reflects the fact that Edmonton is home to people with many different cultures, backgrounds and life circumstances.

Having this wider range of sight leads to better decision-making, resulting in actions that are caring, compassionate, supportive and anti-racist. This builds community safety and well-being.

Training plays a huge part in building an inclusive organizational culture. On this front, **our Task Force finds that training of police, peace and bylaw officers must be markedly improved.**

“We acknowledge that police officers across the organization would benefit from interpersonal training, bias awareness training, and a better understanding of who the justice client is, along with efforts to ensure we examine the efficacy of training as we move forward.”

Presently, peace and bylaw officers employed by the City of Edmonton undertake courses that cover subjects such as active listening and empathy, mental health awareness, respect in the workplace, issues related to vulnerable populations, and gender-based analysis. They also receive training on making decisions while having regard for socioeconomic factors, discretion about issuing tickets, and solutions that divert clients away from the justice system.

While positive, these training efforts are delivered in an ‘ad hoc’ way, rather than part of a systematic, strategic and ongoing professional development plan. This “one and done” kind of approach makes it harder for key concepts to stick and for different practices to become embedded and lasting.

Within EPS, police recruits receive a substantial amount of interpersonal training covering topics that include: bias awareness, victim offender overlap, the LGBTQ2S+ community, trauma-informed policing, procedural justice, mental health, Indigenous historical trauma and smudge, historical trauma, and power and privilege. According to EPS, the objective of this training is “to ensure that recruits will make appropriate decisions and be considerate of the people in their community by understanding implicit and complicit biases and how it impacts their approaches towards people.”

Unfortunately, this minimum standard appears to be the high-water mark in terms of the inclusion training that a police officer receives during their career. After recruit training, things become much more ad hoc. The lessons learned during recruit training are not sustained through systematic, strategic and ongoing professional development. Based on their reported

experiences with police, many Edmontonians would probably find it hard to believe that any inclusivity, anti-racist or other interpersonal training has taken place.

Moreover, this suite of interpersonal training for recruits is relatively new. Most police officers at EPS did not receive this same base as part of their recruit training. They have been forced to rely on only ad hoc courses and their own personal initiative.

- 3.1 Systematic, strategic, ongoing professional development programs must be put in place for police, peace and bylaw officers, to build cultures of inclusion that are robust and lasting.** These programs must include core training on: power privilege and oppression, how to be anti-racist, anti-bias training, Indigenous cultural teachings, and trauma-informed policing. The programs need to be refreshed and delivered annually, and become part of the ongoing development plans of officers.
- 3.2 Periodically evaluate whether the training is having an impact and adjust as needed.** It is of no use to undertake training for the sake of training. It's not about ticking a box on a checklist to say that training was done. The point of training is to bring about better policy, better decision-making and better day-to-day practices in our institutions. Our community should see the concepts and practices conveyed by the training translate into fundamental changes on the streets. To this end, efforts must be made to evaluate the efficacy of training programs and to make appropriate adjustments in order to achieve the lasting organizational culture shifts required.
- 3.3 Training should be developed and delivered in partnership with the community.** Given their profound importance for community relations, the training programs need to be developed and delivered in partnership with community members who are experts in the subject areas. This will have much greater impact than canned programs developed elsewhere. There are many organizations of our community that can credibly deliver diversity, inclusion and anti-racism training with a local perspective (e.g., Indigenous providers, LGBTQ2S+ providers, etc.) These organizations should also play a lead role in evaluating the efficacy of the training.
- 3.4 Deliver these training programs to EPS leadership, police officers and civilian staff, as well as peace officers and bylaw officers.** In addition to police officers, EPS employs civilians in a variety of roles; both police and civilians need to benefit from these training programs, along with EPS leadership. Given the roles they play in community safety, peace officers and bylaw officers employed by the City of Edmonton must also receive these training programs.
- 3.5 Deliver this training to members of Edmonton City Council and the Edmonton Police Commission.** Organizational cultures are influenced by leadership. As the body that makes bylaws and sets policy for City administration (which employs peace and bylaw

officers), members of Edmonton City Council would benefit from receiving similar diversity, inclusion and anti-racism training. Similarly, as the body that provides civilian oversight to EPS, members of the Edmonton Police Commission need to be well-trained on diversity, inclusion and anti-racism.

3.6 Review and adjust recruitment processes to support inclusive, anti-racist cultures.

Training is only one vector that needs to be addressed. We must also ensure that the right individuals are recruited in the first place. Currently there are numerous minimum requirements for recruitment as either a police officer, peace officer or bylaw officer. These requirements, and the processes used for recruitment to these positions, all need to be examined through an inclusivity and anti-racist lens. The goals of these examinations are many-fold including:

- identifying and addressing ways that these processes are contributing to systemic discrimination;
- identifying and removing aspects that acting as barriers to the recruitment of diverse people from diverse backgrounds;
- identifying and pursuing ways of building anti-racist actions and principles into these processes and requirements;
- examining and implementing opportunities to recruit officers to roles at various levels, aside from entry level.

Recommendation Four

Examine and pursue ways of preventing the unnecessary use of force by police, peace and bylaw officers.

The use of force by police is governed through several mechanisms. The authority to use force is provided under the Criminal Code of Canada. The *Police Act* and associated regulations and the Alberta Provincial Policing Standards provide rules and guidance. EPS has requirements around the use of force built into internal policy and procedure. As EPS indicates, the term “force” refers “to all control tactics, ranging from verbal communication to lethal weapons.”

EPS undertakes considerable tracking and reporting of use of force by police officers. Police officers submit Control Tactics Reports when various circumstances are present, including drawing, displaying or pointing a gun or a taser. Statistics on the use of force are reported by EPS to the Edmonton Police Commission at least twice a year. These reports are available on the Commission’s website. They outline the numbers of occurrences of use of force in various forms including, to name a few, the use of holding techniques, OC spray, batons, takedowns, joint

manipulation, and canine contact. Quarter-by-quarter breakdowns and year-over-year comparisons are provided.

The reports present many numbers. For example, according to the Control Tactics Report covering the period of January to June 2020, there was a 95% increase in stunning with a conducted energy weapon and a 21% increase in pointing a firearm compared to the same period during 2019. During the same period, there were marked decreases in the use of batons (down 21%) and pepper spray (down 47%). These are based on relatively small numbers of instances, which can skew the percentage values dramatically. The same report also notes that **only 1.07% of calls for service during the period** had an occurrence of use of force.

So it's important to keep perspective and remember that context matters.

Ultimately, the sad truth is that use of force is sometimes necessary in policing. There will be situations where suspects or others passively resist, actively resist or use lethal means to resist, and police officers have no choice but to use force.

But this doesn't change some other uncomfortable truths. Use of force is traumatic to the person involved and to those who observe it happening. It can be seriously physically damaging or life threatening. It is no one's finest moment. And it leaves scars within the community, and in terms of the trust that citizens have in our institutions.

Use of force must be a last resort. It's not enough to say it or teach it. This philosophy must be lived and actioned, every day and in every interaction.

Moreover, we need to guard against the unnecessary use of force.

How to best do this is a difficult question.

“If you are doing a good job then you shouldn't need a gun. You should be able to de-escalate.”

The Criminal Code, supplemented by other rules and procedures, prohibits unnecessary use of force. Indeed, there are cases where police officers have been charged and gone to trial for having used unnecessary force. But this happens after the fact, when damage has already been done and the community has been harmed.

Preventing the unnecessary use of force is the much better approach. But this comes down to culture. We can have lots of rules on the books about what police may not do. Yet ultimately we

depend on individual police officers to remember and follow those rules – even during critical, emotional and high-adrenaline situations.

Training is part of the answer. Robust training programs can help instill an organizational culture that values and prioritizes restraint in the use of force.

Another idea is that such a culture could be advanced by adopting a model similar to some of those found in certain Commonwealth countries. In some police services, such as in New Zealand, only a select number of police officers carry firearms – the rest do not.

However, this approach is not without controversy. One counterpoint is that it can result in greater use of other control techniques that can pose greater risks of physical harm.

Our Task Force believes a spotlight must be shone on this issue and more work must be done.

Is the unnecessary use of force by police a widespread problem? Or is it a problem that happens more frequently in police interactions with racialized communities?

We can't answer the second question, because Edmonton does not collect race-based data on police interactions with the public. (We have more to say on this later.)

On the first question, our answer is: it doesn't matter. Even one instance of unnecessary force is too many. Even one instance harms the community's sense of safety. And it harms public trust in the systems that provide community safety.

4.1 Conduct research into ways of preventing unnecessary use of force. The focus of this research needs to be on finding solutions. There is no point exploring whether the use of unnecessary force is a widespread problem. Instead, we need to identify practical things that can be done to instill organizational cultures that value and prioritize restraint in the use of force. Once reasonable solutions are identified, they must be pursued.

4.2 Research and efforts should apply to police, peace and bylaw officers. We have spoken about unnecessary use of force within the context of EPS and police officers. However, the same concepts apply to peace officers and bylaw officers. Our community must guard against the unnecessary use of force by these officers as well. Organizational cultures within the City administration, and Community Standards and Neighbourhoods branch in particular, must value and prioritize restraint in the use of force.

Recommendation Five

Identify how collective agreements are contributing to systemic bias and work to address these challenges.

The terms of employment of police, peace and bylaw officers are influenced by collective agreements that the City of Edmonton negotiates with organizations representing these officers. These include the Civil Service Union (CSU 52), which represents peace and bylaw officers, and the Edmonton Police Association, which represents EPS police officers.

The most recent collective agreements agreed to by the City of Edmonton contain provisions covering issues such as seniority, promotions and other things one might expect to find in a collective agreement. However, some of these provisions may not be entirely consistent with modern practices when it comes to diversity and inclusion.

A particular concern relates to seniority provisions. These can serve as a barrier to embedding diversity, inclusion and anti-racism in a lasting way.

