

FALL 2023 SUPPLEMENTAL OPERATING BUDGET ADJUSTMENT

2023-2026 Operating Budget

Recommendation

That adjustments to the 2024-2026 Operating Budget, as outlined in Attachment 1 of the November 7, 2023, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS02052, be approved.

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| Requested Action | Council decision required | | |
| ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle | ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals | | |
| CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals. | Healthy City | | |
| City Plan Values | BELONG. LIVE. THRIVE. ACCESS. PRESERVE. CREATE. | | |
| City Plan Big City Move(s) | A community of communities Inclusive and compassionate Catalyze and converge | Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities | Mobility Network Community safety and well-being Economic Growth Conditions for service success |
| Corporate Business Plan | Serving Edmontonians | | |
| Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-year Budgeting Policy (C578) Fiscal Policy for Revenue Generation (C624) Debt Management Fiscal Policy (C203C) The City Plan | | |
| Related Council Discussions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FCS01394, Proposed 2023-2026 Operating Budget, City Council, November 14, 2022 FCS01394, Proposed 2023-2026 Operating Budget, City Council - Budget, November 30, 2022 FCS01657 - Spring 2023 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment, April 17, 2023 | | |

Executive Summary

- The Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment (SOBA) report is part of the City Council approved multi-year approach to setting the 2023-2026 Operating Budget. The original 2023-2026 Operating Budget was approved by City Council in December 2022.
- Once the four-year budget has been approved, Council has opportunities to adjust the budgets on two occasions each year: in the fall, prior to the start of the budget year, and in the spring of the budget year, prior to finalization of the tax rate.
- The Fall 2023 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment (SOBA) report provides recommendations for adjustments to the 2024-2026 approved operating budget.
- Adjustments to the 2024-2026 approved budget are related to changes in economic forecasts, external factors/legislative changes, operating impacts of capital and other operating adjustments proposed by Administration.
- The proposed tax increase is 7.09 per cent in 2024, 5.04 per cent in 2025 and 4.53 per cent in 2026, mainly driven by increases in utility costs to the City and arbitrated salary settlements.

REPORT

The Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment (SOBA) report is part of the City Council approved multi-year approach to setting the 2023-2026 Operating Budget. The original 2023-2026 Operating Budget was approved by City Council in December 2022. Once the four-year budget has been approved, Council has opportunities to adjust the budgets on two occasions each year: in the fall, prior to the start of the budget year, and in the spring of the budget year, prior to finalization of the tax rate.

The tax increases initially approved by Council in 2022 were as follows:

- 4.96 per cent for 2023,
- 4.96 per cent for 2024,
- 4.95 per cent for 2025, and
- 4.39 per cent for 2026.

The tax increases remained the same following the Spring 2023 SOBA on April 17, 2023.

The recommendations in this report increase the tax change by:

- 2.13 per cent in 2024, for a total of 7.09 per cent,
- 0.09 per cent in 2025 for a total of 5.04 per cent, and
- 0.14 per cent in 2026 for a total of 4.53 per cent.

This report is specific to budget adjustments impacting the currently approved 2024-2026 operating budgets.¹

Administration recognizes the impact of a 7.09% increase in the context of an affordability crisis. Work continues to find solutions to mitigate tax increases now and in the future.

¹ The 2023-2026 Operating Budget was approved by City Council in December 2022. edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/2023-2026OperatingBudget.pdf?cb=1694702721

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Administration will continue to provide regular updates to Council on Operating Amendment 12 (OP12). The amendment, which Council passed during 2023-2026 budget deliberations, reduced operating expenses by \$15 million each year (for a total of \$60 million) and directed Administration to identify a total of \$240 million within the 2023-2026 budget for reallocation to the priority areas of housing, climate change, public transit and core services. Administration continues to report separately on this work.

Economic Outlook

With the exception of population growth, the City's fall 2022 outlook for the 2023-2026 budget cycle and its spring 2023 economic outlook are relatively similar². Population growth, namely from in-migration, is expected to support economic activity in Edmonton, translating to greater demand for goods and services, and for housing. The City's population growth forecast was lifted in its spring outlook, to reflect increased international migration to reflect higher federal permanent resident admissions targets from 2023 to 2025, as well as in-migration from other parts of the country normalising from the effects of the pandemic. Based on provincial population growth trends starting in Q3 2022, Edmonton's population is likely growing at a much stronger rate³, which means an even stronger boost to demand than expected.

Conversely, residential building construction has been slow to respond with fewer housing starts so far in 2023 compared to 2022. Inflation in 2021 and 2022 pushed prices to much higher levels coming into 2023, impacting construction costs, the cost of City operations, and the spending decisions of households and businesses. Higher interest rates have made borrowing more costly as well, which is likely also affecting household purchasing decisions for new homes. Even though price pressures have somewhat eased, and have helped to bring building construction price inflation down, noticeable reductions in price levels are not expected. As a result, residential building construction, which accounts for a large part of building construction activity in Edmonton, is expected to ease over the 2023 to 2026 budget cycle compared to 2022. Inflation has created a challenging price environment that becomes even more challenging given much stronger population growth. This is not only impacting the City's cost of operations, but is also constraining the City's financial capacity to address emerging issues.

Recommended 2024-2026 Operating Budget Adjustments

Guided by the City's Multi-year Budgeting Policy (C578), the supplemental budget adjustment process categorizes adjustments to the 2024-2026 budgets as follows:

- Changes to Economic Forecast: includes adjustments that affect costs, changes in service demand volumes or revenue projections;
- External Factors/Changes in Legislation: allows the City to respond to external factors such as provincial or federal budgets or changes imposed by legislation;
- Operating Impacts of Capital: incorporates the operating impacts related to the acquisition of capital assets or implementation and completion of capital projects; or

² City of Edmonton Spring 2023 Regional (Edmonton CMA) and City (Edmonton) Forecast Summary edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/Spring2023ForecastSummaryTable.pdf?cb=1697227898

³ City of Edmonton - Mid-Year 2023 Economic Update edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/MidYear2023EconomicUpdate.pdf?cb=1697227776

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- Funded service packages that have a direct impact on Council priorities.

Changes are also allowed for urgent budget pressures that need to be addressed during the budget cycle, a recent example being the COVID-19 pandemic.

Budget adjustments for 2024-2026 are itemized in Attachment 1 and discussed below.

Changes to Economic Forecasts

The following adjustments have been incorporated into the proposed budget adjustment and reflect changes to corporate estimates or economic forecasts:

Corporate Expenditures and Revenues

- Ongoing adjustments in investment earnings of a \$26.8 million increase in 2024, \$1.9 million decrease in 2025 and \$0.7 million decrease in 2026 as a result of market conditions, for an adjusted investment earnings total of \$75.9 million (\$26.8 million + \$24.9 million + \$24.2 million) over 2024-2026. Of this, net investment earnings of \$61.4 million are redirected to fund projects in the Capital Budget, consistent with the City's budget strategy to use investment earnings to fund capital projects on a pay-as-you-go basis. The remaining \$14.6 million over 2024-2026 is used for financial service charges such as bank fees and administrative costs, as well as interest transferred to various interest-bearing reserves. There is no resulting impact to the tax levy.
- Ongoing increase of \$4.6 million in revenue for changes in assessment growth starting in 2024.
- Ongoing increase in revenues of \$3.2 million in 2024, decrease of \$0.1 million in 2025 and increase of \$0.1 million in 2026 related to EPCOR power franchise fees based on revised forecasts provided by EPCOR.
- Ongoing increase in revenues of \$2.9 million in 2024, increase of \$0.2 million in 2025 and decrease of \$0.9 million in 2026 related to water, wastewater and drainage (sanitary) franchise fees based on revised forecasts provided by EPCOR.
- An increase in the Land Enterprise Dividend of \$0.8 million in 2024, \$3.1 million in 2025 and decrease of \$0.4 million in 2026 due to the change in calculation methodology resulting from the repeal of City Policy C516B - Land Enterprise Dividend Policy and approval of the revised Council Policy C511A - Land Development Policy by City Council on April 25, 2023. The 2023 Spring SCBA directed that the increase in dividend revenue be directed to repay Land Enterprise Retained Earnings for the interim funding of the Coliseum Demolition. There is no resulting impact to the tax-levy.
- Ongoing decrease of \$6.3 million of revenue for ATCO Gas franchise fees based on revised delivery rate forecasts provided by ATCO Gas.
- Ongoing increase in utility costs of \$12.1 million in 2024, \$5.6 million in 2025 and \$2.1 million in 2026, due to higher utility prices, primarily for power.
- Ongoing increase of \$3.2 million in expenditures for taxation appeals and penalties, driven by assessment changes as a result of assessment complaints, starting in 2024, with an additional \$0.7 million in 2025 and \$0.8 million in 2026.