For example, EPS has taken great efforts to diversify its workforce in recent years. According to EPS, the proportion of recruits who self-identify as belonging to a minority group increased from 12% in 2016 to 57% in 2019. Since 2017, EPS has hired 333 new police officers, of whom 28% were female, 5% identified as Indigenous, and 50% identified as belonging to under-represented communities, with at least 15 languages other than English spoken amongst them. This is an encouraging trajectory that, if continued, can help embed the right organizational culture.

As the most recent hires, however, these officers risk being the first to be fired because of the way the collective agreement operates. Indeed, it has been publicly noted this could happen if EPS were to face any funding cuts.

Effectively, the collective agreement handcuffs our city's flexibility while perpetuating systemic bias. If any kind of hiccup were to hit city budgets, the encouraging progress made by EPS would be lost – not because the most recent hires are the weakest performers, but because antiquated collective agreement provisions would shove them out the door.

In 2021, we can do better.

- 5.1 Address problematic provisions in upcoming bargaining with the Edmonton Police Association.** The most recent agreement between the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Association expired on December 31, 2020. As part of negotiations toward a new agreement, the City of Edmonton should seek to address provisions that could operate as barriers to the creation of a diverse, inclusive, anti-racist culture at EPS.
- 5.2 Address problematic agreement provisions in future bargaining with other organizations.** The City of Edmonton undertakes bargaining with the ATU (which represents Transit Peace Officers), CUPE (which represents Community Peace Officers) and CSU (which represents bylaw officers). The City also undertakes bargaining with entities that represent civilian staff members of EPS. As part of negotiations with these organizations, the City of Edmonton should seek to identify and address provisions that are inadvertently working to perpetuate systemic racism and systemic discrimination.
- 5.3 Apply a GBA+ lens to collective agreements.** Examining existing collective agreements through a GBA+ lens will help identify provisions that may be serving as barriers to embedding diversity, inclusion and anti-racism in organizational cultures over the longer term. A particular aspect that must be considered is how newer, diverse staff hired by EPS can avoid being the first to be laid off in the face of resource limitations.

Recommendation Six

Professionalize policing through the creation of a new regulatory college for police and peace officers.

In Alberta, a number of occupations are subject to the requirements of regulatory colleges. For example, doctors in the province are subject to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, lawyers are subject to the Law Society of Alberta, and engineers are subject to the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta.

The regulatory colleges establish codes of ethics and standards of practice for the people who work in those occupations. These ethics and standards essentially ‘set the bar higher’ – above and beyond the expectations set by an employer.

In doing so, they help protect the public. A person cannot work as a doctor or lawyer or engineer unless they have been given permission to do so by the regulatory college. In order to get and keep that permission, a person needs to show they have the right training, maintain a certain level of ongoing training, and always follow the standards of practice and code of ethics.

Regulatory colleges exist because our society recognizes these professionals have specific duties and privileges that most other people don't have. Because they have those duties and privileges, we hold them to higher standards. (Such as standards for education, on-the-job or field experience, ongoing professional development, and conduct.)

Before we let surgeons cut into human flesh, for example, we want to make sure they know what they are doing and can be entrusted to conduct themselves in the ways we need and expect.

It's time to recognize that policing is a professional service. The individuals who serve as police and peace officers have privileges and duties that members of the general public do not have. Being a police officer, in particular, is not a normal job. It comes with powers to detain, arrest, charge, and carry weapons. It also comes with a positive duty to respond when needed.

Accordingly, we believe that everyone would be well served by the creation of a regulatory college having jurisdiction over police and peace officers. This would professionalize policing on a comparable footing to doctors, lawyers, engineers and other professionals that our society depends upon for the safety and well-being of our communities.

- 6.1 Provide funding to study the implementation of a regulatory college for policing.** A logical step is to develop the concept and how it can be functionally achieved. This should not be challenging, since many of the constituent elements are already present and there are many models already in existence for professional regulatory colleges.
- 6.2 Advocate to the Government of Alberta for implementation of the concept.** Regulatory colleges are enabled under provincial legislation. (Examples include the *Health Professions Act*³ and the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act*.⁴) Accordingly, the City of Edmonton needs to advocate to the Government of Alberta for implementation of a regulatory college covering police and peace officers.

³ *Health Professions Act*, RSA 2000, c. H-7.

⁴ *Engineering and Geoscience Professionals Act*, RSA 2000, c. E-II.

Stories from Edmonton Streets

During our Task Force's months together, a number of incidents occurred on our city's streets that brought the importance of our work into sharp focus. These incidents serve as opportunities to reflect on how things need to improve – and how our recommendations will help make that happen.

On March 2, 2021, the Chief of EPS was quoted in the media raising speculation about the degree to which racist intent was behind the use of tiki torches at an 'anti-masking' rally held in Edmonton. This touched off considerable public debate in both traditional and social media. Both Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson and Alberta Premier Jason Kenney condemned the anti-masking rally. Many Edmontonians noted that promotional flyers for the anti-masking rally had included photos from a white nationalist torch rally held in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017. Speakers at the anti-masking rally had included an individual who has been charged with hate speech.

The Chief of EPS later attempted to clarify his message saying that while EPS condemns tiki torches, "We don't have that evidence. Just because somebody says it's a racist rally or they're using something, you still have to have intent under the Criminal Code." Some people in racialized communities openly wondered whether EPS would have been as reticent to lay charges against anti-masking protesters had they not been white.

Implementation of our Task Force's recommendations could help prevent a similar incident from occurring in the future, by way of the following:

1. Clear expectations would be set down by Edmonton City Council and the Edmonton Police Commission about how our city expects to see inclusive and anti-racist policing occur, providing better guidance to EPS' approach.
2. Thanks to a culture of inclusion and anti-racism, EPS would have strong and productive relationships with racialized communities in our city, better positioning them to understand the harm posed to these communities.
3. Based on this guidance and these relationships, EPS would take more seriously the promotional literature and other evidence in advance of the anti-masking rally that it would involve implicit and explicit tones of racism.
4. Edmonton City Council and EPS would use all means at their disposal to be actively anti-racist in preventing explicitly and implicitly racist activities, including the use of bylaws, public health orders or other legislative and policy tools to sanction, discourage or disperse racist protestors.

Build and Sustain Trust

Trust is fundamental for Edmonton to have lasting community safety.

Edmontonians need to have confidence that our systems are making decisions with everyone's interests in mind.

They need to see our leaders telling police, peace and bylaw officers that our community values diversity, inclusivity and anti-racism – and setting clear and modern expectations about how policing is to be done.

When there is a concern about the conduct of police, peace or bylaw officers, Edmontonians need to see those concerns taken seriously, investigated fully and dealt with transparently.

This requires our systems to provide strong guidance and oversight for police, peace and bylaw officers. It also requires our systems to collect data, measure performance and foster continuous improvement.

Our Task Force finds there are opportunities to improve the current systems.

Increasingly, private sector institutions are embracing Corporate Social Responsibility in their governance, leadership and operations. Among other objectives, organizations making that shift are aiming to address racism, improve inclusion and pursue more equitable practices.

When compared against a rubric such as the Canadian Business for Social Responsibility's *CSR Governance Guidelines*,⁵ for example, one can see improvements that need to be made.

Making these improvements will enable Edmontonians to have greater trust in these systems. This will, in turn, help enhance community safety and well-being.

⁵ Canadian Business for Social Responsibility. (2010). *CSR Governance Guidelines*. Available at [https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/csr-rse.nsf/vwapj/Governance_Guidelines.pdf/\\$file/Governance_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/csr-rse.nsf/vwapj/Governance_Guidelines.pdf/$file/Governance_Guidelines.pdf)

Recommendation Seven

Expect and instruct the Edmonton Police Commission to fully exercise its authority to provide strong guidance and oversight to EPS, in order to drive inclusivity and anti-racism in policing.

In Alberta we have civilian oversight of police. This is designed to ensure that police remain accountable to the communities they serve and work in line with those communities' interests.

Since the City of Edmonton has its own municipal police service (i.e., EPS), the *Police Act* requires the city to establish a police commission. This is done through Bylaw 14040, which creates the Edmonton Police Commission.

Under the *Police Act*, the Edmonton Police Commission has a duty to “oversee the police service” and, among other things, must “allocate the funds that are provided” by Edmonton City Council and “establish policies providing for efficient and effective policing”.⁶

Recognizing the Chief's role in leading the police service, the Commission may only issue direct instructions to the Chief of EPS, not to an individual police officer. However, the *Police Act* makes it clear that every police officer is “subject to the jurisdiction of the commission” and “shall obey the directions of the commission.”⁷

This strikes a balance that respects the Chief and command structure of EPS. The Edmonton Police Commission does not micromanage the day-to-day operations of EPS, but it plays an important role in telling EPS what the community expects from its police service. This role goes well beyond hiring the Chief of EPS.

In doing this, the Commission complements and supplements other guidance that EPS and police officers are required to follow. For example, EPS and police officers must follow applicable federal laws (such as the Criminal Code), provincial laws (such as the *Police Act* and labour legislation) and municipal bylaws. They are also subject to the Alberta Provincial Policing Standards published by the Government of Alberta.

⁶ *Police Act*, RSA 2000, c. P-17, s.31.

⁷ *Police Act*, RSA 2000, c. P-17, s.31.

Currently, the Edmonton Police Commission provides direction to EPS through a few mechanisms, including the following:⁸

- The establishment of annual and long-term goals for the Chief of EPS, the progress on which are measured and tracked annually.
- The approval of the EPS' Strategic Plan and Business Plan, which set goals and target outcomes and describe how those goals and outcomes will be achieved.
- The Edmonton Police Commission Strategic Plan 2019–2023, which sets out goals and outcomes that are reviewed regularly.
- The Chief's performance agreement.
- A suite of policies that the Commission has enacted.