Edmonton Transit Service

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- Ongoing decrease in transit services revenue of \$5.1 million in 2024, increase of \$0.4 million in 2025 and increase of \$0.2 million in 2026. Transit revenues have been impacted by a combination of recovery rates of transit ridership, changes in travel behaviour and rider demographics, compared to what was assumed in the transit fare model. While bus ridership has recovered, LRT and paratransit ridership has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. This combined with the change in travel behaviour and a shift away from monthly passes to the pay-as-you-go pricing enabled by the introduction of the Arc card result in lower fare revenue. This adjustment is for half of the \$10 million revenue shortfall in transit revenues, so there is a risk of continued budget shortfalls that may necessitate additional tax levy support in the future. Administration will continue to monitor the remaining shortfall and bring forward updates as necessary.

Community Recreation and Culture

- Ongoing increase of \$8.2 million in revenue and \$3.4 million in related expenses for community recreation facilities due to higher than anticipated volumes starting in 2024. The additional costs relate to personnel to support increased attendance and programming, and additional security costs to ensure safe facilities.

Parks and Roads Services

- Ongoing decrease in expense of \$5.0 million starting in 2025 as Traffic Safety and Automated Enforcement Reserve (TSAER) shortfall is less than originally forecasted, impacting the transfer to reserve.

Planning and Environment Services

- The Sanitary Servicing Strategy Fund (SSSF) was established for construction of deep trunk sewers servicing new development and growth in the City for the next 40 years. The program is funded through expansion assessment fees, sanitary sewer trunk charges, utility contributions and interest earned. Revenue and expenditure budgets are regularly adjusted to align with current economic conditions and evolving construction plans. This adjustment increases expenditures by \$21.0 million in 2024, reduces by \$12.7 million in 2025 and reduces \$8.0 million in 2026 to align with updated construction plans as determined by EPCOR, as well as increase revenues by \$3.7 million in 2024, decrease of \$1.6 million in 2025 and increase of \$0.1 million in 2026 to reflect economic forecasts. The result is a decreased transfer to SSSF reserve of \$17.3 million in 2024, increase of \$11.1 million in 2025 and increase of \$8.1 million in 2026. There is no resulting impact to the tax levy.

Development Services

- The Planning and Development Business Model (PDBM) revenues and expenses are regularly adjusted to align with economic conditions and forecast development activity. Planning and Development Business revenues are budgeted to increase in 2025; however, are on track to be higher beginning in 2024, requiring a one-time increase in 2024. Therefore, an increase in revenue of \$3.5 million in 2024, a decrease of \$3.3 million in 2025 and an increase of \$2.6 million in 2026. Expenses will increase by \$0.6 million per year starting in 2024 to ensure adequate resourcing to keep up with service levels. The difference between revenues and expenditures is adjusted through the transfer to/from the Planning and Development

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Reserve. As such, these adjustments result in an increase in the transfer to the Planning and Development Reserve of \$2.9 million in 2024, decrease of \$3.3 million in 2025 and increase of \$2.6 million in 2026. There is no impact to the tax levy.

External Factors/Changes to Legislation

The following adjustments are a result of external factors or changes in legislation:

- The arbitrated salary settlement for Edmonton Police Association results in an ongoing increase to Edmonton Police Service of \$19.7 million starting in 2024. This is partially offset by reductions in Financial Strategies.
- For the 2023-2026 budget approved in December 2022, funding for the Edmonton Police Service was approved for 2023 only. There is an ongoing increase to Edmonton Police Service (EPS) of \$11.8 million in 2024, \$11.4 million in 2025 and \$3.9 million in 2026, as a result of City Council approval of the revised Council Policy C604B - Edmonton Police Service Funding Formula on August 23, 2023. This is partially offset by a \$7.0 million reduction in Financial Strategies for 2024 and 2025 and \$3.9 million in 2026, these funds were held in anticipation of the revised funding formula. The calculation shows full funding allocated for 2024 and 2025, with 2026 being reduced to an incremental \$3.9 million because of the 30 per cent civic expenditures cap. Subsequent changes in the operating budget would require a recalculation of the funding formula. The funding formula will be recalculated as part of every fall SOBA.
- Changes to Workers' Compensation Board premiums increase ongoing expenses by \$0.7 million starting in 2024.
- Workforce Safety and Employee Health will increase ongoing expenses by \$0.1 million starting in 2024 for Occupational Medicine Consultant costs, which are required to maintain compliance with legislated service levels.

Adjustments for Operating Impacts of Capital

Operating impacts of capital include adjustments required to the operating budget from the acquisition of capital assets and implementation or completion of capital projects. The operating budget adjustment as proposed includes funding for the following:

- Metro to Blatchford (alternative scenario); this adjustment funds the operation of the new permanent NAIT Station starting in 2024 and maintenance of the completed Blatchford Gate Station and associated infrastructure; the opening of Blatchford Gate Station will be deferred. The ongoing impact is an increase of \$2.4 million in 2024, an increase of \$0.2 million in 2025 and a decrease of \$44,000 in 2026. An unfunded service package for the Metro to Blatchford (base scenario) has also been included for Council consideration.
- Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) Auxiliary Vehicle Growth Units; specialized auxiliary vehicles required to maintain LRT systems, including signals, and overhead power and substations, which are fundamental to the mobility network. This responsibility transitioned to the City of Edmonton from EPCOR subsequent to the 2023-2026 budget deliberations. The ongoing impact is an increase to Edmonton Transit Service of \$1.4 million in 2024, a decrease of \$0.4 million in 2025 and a decrease of \$0.3 million in 2026.

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- Open City and Technology (OCT) network operations⁴ reflects ongoing operating support of \$0.4 million in 2024 for the capital profile recommended in the Fall Supplementary Capital Budget Adjustment.
- Tweddle Place Living Wall is a recently acquired asset from EPCOR that requires ongoing maintenance of shrubs for the nature-based solution, which replaces traditional noise and visual barriers between roadways and residential areas with noise-absorptive, graffiti-resistant willow. The ongoing impact is an increase to Parks and Roads Services of \$0.2 million in 2024 and \$1,000 in 2026.
- EPS growth units are required for six growth units in EPS for the Human-centred Engagement & Liaison Partnership (HELP) program. Annual expenses are under \$100,000. There is no tax levy impact as grant funding will be used for 2024 and 2025, and existing funding from EPS will fund 2026 expenses and beyond.

Funded Service Packages

The following funded service packages will have a direct impact on Council's priority of Community Safety and Well-Being:

- Anti-Racism - High Level Office advances implementation of the Anti-Racism Strategy, responds to the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan and co-ordinates action with the Indigenous Framework. The Anti-Racism - High Level Office in Administration leads anti-racist transformations of City services, enhances employment practices, and is accountable and responsible for the Strategy and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan. The ongoing impact is an increase to the City Manager's Office of \$2.6 million in 2024, \$0.1 million decrease in 2025 and \$15,000 decrease in 2026.
- Anti-Racism - Independent Body provides operational surety for a community-based Independent Anti-Racism Body. The Body is the community's convening point for anti-racism concerns and ideas, education and advocacy, and serves as an accountability partner for the City's anti-racism actions. The ongoing impact is an increase to the City Manager's Office of \$1.0 million in 2024 and \$0.6 million in 2025.

Other Adjustments (for information)

These adjustments are presented for Council's information; however, approval is not required as the Police Commission approves adjustments that have no impact to tax levy, per the *Police Act*.