The Commission has also endorsed Vision 2020, developed by the Chief of EPS. Vision 2020 sets out how EPS will restructure its operations and resources “to better manage service demands by balancing traditional enforcement with additional social supports.”⁹

While this is substantial, our Task Force finds **the Commission needs to fully exercise its authority to provide better guidance to EPS about the kind of inclusive, anti-racist policing that our city wants.**

The Commission's strategic plan identifies guiding values that include “inclusivity” and “respect”. It also sets a goal, “To ensure that EPC acknowledges, reflects, understands, and acts on the diversity and richness in our community.” One particularly relevant strategy under this goal is to develop a community engagement strategy to address the Commission's work with vulnerable people. This is positive, but it is not robust guidance that describes how Edmonton expects inclusive and anti-racist policing.

The values stated in the EPS Strategic Plan 2020–2022 include “integrity, “respect” and “community”, but do not explicitly speak to the concepts of inclusivity or anti-racism. One of the goals in the plan is to “Establish an inclusive workforce and environment that leverages diversity and grows talent to create a resilient organization.” One of the priority areas under this goal is to “Develop and implement a comprehensive approach to recruit, develop and engage our members.” Among the outcomes attached this goal are that “EPS has a range of perspectives which allow it to continuously adapt to a changing environment” and “EPS has a diverse workforce to be more effective.” These are important and it is positive the Commission has endorsed them. But this does not serve as robust guidance that describes how Edmonton expects inclusive and anti-racist policing.

⁸ Prior to 2019, the Commission utilized the Annual Policing Plan and Annual Policing Plan Report Card. These have since been replaced by the Strategic Plan and Business Plan.

⁹ Edmonton Police Service website; <https://www.edmontonpolice.ca/AboutEPS/Vision2020>

“There needs to be a shift in the balance of power. Anti-racism is a verb, it’s an action.”

The EPS Business Plan 2020-2022 identifies key activities that EPS will pursue to bring life to the strategic plan. Particularly relevant activities include:

- Develop a Community Engagement Strategy
- Develop a Vulnerable People Strategy
- Develop a Youth Strategy
- Develop Human Resources Strategy
- Systemic review of issues facing Indigenous Peoples and response action plan
- Develop Inclusive Language Glossary.

These are important. It is positive the Commission has endorsed this work. But it does not serve as robust guidance that describes how Edmonton expects inclusive and anti-racist policing.

Policies enacted by the Commission are published on its website. Most of the policies cover topics about how the Commission will govern and run itself. There are also policies covering information requests and reporting requirements, and policies speaking to police discipline matters. There is a “Diversity and Inclusion” policy, but its content focuses on how the Commission will work to encourage diversity and inclusion within the Commission itself. This is nice to see. But it does not serve as robust guidance that describes how Edmonton expects inclusive and anti-racist policing.

The Alberta Provincial Policing Standards contain a preamble stating, “Police must seek and preserve public trust, confidence and support by exercising impartial service to the law, and providing service to all people without regard to race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, belief or social standing.” They do not, however, directly speak to expectations regarding inclusivity and anti-racism in policing. And regardless, the Alberta Provincial Policing Standards constitute the base level of standards the Government of Alberta expects from police services in the province. Communities are allowed to go above and beyond these standards—and Edmonton should.

As an example of desirable guidance, our Task Force takes note of the Toronto Police Services Board (TPSB). It is the civilian-led commission that oversees the Toronto Police Service, and has authorities under Ontario law that are broadly similar to those given to police commissions in

Alberta.¹⁰ The TPSB has used its authority to enact a number of policies that address inclusivity and anti-racism in policing, including policies on:¹¹

- Human Rights
- Collection, Use and Reporting of Demographic Statistics
- Search and Detention of Transgender People
- Regulated Interaction with the Community and the Collection of Identifying Information (i.e., carding and street checks)
- Race and Ethnocultural Equity
- Race-Based Data Collection
- Victims and Witnesses Without Legal Status
- Women in a State of Partial or Complete Undress.

In these policies, the TPSB articulates its commitments to particular beliefs, principles and concepts. It also identifies desired outcomes and expectations – what needs to be done and what shall not be done. But it does this without micromanaging, by directing and empowering the Chief of Toronto Police Service to develop procedures consistent with the policy. This respects the Chief's role in operationalizing the service, while giving clear and robust expression to the will of the community – just as is intended with a civilian oversight model.

Our Task Force can find nothing like this anywhere within the systems governing Edmonton's community safety. This must change.

7.1 Direct the Edmonton Police Commission to develop policies that address the community's expectations for inclusive and anti-racist policing. The policies enacted by the TPSB serve as an excellent model that can be adapted for the Edmonton context. The topics addressed by the TPSB also make sense.

7.2 Direct the Edmonton Police Commission to maximize its authorities in respect of funding and oversight to drive inclusive and anti-racist policing. In addition to enacting policy, the Commission allocates funding that City Council provides for policing. The Commission also sets expectations through its own Strategic Plan, the approval of EPS' Strategic Plan and Business Plan, and the establishment of performance expectations for the Chief of EPS. These levers should all be utilized to articulate Edmonton's expectations for inclusive and anti-racist policing and to drive EPS to meet those expectations.

¹⁰ *Police Services Act*, RSO 1990, c. P-15. Part III of the Act outlines municipal police services boards.

¹¹ Toronto Police Services Board. Available on its website at: <https://www.tpsb.ca/policies-by-laws/board-policies>

Recommendation Eight

Change the composition and recruitment of the Edmonton Police Commission to more comprehensively reflect the community.

The point of civilian oversight of police is to ensure police work in line with the expectations of the community they serve. To express the community's expectations in a fulsome way, the civilian oversight body needs to reflect the community as fulsomely as possible.

We believe that, with some changes, the Edmonton Police Commission can reflect our city in a more fulsome way. This will enhance the Commission's credibility as it more fully exercises its voice about the kind of inclusive and anti-racist policing that our community expects.

We are not saying the current community members of the Edmonton Police Commission are the wrong individuals to have on the Commission. That is not our point.

The problem is that the current members of the Commission are working within the confines of City of Edmonton Bylaw 14040, which is rather flimsy.

Bylaw 14040 sets out the composition of the Commission, the appointment of Commission members, and other administrative matters. As constructed right now, the bylaw gets in the way of enabling the community to be as fully represented as it could.

For example, Bylaw 14040 says that the Edmonton Police Commission must have between five and 11 members. But the *Police Act* allows for up to 12 members on a police commission. This means our city is deliberately leaving a seat unused, which could otherwise be filled by an additional member of the community. This may have been done to avoid the potential of having a 6-6 tie vote happen on the Commission, but that is not a compelling reason.

Bylaw 14040 also allows for two members of the Commission to be Councillors or employees of the City. This provision is currently being used, with two members of Edmonton City Council occupying seats on the Commission. Why? Members of Edmonton City Council already have powerful voices at the City Council table, where they already have power to set priorities and expectations. Giving them seats on the Edmonton Police Commission extends their power privilege while crowding out the Commission's ability to include more community voices. (Appointing two City of Edmonton employees instead would be no better, since they ultimately report to the City Manager, who is the direct employee of Edmonton City Council.)

“They say ‘we represent the community’.
Well no, you don’t. Because I sure don’t
feel represented.”

Bylaw 14040 also makes no provision for ensuring diversity in the Commission’s composition. Indeed, there is more in the bylaw about financially reimbursing the Commissioners than there is about who they should be. In 2021 it is not unreasonable to stipulate some expectations about ensuring a diverse range of the community is represented. Even more so for the Commission, given its critical role in expressing the community’s expectations for the police officers we allow to detain, arrest, charge, and carry weapons.

The recruitment process to the Commission is similarly uninspired. At present, the process is roughly the same as that used for other City agencies, boards, committees and commissions. But the Edmonton Police Commission is not like other civic boards. Treating it as such risks minimizing its reputation and importance in the eyes of the public. These are very serious roles undertaking very serious decisions that influence how a very serious part of our society works. The recruitment of members to the Edmonton Police Commission needs to be a process involving standards of rigour and transparency that are higher than those of other civic boards.

Edmonton City Council needs to modernize the Edmonton Police Commission Bylaw and recruitment process, to better reflect and include the great diversity of people and perspectives that make up our city. These are highly doable and common sense steps that can be taken before the 2021 municipal election.

- 8.1 Amend Bylaw 14040 to expand the number of members of the Edmonton Police Commission to 12, and then recruit to the full complement.** The *Police Act* allows a maximum of 12 members and there is no compelling reason not to make use of this. Every seat counts in enabling the Commission to represent the community as fully as possible. No seat should go vacant.
- 8.2 Incorporate the perspectives of those with lived experience, and those with firsthand experience working with vulnerable and racialized communities.** As part of efforts to enable the Commission to be more fully representative of the community, Bylaw 14040 needs to explicitly state objectives to incorporate individuals from various backgrounds. Specifically, the Commission needs to have the perspectives of people with lived experience, and it needs the perspectives of people who have worked firsthand with vulnerable Edmontonians and racialized communities. It must be remembered that diversity is not the same thing as inclusion. Having people of different genders and races

around the table is not useful if they all succumb to groupthink. What we need is a Commission whose membership includes perspectives and experiences representing a cross-section of those held and lived by Edmontonians.

8.3 Have no less than four members of the Commission be individuals who represent community organizations.

To help ensure the Commission reflects a wide range of community voices and perspectives, Bylaw 14040 should explicitly indicate that no less than four members of the Commission be employees of or approved by community organizations. By community organizations, we mean non-profit organizations that directly work with or advocate for vulnerable or racialized communities.

8.4 Change the Commission recruitment process to be more inclusive. Aspects of any recruiting process can inadvertently serve as barriers to participation by vulnerable or racialized people. These barriers must come down. The City needs to examine the current process used for recruiting members of the Commission and address any aspects of the process that may serve as such barriers. This should be done consistent with the objective of ensuring the Commission's membership has not only a diverse complement of skill sets, but also diverse experiences and perspectives.

8.5 Add greater transparency to the Commission recruitment process. In addition to making the recruitment process more inclusive, the City must add greater transparency to the recruitment process. Such changes should accomplish all of the following:

- Enable members of the public to examine which individuals have been “short-listed” as candidates being considered for appointment to the Commission, along with information as to why these individuals have been short-listed. (For example, how their skills, experiences and perspectives will help the Commission reflect the community as fully as possible.)
- Provide Edmontonians with an opportunity to comment upon the suitability of the short-listed candidates, in respect of whether and how their appointment would help the Commission reflect the community as fully as possible.
- These publication and comment aspects should not inadvertently serve as barriers to attracting a range of applicants by exposing people to a daunting experience or one that puts them at harm. Individuals going through the process should be protected from personal attacks. We do not want the process doing more harm than good.
- At the same time, Edmontonians need sufficient transparency so as to independently research the views and perspectives of the short-listed candidates (e.g., public statements they have made), in much the same way they would independently research potential candidates for elected office.

8.6 Members of the Commission who are elected officials or City employee members must be non-voting. Having members of Edmonton City Council on the Commission

unnecessarily takes up space without expanding the range of community participants who have voices in the system. Every seat counts in enabling the Commission to represent the community as fully as possible. These two seats need to be used for community members.

Recommendation Nine

Establish mechanisms to provide community direction to peace and bylaw officers employed by the City of Edmonton.

As noted earlier in this report, the City of Edmonton employs peace officers and bylaw officers to perform various functions and duties.

Peace officers are subject to the *Peace Officer Act* and associated regulations, which set out a number of rules and requirements for their appointment, employment and work. Essentially, the City of Edmonton is considered an “authorized employer” that hires, pays and is liable for the individual serving in the position; but that individual is appointed and empowered as a peace officer by the Government of Alberta. The Government of Alberta specifies the minimum qualifications that a person needs to have to be appointed as a peace officer. For example, a person gets their job as a Transit Officer from the City of Edmonton, but they get their powers as a peace officer from the Province.

As an authorized employer the City of Edmonton is required to do certain things. These include: have a code of conduct in place for its peace officers; specify the duties and responsibilities its peace officers will have; and provide particular reasons and evidence if it desires peace officers to carry any weapons. (The City currently employs approximately 180 peace officers, who carry batons and OC spray.)

But as long as it remains consistent with the Act and regulations, the City of Edmonton has considerable flexibility in how it chooses to provide guidance to its peace officers. Presently this is done by the Community Standards and Neighbourhoods Branch of City administration.

Bylaw officers (which the City terms “municipal enforcement officers”) are not peace officers. They are non-uniformed officers who do not have the authority to carry weapons, and who are appointed by the City without involvement of the Government of Alberta. Consequently, the City of Edmonton has considerable flexibility in how it chooses to provide guidance to bylaw officers. Presently this is also done by the Community Standards and Neighbourhoods Branch.

Peace and bylaw officers do not have the same levels of duties and authorities as police officers, but they still provide community safety functions. Some of them carry weapons. They are not police, but they are still doing forms of policing.

As such, **our Task Force believes that peace and bylaw officers should be subject to civilian oversight in a way similar to police.** This way, the community can provide robust guidance that describes how our city expects inclusive and anti-racist policing from peace and bylaw officers.

9.1 Establish a civilian oversight body for peace and bylaw officers, similar to the police commission.

A complement of 12 community members makes sense. Consistent with our recommendations regarding the Edmonton Police Commission, the new oversight body should not have members of Edmonton City Council or City employees as voting members. In this model, the most-senior City employee to whom the peace and bylaw officers report is analogous to a police chief. They are responsible for day-to-day operations and associated procedures. The civilian oversight body needs to strike the same balance as a commission: providing guidance and articulating the community's expectations, without micromanaging.

9.2 Incorporate the perspectives of those with lived experience, and those with firsthand experience working with vulnerable and racialized communities on the new civilian oversight body.

Similar to our recommendations regarding the Edmonton Police Commission, there need to be explicitly stated objectives to incorporate individuals from various backgrounds in the new civilian oversight body's membership. Specifically, it needs to have the perspectives of people with lived experience, and it needs the perspectives of people who have worked firsthand with vulnerable Edmontonians and racialized communities. The goal is to have a civilian oversight body whose membership includes perspectives and experiences representing a cross-section of those held and lived by Edmontonians.

Recommendation Ten

Bring more transparency and independence to public complaints processes.

There are many provisions under Alberta law covering public complaints about policing and how they need to be handled. For the purposes of our analysis, things can be summed up as follows.

All complaints about EPS are directed to the Chief of EPS – whether that complaint is about EPS generally, or about a specific police officer. The only exceptions are complaints specifically about the Chief, which go to the Edmonton Police Commission.

Most complaints that are referred to the Chief are handled internally at EPS.

If a complaint is about the policies or services of EPS generally, the Chief can take whatever actions they deem appropriate, or refer the matter back to the Commission.

If a complaint is about the conduct of a police officer, the Chief must have the complaint investigated. Investigations of such complaints are done by the Professional Standards branch within EPS. The Commission is kept informed about the progress of these complaints, but it does not direct their investigation.

There can be exceptions to this. If a complaint alleges that serious injury or death of a person may have resulted from the actions of a police officer, or “any matter of a serious or sensitive nature” related to a police officer’s actions, then the Chief must notify the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. The Minister may then choose to have an outside person or police organization investigate the matter, such as the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT).

Complaints can take numerous paths. A complaint can be resolved informally through a dispute resolution process. Many go this route.

After investigation, if the Chief believes that an officer may have committed a legal offence, then the matter must be referred to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

If the Chief believes that an officer may have contravened regulations regarding police discipline or performance, then a hearing may be held by the Chief or a person designated by the Chief. There are many rules in the *Police Act* about the way hearings are held. Ultimately, the matter can be dismissed, or can result in actions taken against the police officer that the Chief or Chief’s designate considers appropriate.

Generally speaking then, unless it’s about something quite serious, complaints about police officers are usually dealt with by the Chief of EPS in a way the Chief determines is appropriate.

The complainant is kept informed throughout the complaint process. After a complaint has been dismissed or resulted in action being taken, the complainant can have an appeal.

If their complaint was about the EPS generally, then their appeal is to the Edmonton Police Commission.

If their complaint was about a police officer, then their appeal is to the Law Enforcement Review Board (LERB). The LERB is appointed by the Government of Alberta. Legislation requires that at least one of its members must be a lawyer. But there are no requirements for any of its members to be from Edmonton, or to have lived experience, or to have any training or background in inclusivity or anti-racism. Our Task Force has no particular view on the effectiveness of the LERB. We note with approval that its decisions with reasons are made available through its website.¹² But it is fair to argue that once a matter is appealed to the LERB, it is effectively removed from our community's influence, adjudication or control.

When it comes to peace officers and bylaw officers employed by the City of Edmonton, the situation is different.

All complaints about peace officers are made to the City of Edmonton, since it is their authorized employer. The *Peace Officer Act* and associated regulations require the City to have policies and processes for managing, investigating and responding to complaints, and a disciplinary policy for peace officers. These need to be consistent with the Act and regulations and the Policy and Procedures Manual published by the Government of Alberta.¹³ The City must dispose of a complaint consistent with all of these policies and processes, and must give reasons for the decision. If the complaint is found to have merit, then the City must take action consistent with its disciplinary policy.

Investigations of complaints about peace officers are undertaken by the Professional Standards unit of the Community Services and Neighbourhoods branch of the City of Edmonton. Criminal allegations against peace officers, however, are investigated by EPS.

The complainant is kept informed throughout the complaint process. After a complaint has been dismissed or has resulted in action being taken, the complainant can request a review of how the complaint was disposed.

That review is done by the Director of Law Enforcement, who is an appointee of the Government of Alberta. The Director can confirm, vary or reverse the City's original disposition of the complaint, and their decision is final. There is no requirement the Director be from Edmonton, or have lived experience, or have any training or background in inclusivity or anti-racism. It is fair to argue that once a matter goes to the Director for review, it is effectively removed from our community's influence, adjudication or control.

¹² <https://www.alberta.ca/law-enforcement-review-board.aspx>

¹³ *Public Security Peace Officer Program Policy and Procedures Manual*. (January 2007; amended February 2012). Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security. Available at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/public-security-peace-officer-program-policy-and-procedures-manual>

Complaints about bylaw officers are made to the City of Edmonton. The City handles these complaints consistent with its internal policies and processes about managing, investigating and responding to complaints.

All of this makes the first stage of each complaint process extremely important. It is the stage where investigation occurs. It is the stage where our community has the closest and most direct involvement. It is the stage at which we have the most power to take inclusive and anti-racist policing most seriously.

“I’ll feel safer when I know it’s not police policing themselves. They’re not there for people who look like me.”

This also makes it the stage at which trust in our systems can be harmed if the community feels that complaints involving allegations of racism and discrimination are not taken seriously.

Our Task Force believes that certain changes will help build, restore and maintain public trust in complaints processes.

10.1 Bring more transparency to the EPS complaints process. The LERB’s practice of publishing its decisions online is a good one. EPS needs to adopt this practice for complaints involving police officers. Currently, EPS’ website indicates that copies of disciplinary decisions can be obtained by contacting the EPS FOIPP Coordinator. This is off-putting and serves as a barrier for some Edmontonians. All decisions should be published online as a standard practice, for members of the public to access at any time.

10.2 Bring more transparency to the complaints processes for peace and bylaw officers. Likewise, the City of Edmonton needs to adopt the same practice of publishing decisions regarding complaints about peace and bylaw officers. Our Task Force could not find any part of the City of Edmonton website that lists decisions, nor could we find any language that invites members of the public to request decisions. This needs to change.

10.3 Ensure Professional Standards personnel at both EPS and the City of Edmonton are highly trained in inclusive and anti-racist policing. Our earlier recommendations on training will help in this regard. A significant amount of discretion is given to leaders in the first stage of these complaint processes, so our community is relying on these leaders to recognize instances of non-inclusive or racist police conduct. It is therefore critical that

Professional Standards personnel are well-versed in unconscious bias, systemic racism, power privilege and other key concepts identified earlier in this report.