- The \$9.0 million increase in ongoing expenditures associated with 50 new police officers will be offset by grant revenue from the Province of Alberta. There is no resulting impact to the tax levy.
- The \$0.4 million increase in ongoing operating costs at the Police Seized Vehicle Storage Lot (PSVSL) is offset by increased revenues, as fees increased from \$45 per day to \$50 per day effective July 1, 2023. There is no resulting impact to the tax levy.

⁴ Discussion regarding OCT network operations would need to be in private, pursuant to section 25 (disclosure harmful to economic and other interests of a public body) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Adjustments to Financial Strategies

The Financial Strategies budget provides flexibility for unknown amounts over the budget cycle. The amount of funding for the financial strategies budget is based on a risk assessment of potential impacts to the City's operating budget and provides a mechanism to manage fluctuation within the operating budget over the four-year cycle. Risks and funding allocations are monitored and adjusted annually to address ongoing budget pressures over the course of the 2023-2026 Operating Budget, including fuel and utility cost escalation, changes in interest rates, other inflationary impacts and other changes to the City's operating budget. Funds are released from Financial Strategies as necessary to mitigate financial impacts. The net impact is a reduction of \$10.2 million in 2024, \$10.8 million in 2025 and another \$4.2 million reduction in 2026.

Service Packages

Service packages reflect new or enhanced services, growth on existing services or increases resulting from impacts of capital.

Funded service packages are added to the base budget and are recommended for funding because they are operating impacts of capital for approved capital projects that require funding, required costs for assets that have been acquired or because the item is a priority request. These include the adjustments to operating impacts of capital and funded service packages described above.

Unfunded service packages are included in Attachment 2 for Council consideration; they would require an approved Council motion to add to the budget. Unfunded service packages from Administration and motioned by Council have been evaluated in a manner consistent with analysis of core services contemplated in Administration's work on OP12 to determine if they are legally required, practically necessary or have a direct impact on Council priorities.

Governance of Agencies, Boards and Commissions is outside of City Manager and Administration's authority. Therefore, all service packages for Agencies, Boards and Commissions will be submitted as unfunded, as any funding decisions related to these agencies must be made by Council. Unfunded service packages submitted by Agencies, Boards and Commissions are:

- Explore Edmonton: Increased Mandate and Scope Funding
- Edmonton Public Library: Heritage Valley Expansion
- GEF Seniors Housing: Social Housing - Lodge Staffing Increase

Unfunded service packages brought forward by Administration due to high priority are:

- Temporary and Seasonal Workforce Review - Recalibrating the Workforce
- Core Encampment and Unsheltered Homelessness Response
- Enhanced Encampment and Unsheltered Homelessness Response
- Capacity Funding / Positions for Indigenous MOU Partners

Unfunded service package for consideration that are Council-driven are:

- Community Property Safety Team (CPST) Program

Unfunded service packages include those motioned by Council:

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- Redeploy VLSE (Valley Line Southeast LRT) Service Hours/Buses
- City Centre Optimization
- Expanded Snow Program
- Traffic Enforcement
- Landlord Licensing, Compliance and Registry Project
- Satellite Garage and Transit Service Growth Operating Impact of Capital
- Ongoing Maintenance of Trees

Unfunded service packages that result from motions made after September 15, 2023, will be included as an addendum to the Fall SOBA.

Dedicated Funds

In response to two separate Council motions, there are considerations for dedicated funds:

- A Dedicated Climate Fund, FCS01782 Dedicated Climate Fund, at Executive Committee on November 1, 2023.
- A Dedicated Renewal Fund, which is discussed in Attachment 3.

Financial impacts of these dedicated funds are not included within the proposed tax increase for the Fall SOBA; therefore, Council decisions may have an impact on the tax levy.

Community Insight

To prepare for the capital and operating financial outlooks (Financial and Corporate Services reports FCS01168 and FCS01169, June 7, 2022), Administration commissioned a third-party survey of 1,006 participants using an online panel. The largest group of respondents (33 per cent) expressed a preference of limiting tax increases to the amount needed to account for inflation, with services staying at the same level. The next largest group (28 per cent) opted to hold tax at the same level with the understanding that services would be reduced. The survey also asked participants what a reasonable annual tax increase would be; their suggestions averaged to 1.9 per cent.