- 10.4 Treat all complaints involving racism or systemic racism as serious complaints.** Under section 46.1 of the *Police Act*, the Chief of EPS has an obligation to notify the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General of any complaint alleging “any matter of a serious or sensitive nature related to the actions of a police officer”. A similar provision is in section 19 of the *Peace Officer Act*, requiring the City to notify the Director of Law Enforcement of “any matter of a serious or sensitive nature related to the actions of a peace officer.”

Edmonton must take the position that any complaints alleging non-inclusive or racist conduct, or alleging conduct driven by systemic discrimination, fall under these two definitions. This must be made clear in policies enacted by the Edmonton Police Commission and by the new civilian oversight body that we recommend be established for peace and bylaw officers. And the Chief of EPS and the Community Standards and Neighbourhoods branch of the City must both be instructed to handle complaints accordingly. This will send a strong signal that our community takes inclusivity and anti-racism seriously, and it will help further build cultures of inclusivity and anti-racism within the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Police Commission and EPS.

Recommendation Eleven

Implement measurement and reporting to drive change and encourage ongoing improvements.

As the saying goes, “What gets measured gets done.” What gets measured also helps our community get a more complete picture of the state of community safety.

It’s worth saying again: **community safety is about more than crime statistics.** Even if crime statistics are headed in the right direction, people can still feel unsafe. As we’ve seen in recent history, people’s actions can make our community feel unsafe even if those actions don’t amount to a crime under Canada’s current laws.

Public levels of trust in our institutions also impact community safety. It is important that the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Police Commission and EPS are all maintaining the confidence of Edmontonians. And this isn’t just about confidence about budgets and spending.

It's about people trusting that police, peace and bylaw officers are working in inclusive and anti-racist ways, and not doing more harm. It's about people having confidence that the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Police Commission are holding police, peace and bylaw officers to account. It's about people believing that EPS is holding itself to account, always striving to get better at inclusive, anti-racist policing.

“We keep pouring more money into doing the same old things in the same old ways and get the same poor outcomes.”

Data enables us to see what's going on, and it helps people have confidence in how things are working. It also provides the information we need to course-correct and continuously improve.

Right now, there are too many areas where our community is flying blind.

Our Task Force has found that **Edmonton needs to do a better job of collecting and evaluating data about community safety.**

The most glaring gap is in race-based data.

We need to gain a better understanding of the interactions happening between officers and vulnerable and racialized communities. The current lack of data leaves everyone with little more than anecdotal evidence. Without clear data we are stuck in a fog of conjecture, where half-truths, exaggerations or speculations reign supreme. This is not a recipe for putting people's minds at ease, or for building trust and relationships within community.

Our Task Force recommends that major efforts be made to enhance race-based data collection and to expand measurement and evaluation of the community safety ecosystem overall.

II.1 Mandate the collection of race-based data. It is a waste of time and money to keep debating whether to do this. It makes sense and needs to be done, starting immediately. The City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Commission need to establish policies and expectations that require the collection of race-based data on the interactions police, peace and bylaw officers have with members of the public. This will enable our community to get a clearer picture of where work needs to be done on improving inclusivity and anti-racism in community safety efforts.

- 11.2 Enact performance metrics that measure whether things are getting better.** It is important to measure outcomes, not only inputs and outputs. For example, counting how many people receive training is not particularly insightful; what really matters is whether we are seeing people's work get better in day-to-day practice. Our Task Force has identified a range of performance metrics that will do this, with the goal of driving organizational cultures to be more inclusive and anti-racist. (These are outlined in Appendix A to this report.) Making headway on these metrics will, collectively, help translate into a community that is safer for everyone. The metrics need to be adopted, tracked and used to inform continuous improvement – by the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Police Commission and EPS.
- 11.3 Establish a Community Safety Metric to grade policing effectiveness and trust.** This new metric would be designed in collaboration with stakeholders using a common outcomes initiative model. This would involve using stakeholder engagement as a means of identifying public expectations for police and community safety. The stakeholders would represent a cross-section of the community safety ecosystem, including those from health, education, social services, and even private security firms. The Community Safety Metric would be monitored, evaluated and published by the City of Edmonton.
- 11.4 Create a publicly accessible dashboard that reports progress on implementing our Task Force's recommendations.** This will provide transparency on the efforts undertaken by Edmonton City Council, the Edmonton Police Commission and EPS to take the actions needed for enhancing community safety.

Stories from Edmonton Streets

During our Task Force's months together, a number of incidents occurred on our city's streets that brought the importance of our work into sharp focus. These incidents serve as opportunities to reflect on how things need to improve – and how our recommendations will help make that happen.

Over several months, a string of attacks on Muslim women brought shock and put attention on Islamophobia in our city. The attacks on Muslim women occurred in broad daylight in public spaces such as a shopping mall. On December 8, 2020, two Somali women wearing Hijabs were sitting in their vehicle in a shopping mall parking lot when they were verbally assaulted and chased by a man yelling racial obscenities at them. Several other incidents in the following months were reported to police, with some incidents resulting in charges under the hate crimes provision under the Criminal Code. These incidents have brought attention to the need for our city to “live the commitment” to justice for communities experiencing racism.

Since April 2019, members of the Asian community have experienced attacks due to an increase in Sinophobia fuelled by scapegoating over COVID-19. Fear in the community has been compounded by events such as those in Atlanta, Georgia where 8 people were gunned down, six of them Asian women; and in Vancouver, where police confirm attacks against the Asian community are up 717%. Members of Edmonton's Asian community report that hate-motivated incidents against Asian peoples are on the rise. There is widespread belief the numbers of attacks and racially-motivated incidents directed at Asians and other racialized communities are higher due to a lack of trust in authorities, causing many incidents to go unreported.

Implementation of our Task Force's recommendations could help, by way of the following:

- Clear expectations would be set down by Edmonton City Council and the Edmonton Police Commission about how our city expects to see inclusive and anti-racist policing occur.
- Edmonton City Council, the Edmonton Police Commission, EPS, Community Standards and Neighbourhoods and other community safety institutions would more regularly and directly engage with communities that have been affected by racist incidents and attacks, to develop collaborative actions.
- With a deepened culture of inclusion and anti-racism efforts, EPS would have stronger and productive relationships with the Muslim and Asian communities, and other racialized and minority communities.
- The same vigour that led to the arrest and charging of a suspect in the January and February attacks on Muslim women would be brought to all reports of hate-motivated incidents perpetrated against members of minority communities.
- Members of Edmonton's Muslim, Asian and other racialized communities would feel safer reporting hate-motivated attacks and incidents that they experience.

Edmonton's ecosystem would have more culturally-appropriate community support systems for victims of violence, trauma and vicarious trauma, in partnership with affected communities.

Reduce Demand for Police

People truly feel safe when they feel a sense of belonging, acceptance and ability to participate fully in community life. For many Edmontonians this isn't the case, especially those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable.

The correlations between race and poverty are clear.

On its website, End Poverty Edmonton cites, "We cannot solve the problem of poverty...unless we honestly unravel the complex and continuing connection between poverty and race."¹⁴

Our Task Force would similarly say: We cannot solve the problem of racism unless we honestly unravel the complex and continuing connection between race and poverty.

Right now we have too many instances where Edmontonians are getting dragged into the justice system for being poor. Those experiencing homelessness, addictions, and mental health issues are among the residents most at risk.

This can happen due to something as minor as riding the LRT without a transit pass. After being issued a fine they have no capacity to pay, a person in poverty can be sent to jail. After their release they are worse off than they were before, and now with a record of incarceration that makes it even harder for them to get out of poverty. It is dehumanizing to the person. It is costly to the system. It is not a productive deterrent in any way. It is, frankly, stupid policy.

“I get harassed for smoking, loitering, trying to use a washroom because I’m an Indigenous female with a pink coloured mohawk and tattoos. I’m asked where I’m going all the time.”

Vulnerable and disadvantaged Edmontonians can sometimes end up interacting with the justice system because police are the only ones available to respond. For example, a person on the street suffering a substance abuse crisis in the middle of the night can end up in a jail cell for lack of a better alternative – when what they really needed was a social worker and a safe place to shelter.

¹⁴ End Poverty Edmonton, www.endpovertyedmonton.ca; quote by Alan Jenkins.

In more extreme cases, an enforcement-based response to a person in crisis can go sideways unexpectedly. This can lead to escalation, serious injury, or death.

Our community needs to work differently so that “prevention” and “support” become the central premises of how we approach community safety. By doing so, we can reduce demand for police in the first place. This will avoid criminalizing people for being poor, and it will enable police to focus on addressing real and serious threats to public safety.

Recommendation Twelve

Enact policies and standards that place focus on proactively and effectively providing support to disadvantaged Edmontonians.

In addition to modernizing the way people respond, we need to have smarter laws and policies in the first place.

This includes carefully crafted bylaws, policies and procedures that enable officers to act with discretion when they encounter vulnerable Edmontonians. Officers should have the flexibility they require to divert vulnerable and disadvantaged Edmontonians away from the criminal justice system and towards the health and social services that can provide them with assistance.

It also includes making strategic policy choices at the municipal level. For example, providing free transit to low-income residents and eliminating other barriers to accessing this service would help avoid unnecessary justice system interactions.

“As an adult who works with youth, it is absolutely disheartening to hear young people talk about their experiences being profiled and followed, just because of their skin colour.”

An excellent starting point for such policy making is the *No Fixed Address* report by Student Legal Services of Edmonton, whose recommendations we endorse.¹⁵ Among its eye-opening findings are that, during 2018 alone, Transit Peace Officers in Edmonton issued over \$1.425 million worth of bylaw and provincial violation tickets to people having “no fixed address”. During the same year, EPS laid 44 criminal charges for screaming, shouting, swearing or singing in public – 31% of which were laid against people with “no fixed address”.

Overall, the goal should be to ensure that municipal authority is used to proactively and effectively support Edmontonians who are disadvantaged and vulnerable, rather than punishing them for their circumstances.

- 12.1 Use an inclusive and anti-racism lens when establishing bylaws, policies and procedures.** We understand that the City is currently undertaking a bylaw review with the goal of addressing areas of existing bylaws that may be having a disproportionate impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged Edmontonians. This includes areas such as riding a bike on a sidewalk, jaywalking, proof of payment and loitering. As part of its next steps, the City administration will be working with Edmonton’s Anti-racism Advisory Committee to review practices, policies, processes and approaches. This is positive. In addition to this, Edmonton City Council needs to apply a lens of inclusivity and anti-racism when creating and considering bylaws, policies and procedures. Applying such a lens will help drive ongoing change at a systemic level.
- 12.2 Eliminate bylaw provisions that result in nonsense ticketing.** Our city needs to take a hard look at, and eliminate, bylaw provisions that are having disproportionate impacts on vulnerable and racialized communities. These provisions result in nonsensical issuing of tickets to people who cannot pay them and, instead, get hauled into the justice system -- all without yielding any real or meaningful improvement in community safety. Giving officers discretion to avoid ticketing and pursue other solutions is good, but it is a band-aid. The root problem -- the bylaw provisions themselves - must be addressed.
- 12.3 Use municipal licenses, permits, service contracts, funding agreements and other instruments to drive inclusive and anti-racist behaviours.** Bylaws and policies are not the only mechanisms available to Edmonton City Council and City administration to set expectations and drive change. The City also requires, issues and enters into a variety of licenses, permits and agreements, and should strategically attach conditions to these in order to demand services are delivered in inclusive and anti-racist ways.
- 12.4 Enact standards for emergency shelters.** There is no common standard in place for the operation of emergency shelters in our city. Given the role they play in providing a basic

¹⁵ *No Fixed Address: How Transit Peace Officers and Edmonton Police Services prohibited and penalized homelessness in 2018.* (2019). Student Legal Services of Edmonton.

survival need for vulnerable people, emergency shelters need to be guided by common standards that include requirements for inclusive and anti-racist operations. A frequently encountered refrain is that the provincial government needs to do this. However, there is precedent for a municipal government acting on its own. The City of Toronto has enacted emergency shelter standards which are quite extensive.¹⁶ As it explains on its website, “In the absence of provincial standards governing the delivery of shelter services, the City of Toronto first developed Shelter Standards in 1992 to provide City-funded shelter providers and shelter clients with a clear set of expectations and guidelines.”¹⁷ If Toronto can do it, then Edmonton can as well. This needs to be done before the 2021 municipal election. The motion passed by Edmonton City Council on March 15, 2021 is a step in the right direction.

- 12.5 Ensure the new emergency shelter standards require dignified treatment.** The new minimum emergency shelter standards need to set expectations that ensure individuals using these services are treated like human beings. This includes the use of human-centered design and dignity-based service delivery. It also means requiring shelters to allow for pets, partners and property. Not allowing for these elements is a major barrier to the accessibility and effectiveness of shelters in the community safety ecosystem.

Recommendation Thirteen

Invest in urgently needed priorities for community safety.

There is a lot of discussion about the current level of preventative supports and intervention services available in Edmonton’s health and social services ecosystem. Could existing health and social services be better coordinated? Absolutely. Are there enough resources in the system already? It is hard to say with certainty. The funding provided for health and social services is a complex quilt right now, with money provided by the federal and provincial governments and the City of Edmonton in various ways and places.

It is not the job of our Task Force to sort this out. We leave that for people with the mandate, expertise, time and resources to do so.

¹⁶ *Toronto Shelter Standards*. City of Toronto.

¹⁷ <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/community-partners/emergency-shelter-operators/toronto-shelter-standards/>

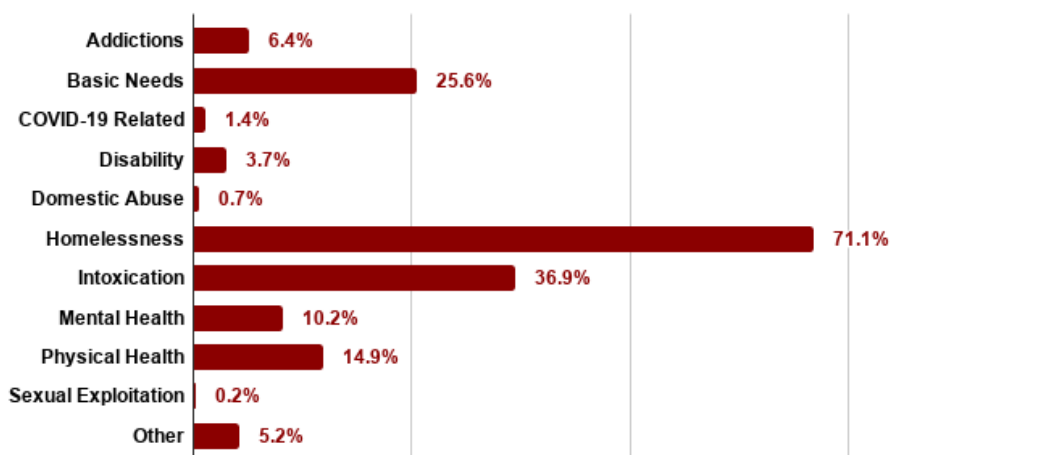
“We are criminalizing the basic survival instincts that people have. The systems shouldn’t be designed to do that.”

What we can say is there are specific areas where investments could make an impact right now in helping enhance community safety. We recommend the City of Edmonton invest in these areas, regardless of whether there is support or participation from other governments.

13.1 Invest in gender-neutral, barrier-free public washrooms. Establishing this capacity in our community would make a positive difference. The availability of gender-neutral, barrier-free public washrooms supports human dignity, the cleanliness of our community, and helps prevent the criminalization of poverty.

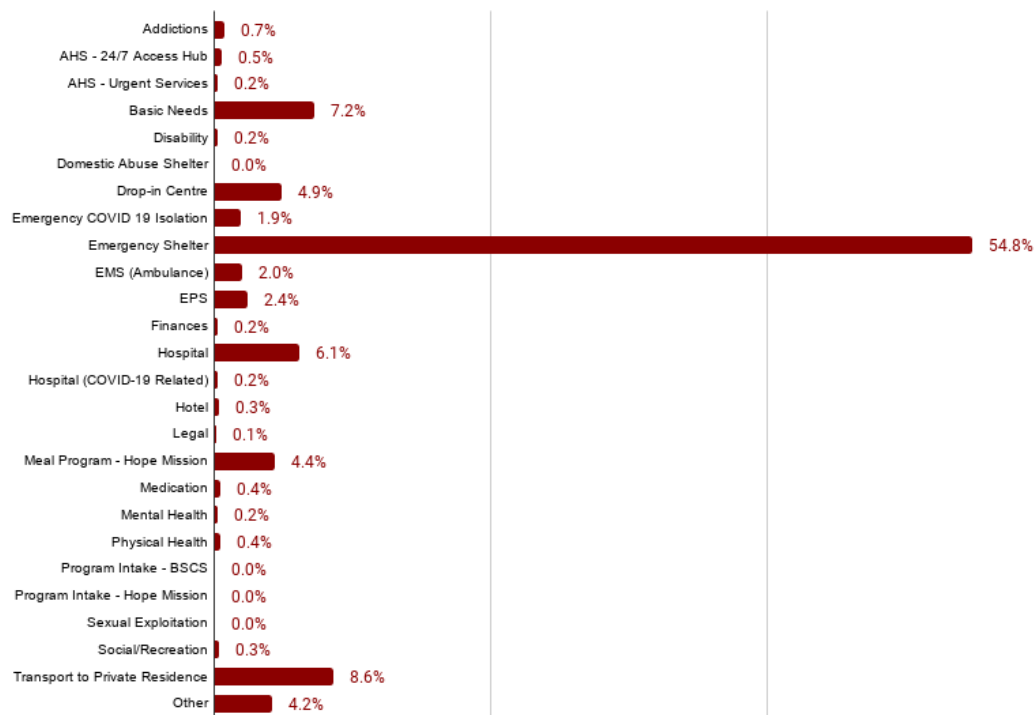
13.2 Invest in shelter space for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. A disproportionate number of Edmontonians experiencing homelessness identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit. This is a legacy of colonialism, historical trauma, intergenerational trauma and systemic racism in our institutions. Building culturally appropriate shelter capacity would provide a basic survival need in a way that helps foster safety and healing for Indigenous members of the community.

Precipitating Factors 2020

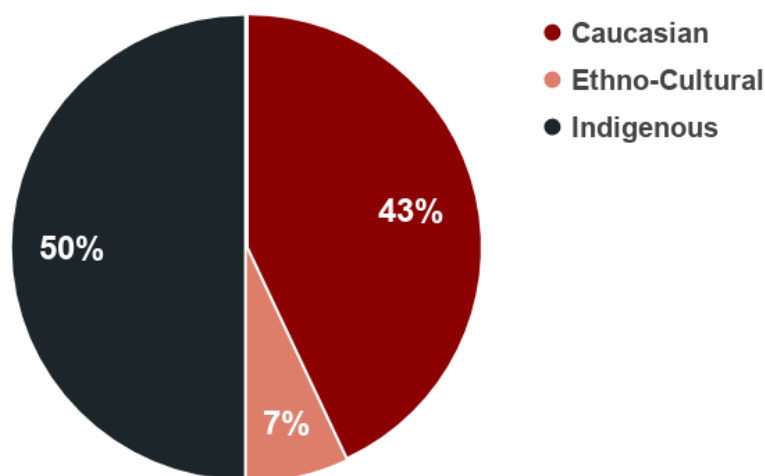


Source: REACH Edmonton. The experiences that people are having when they engage with the 24/7 Crisis Diversion program.