The October 31, 2022 City Council report CE01489 provided details on the extensive engagement Administration conducted on the 2023-26 Capital and Operating Budgets during the summer of 2022.

More than 3,200 Edmontonians participated in the Balance the Budget exercise in which they could build their own budget by increasing and decreasing funding to City services. For City services that have direct impact to the majority of Edmontonians such as parks and roads, respondents were aligned in wanting to increase investment. There was also alignment to decrease investment on items that they do not have direct connection with such as boards, general expenses and oversight. Opinions were more polarized in social development, transit, community recreation and neighbourhoods, policing and libraries.

At the same time, Administration organized outreach to organizations and community groups and harder-to-reach communities, tailoring the engagement approach to each group. Themes that emerged included:

- Coming out of the pandemic, there is a need to focus on improving community safety.

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- The cost of living is going up and Edmontonians are facing increased financial pressures.
- Transit safety and connectivity are important.
- Participants want to connect with each other and celebrate Edmonton.
- Long-term solutions to climate challenges are needed.
- Participants are concerned about the overlapping nature of federal, provincial and municipal responsibilities.
- An overall sentiment of empathy among participants, who expressed an understanding that some individuals may be impacted by service reductions or fee increases more than others, including vulnerable populations, and those on low and fixed incomes.

The Service Satisfaction Survey gathers Edmontonians' perceptions of overall service quality and the satisfaction and importance of highly visible City of Edmonton services. 2023 results indicated the majority of Edmontonians are satisfied with the overall quality, ease of access to City services, and how well the City informs Edmontonians about services; however, less than 50 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the quality of customer service they receive from the City.

For individual services, Edmontonians rated each in terms of their satisfaction, importance and preferred level of investment. Based on these ratings, each City service was classified as a strength or an opportunity.

Parks, sports fields and green spaces; fire rescue; waste collection; recreational facilities and pathway maintenance are the City's top five primary strengths. Relative to other services, Edmontonians are more satisfied with these services and consider them more important.

Homelessness response and support, affordable housing for low-income households, community safety, public transit and bylaw enforcement are the City's top five primary opportunities. Relative to other services, Edmontonians are less satisfied and consider them more important.

Edmontonians generally support increased investment in the services they see as primary opportunities.

2023 is the second year that the City has collected these insights with the Service Satisfaction survey. Year over year results indicate that Edmontonians were less satisfied with several services in 2023, while the importance of services remained stable, and there is a smaller proportion of Edmontonians seeking more investment into services than in 2022. Details on the 2023 survey are in Attachment 4.

The complexity of these results illustrate that there is no single combination of service priorities that will satisfy all Edmontonians.

GBA+

The four-year budget incorporated input from the public engagement activities described above. This engagement applied a GBA+ approach to do targeted outreach and ensure the City captured input from residents experiencing unique barriers and challenges, and those whose voices are heard less often. Administration conducted targeted outreach and engagement with 2SLGBTQ+ community members, non-English speakers, youth, seniors, racialized community members,

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women, people with disabilities, Edmontonians experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and people experiencing mental health and addiction challenges.

GBA+ is applied on the project, service or profile that make up each of the budget adjustments. As part of the development of the 2023-2026 Proposed Operating Plans and Budget, departments and GBA+ Centres of Excellence participated in a partial GBA+ process and identified differential impacts that new initiatives proposed for the next four years might have on Edmontonians. For example, would a proposed program impact single parents one way and seniors another way?

This information was used as a factor to help determine which initiatives to advance. The GBA+ process will be applied to initiatives that are approved as part of the 2023-2026 operating budget decisions and will identify measures to address differential impacts as the program or project is implemented.

Attachments

1. 2024-2026 Operating Budget Changes
2. Operating Budget - The City of Edmonton Fall 2023 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment
3. Options for Creation of a New Dedicated Renewal Fund
4. Service Satisfaction Survey 2023 - Service Report