Warm Hand-Offs 2020



Source: REACH Edmonton. Shelters comprise 55% of the warm hand-off referrals utilized with 24/7 Crisis Diversion clients. The opportunity to increase community services such as Drop-ins (providing basic needs, showers, laundry, first aid and access to crisis workers along with increased mental health and addiction peer workers/specialists) could extend the opportunity to support clients.



Source: REACH Edmonton. Demographic information about 24/7 Crisis Diversion clients. 50% of new unique clients in 2020 are Indigenous, while 43% are Caucasian. The remaining 7% are of other ethno-cultural backgrounds. This and previous years' data identify a decreasing trend in the proportion of Indigenous clients engaged by 24/7 Crisis Diversion.

Let's Talk About the Money

Our Task Force was mandated to examine community safety and well-being broadly, which is commendable and makes sense. But we must acknowledge that a key piece of the conversation is the concept of “defunding the police”. We cite that phrase only because it is familiar to people.

To our Task Force, this phrase means “allocate money in preventative and community-building ways, rather than in reactive and militaristic ways.”

The essential idea is that investing public funds in health, education, social supports and other human development will lead to a more equitable community with less poverty, fewer health and social challenges and less demand for police.

Our recommendations align with the spirit of this sentiment. They are designed to bring about a wholesale shift away from a reactive, enforcement-based model and towards a proactive, supportive model of community safety.

In regards to funding, we must take care to look at things with a local context.

The conditions in Canada are unique compared to those in the United States. For example, there is publicly-funded health care available to all residents. This represents a significant investment in Edmonton's health and social services ecosystem that is not present in the same way in most American cities. Hence, the issue of funding for policing needs to be looked at uniquely as well.

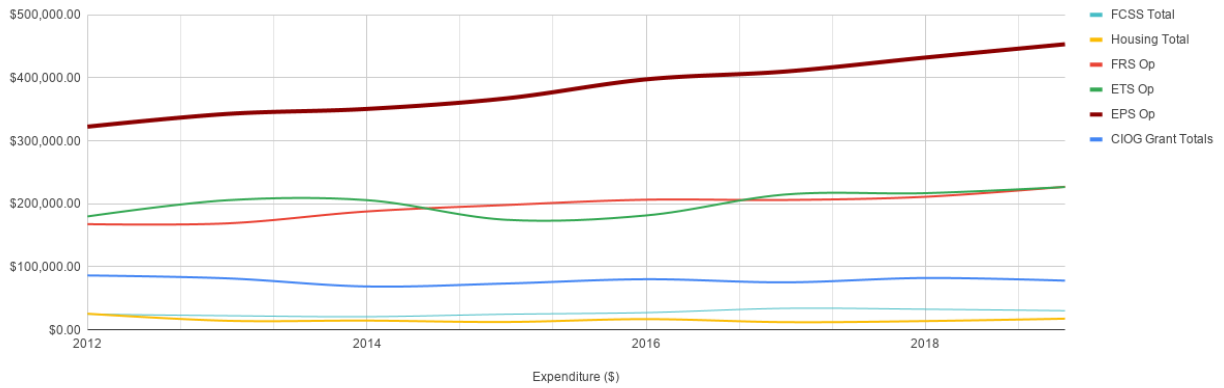
What is helpful to explore is the amount of per-capita spending on policing.

Our finding is that **Edmonton spends more per person on policing than many comparable cities in Canada.**

In 2019, our city's per capita expenditures on police were \$372 – higher than those of Ottawa (\$306), Winnipeg (\$357) and Hamilton (\$216). This trend is forecast to continue in 2021, when Edmonton's per capita spending on police will be \$376 – still higher than the per capita costs of Ottawa (\$332), Winnipeg (\$363), and Hamilton (\$229). The exception to this is Calgary, where per capita spending on policing was \$401 in 2019 and will be \$411 in 2021.

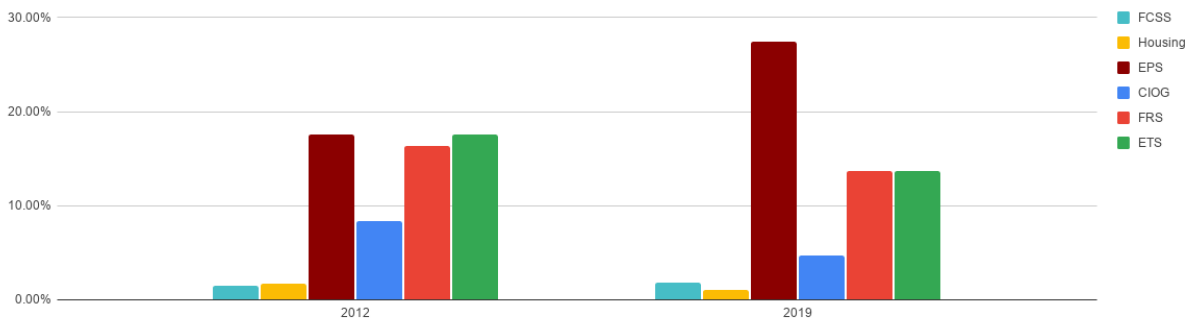
Edmonton's spending on policing has also outpaced its spending on other community services. As can be seen in the charts below, funding for EPS operations has been on a steady track upwards, at a rate markedly higher than funding for housing, Family and Community Support Services, Edmonton Transit Service, or Edmonton Fire Rescue Services. From a budgetary standpoint our city has clearly been preferring EPS in relation to other services. This held true even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic; while many other departments and services experienced freezes or cuts in funding, allocations to EPS remained unaffected.

EPS Expenditure Growth and Other Program Growth (2012-2019)



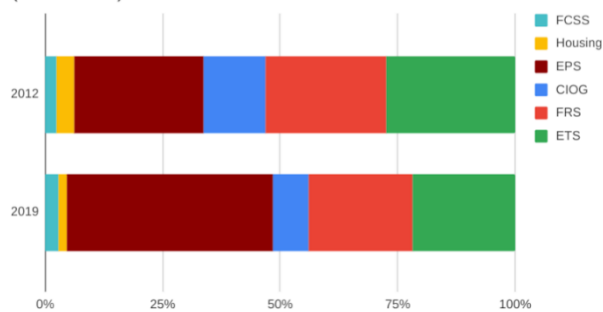
Source: City of Edmonton Open Data

% of Budget by Area (2012/2019)



Source: City of Edmonton Open Data

Expenditure Total Dollars By Area Inflationary Comparative (2012/2019)



Expenditure Total Dollars By Area (2012/2019)



Source: City of Edmonton Open Data

Over the past number of years this upward trend has been fueled in part by a funding formula for EPS that was put in place by Edmonton City Council. The funding formula has escalated the amount of money provided to EPS based on population growth and inflation (using an inflation rate called the “police pricing index” that is higher than the Consumer Price Index). **Under the formula, EPS has received steady budget increases regardless of its initiatives or priorities, and despite not achieving many of its identified performance targets.**

This has provided EPS with predictable multi-year funding, which obviously is helpful from a planning perspective. But most other organizations in the public and private sectors have not been given this same courtesy during this time of strained fiscal resources.

The 2021 City of Edmonton budget offers the latest example. While civic departments will experience a decrease of 0.5 per cent from the 2020 base budget, funding for EPS will increase by 0.6 per cent.¹⁸

The question needs to be asked: why is policing given such preference when other community services are not? Why is Edmonton choosing to scale up investments in policing more than other community services? Does our community value policing more than housing? Or more than shelter? Or more than the fire department?

Funding for EPS has been completely divorced from expectations. EPS has enjoyed the privilege of receiving the money no matter what.

Given the state of public finances everywhere, it does not seem responsible to preference one community service with ever-escalating, multi-year funding while not doing so for others. Continuing on this trajectory will also be unaffordable over the longer term.

Moreover, the funding formula for EPS over the past few years has been completely divorced from expectations. EPS has enjoyed the privilege of receiving the money no matter what. Such a scheme provides zero financial incentive to save money, to divert people away from the criminal justice system, or to make any changes of any kind.

¹⁸ *Fall 2020 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment*. Report to Edmonton City Council. <https://pub-edmonton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=74235>

The way our city funds policing needs to change – for the sake of the City’s budget, for accountability to Edmontonians, and for the enhancement of community safety and well-being in Edmonton.

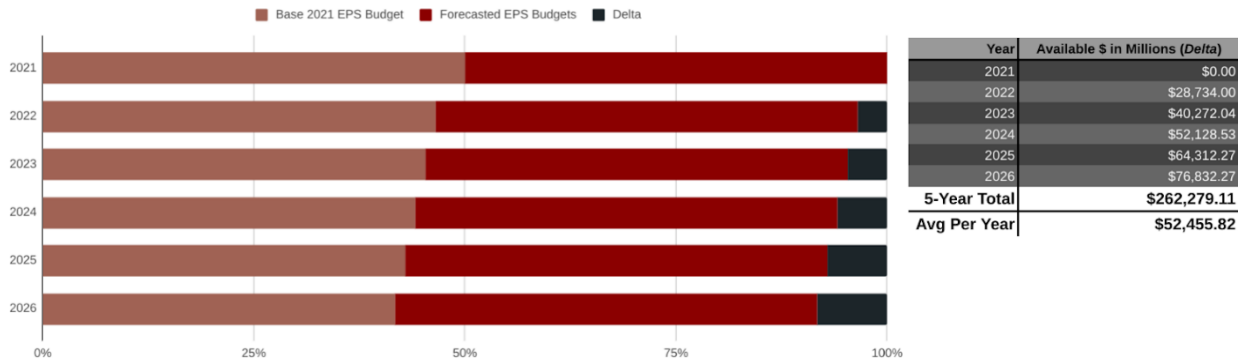
Recommendation Fourteen

Bring police funding into line with comparable cities and tie a portion of funding to specific performance.

Our Task Force recommends that Edmonton’s expenditures on policing be brought into line with those of comparable Canadian cities. We also believe that funding should not be structured in a multi-year arrangement, but provided on a year-to-year basis as is done for other community services in our city.

- 14.1 Freeze the current level of funding to EPS until alignment with comparable cities is achieved.** The level of funding provided to EPS for the 2021 budget year should remain unchanged until the average per-capita spending on policing by peer cities (i.e., Calgary, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Hamilton) catches up to Edmonton’s.
- 14.2 Tie a portion of funding to performance expectations.** Funding is a powerful incentive for change and progress. Edmonton City Council and the Edmonton Police Commission need to incorporate performance expectations into the allocation of funding for policing. Those expectations should relate to things EPS can directly control – notably, enacting changes to training that we recommend, enacting changes to the public complaints process that we recommend, and expanding PACT and HELP teams as we recommend. We believe that 16% of EPS’ funding is an appropriate allocation to tie to performance. (This represents half of the 32% of calls for service that we found EPS does not need to be attending right now.) The development of the exact performance expectations should involve discussions between Edmonton City Council and the Edmonton Police Commission, and should incorporate outcomes that have been informed by the community, in a way similar to the Family and Community Support Services model.
- 14.3 Take the additional funding that would have gone to EPS under the previous funding formula, and use it to refund the community.** Freezing EPS funding at the 2021 level creates opportunity to make investments in other urgent areas. Under the most recent EPS funding formula used by Edmonton City Council, **additional funding on the order of \$260 million would have been provided to EPS over the next five years. This money should be refunded and invested in the community to make certain health and social services available on a 24/7 basis.**

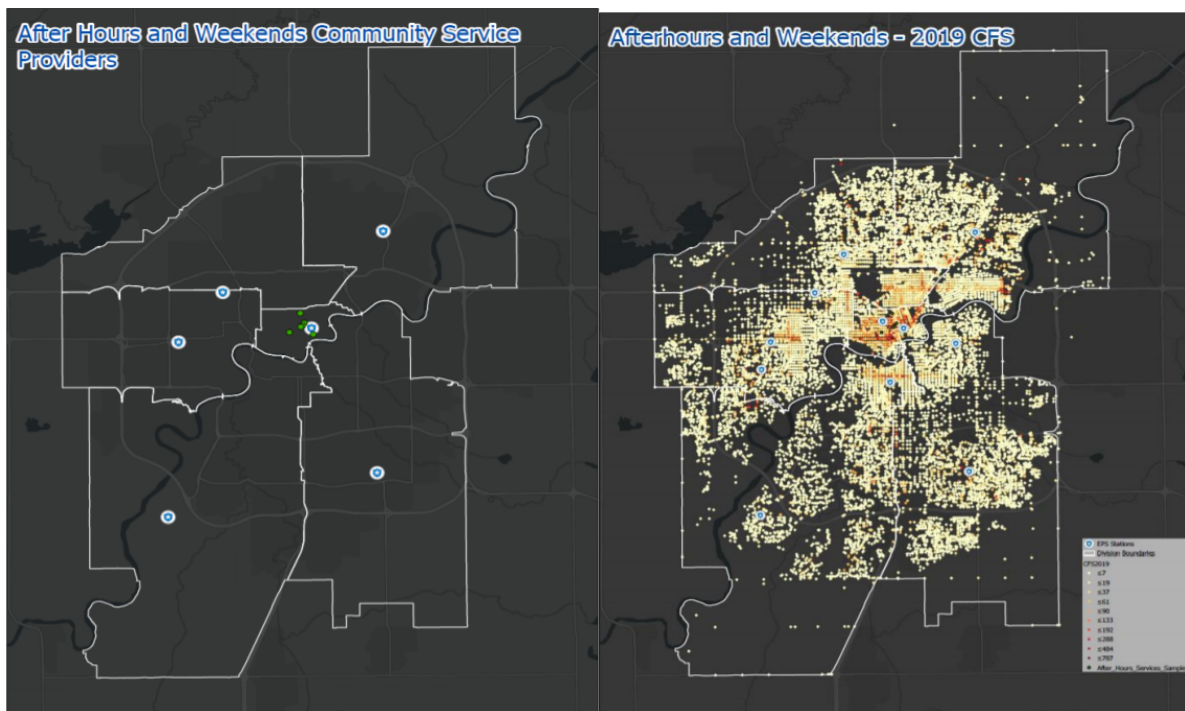
Re-Allocating EPS Budgetary Increases to Alternative Services



15

Source: City of Edmonton

These services should be identified in collaboration with EPS, with the goal of enabling person-in-need calls to be handled by community partners after standard business hours. Right now there are insufficient services available in the evening, overnight and weekend periods, which constrains the community's ability to respond to person-in-need calls and leaves EPS filling the gap. Refunding the community on this front can have a huge impact in enhancing community safety and well-being in Edmonton.



Source: Edmonton Police Services report. Analysis of the Delivery of Social Services Type Events by Edmonton Police Service- Responding to Social Disorder & Mental Health Calls for Service

Final Thoughts

Achieving real and lasting community safety for all Edmontonians will require dedicated commitment and ongoing work. To help ensure forward momentum is maintained, Edmonton City Council needs to report to the community on the progress made in implementing our Task Force's recommendations. This reporting should be done every six months.

While our recommendations are directed to Edmonton City Council, it is our hope that the spirit and intent of our recommendations are taken up by others as well – including academics and researchers, public servants in other cities and jurisdictions, and by Edmontonians at large.

As we note at the outset of this report, despite coming a long way over many decades, our society still has much headway to make when it comes to inclusion and anti-racism. It will take dedicated efforts by all of us – in our professional and personal lives – to challenge our motives, consider our biases, and avoid being carried away blindly by the currents of fear and hate that have been generated over decades of systemic discrimination and systemic racism.

And on that note, we issue a call to action.

The year 2021 presents a unique opportunity to impact change in our city's highest institution – Edmonton City Council. This fall's municipal election offers a chance to showcase and support candidates who champion inclusion, offer diverse perspectives of lived experience, and demonstrate allyship in the fight against racism. And it is one of the best times to make our voices heard and demand better.

In the months and years ahead, we encourage all Edmontonians to be partners in driving our leaders towards decisions and actions that will truly make our city a place that is safer for all.

Thank you.

Appendix A: Recommended Performance Metrics

Recommendation	Recommended Measures
Move to an independent, integrated call evaluation and dispatch model, with representation from EPS, EMS, EFRS, Community Standards and Neighbourhoods, mental health services, crisis diversion and key social service partners.	• % of calls to Emergency Communications Centre that involve police response • % of calls by support type (EFR, EMS, EPS, etc.) • % of staff with appropriate training
Expand the number and use of crisis diversion and alternative policing teams.	• Number of alternative approaches using appropriate responders implemented • Response time for emergency response services from initial call.
Enhance recruitment and training to build diverse, inclusive, anti-racist organizational cultures.	• Number of training related recommendations/ actions implemented • Number of new or improved training opportunities developed and offered. • % of workforce to have completed training before next policing budget dialogue • Number of Commission members receiving relevant training
Examine and pursue ways of preventing the unnecessary use of force by police, peace and bylaw officers.	• Research undertaken
Identify how collective agreements are contributing to systemic bias and work to address these challenges.	• Number of collective agreement related recommendations / actions implemented
Professionalize policing through the creation of a new regulatory	• Study on regulatory college implementation completed

Recommendation	Recommended Measures
college for police and peace officers.	
Expect and instruct the Edmonton Police Commission to fully exercise its authority to provide strong guidance and oversight to EPS, in order to drive inclusivity and anti-racism in policing.	• % of citizens who feel EPS is trustworthy (broken down by age/race/gender/etc.) • % of Edmonton residents who strongly or somewhat agree with the statement, “I have a lot of confidence in the Edmonton Police Service” (broken down by age/race/gender/etc.) • % of Edmonton residents who strongly or somewhat agree with the statement, “I have a lot of confidence in Edmonton bylaw enforcement” (broken down by age/race/gender/etc.) • Sense of safety • Enactment of inclusivity and anti-racism policies • % of sworn female hires • % of sworn hires from Indigenous or racially visible communities
Change the composition and recruitment of the Edmonton Police Commission to more comprehensively reflect the community.	• Bylaw 14040 amended to change Commission composition • Recruitment process transparency increased • % increase in applications received in Commission member recruitment process
Establish mechanisms to provide community direction to peace and bylaw officers employed by the City of Edmonton.	• New civilian oversight body established • Enactment of inclusivity and anti-racism policies • Number of new or improved data points for recruitment • % of female hires • % of hires from Indigenous or racially visible communities
Bring more transparency and independence to public complaints processes.	• Number of data reports with disaggregated data to include demographics • EPS disciplinary decisions posted on EPS website • Peace and bylaw officer disciplinary decisions posted on COE website

Recommendation	Recommended Measures
	• Number of inclusivity- or racism-related complaints received by EPS • Number of inclusivity- or racism-related complaints received by COE • Number of reports of relevant Community Safety and Well-being Bureau data to the public • % of cases disclosed to the public • Number of outcomes of internal disciplinary measures reported to the public
Implement measurement and reporting to drive change and encourage ongoing improvements.	• Number of EPS and Community Standards and Neighbourhoods measures enhanced with demographic data. • Collection of race-based data policies enacted by City of Edmonton, Edmonton Police Commission, and civilian oversight body for peace/bylaw officers
Enact policies and standards that place focus on proactively and effectively providing support to disadvantaged Edmontonians.	• Number of community safety ecosystem implementation targets set • % of community safety ecosystem implementation targets achieved • Emergency shelter standards enacted • Bylaw review completed • % of identified pretense policing bylaw issues addressed/eliminated
Invest in urgently needed priorities for community safety	• Number of new community collaborations • Number of stakeholder engagements
Bring police funding into line with comparable cities and tie a portion of funding to specific performance.	• Number of funding recommendations / actions implemented • Per capita spending on EPS • % difference of Edmonton per capita spending on EPS relative to average per capita spending on policing by comparable cities • % of performance-based funding allocation to EPS successfully earned by organization

“We need a system
where everyone,
unequivocally feels
safe to call police
for help.”