

# The Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy

## Recommendation:

That Community and Public Services Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That the Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy, as outlined in Attachment 1 of the September 12, 2016, Citizen Services report CR\_3664, be approved.
2. That Administration collaborate with key stakeholders to develop a Suicide Prevention Implementation Plan by December 2017.

## Report Summary

**This report provides an overview of the Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy and outlines the need for a Suicide Prevention Implementation Plan for Edmonton.**

## Report

### Background

At Community Services Committee on August 18, 2014, Administration was directed to provide a report on options to better support suicide prevention in Edmonton. Based on information provided in the February 23, 2015, Community Services report CR\_1620 - Options to Support Suicide Prevention, Council directed Administration to create a suicide prevention framework as part of the Urban Isolation/Mental Health Initiative.

Administration convened an advisory committee to develop a suicide prevention strategy for Edmonton. The Edmonton Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee is comprised of stakeholders from diverse areas of expertise that include representatives of the City of Edmonton, Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, the University of Alberta, non-profit community agencies, and first responders.

A critical first step in the development of the Suicide Prevention Strategy was to understand suicide in Edmonton. The Edmonton Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee learned that:

- There were 117 deaths by suicide in Edmonton in 2013 and 165 in the Edmonton Zone of Alberta Health Services, which includes surrounding areas. It is generally understood that this is an underestimate given the challenges of confirming death by suicide.
- Three out of four suicide deaths are male, and most suicides among men take place between the ages of 30 and 69 years.
- The World Health Organization estimates that 90 percent of people who die by suicide have a mental illness, often combined with depression and substance abuse.
- After a mental illness, the risk factors most frequently associated with suicide include substance abuse, trauma, social isolation, and higher rates of poverty.

- According to the Injury Prevention Centre, the total loss costs associated with suicidal behaviour in the Edmonton Zone - Alberta Health Services, were estimated at over \$89 million in 2013.

### The Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy

While suicide is a complex issue involving the interaction of biological, psychological and social factors, it is preventable. The Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy provides an understanding of suicide in Edmonton and recommends a set of actions for implementation that reflect evidence-based practices. Recommended actions are intended to enhance known protective factors that mitigate against suicide while reducing factors that put individuals at higher risk.

The strategy employs a universal preventive approach that emphasizes collaboration and coordination of services. It also takes into account alignment opportunities with existing and upcoming community and provincial initiatives.

### Strategy/Goals

The three goals of the Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy are:

- to provide awareness and education to promote positive mental health and reduce the stigma of suicide
- to ensure the whole continuum of services including the promotion of positive mental health, prevention, intervention, and postvention
- to promote these services to be fully accessible and address the needs of at-risk populations

### Next Steps

The development of a suicide prevention implementation plan is a critical component in the effort to advance the recommendations identified in the strategy. An implementation plan would foster a coordinated approach and provide necessary direction so multiple stakeholders can work together towards reducing suicide in Edmonton.

Specifically, a Suicide Prevention Implementation Plan for Edmonton should: identify key stakeholders, determine scope, prioritize objectives and actions, establish timelines, establish funding and resource requirements, specify outcomes, and make evaluation recommendations.

### **Corporate Outcomes**

- "Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play." Fewer individuals engage in suicidal ideation and behaviour because they feel connected to their community, which is a protective factor against suicide.
- "Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living." The mental health of Edmontonians improves and as a consequence fewer individuals engage in suicidal ideation and behaviour.

## Risk Assessment

Risk Element	Risk Development	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Current Mitigations	Potential Future Mitigations
Political Influence	Implementation of an effective suicide prevention strategy will require commitment of Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services. If this commitment is withdrawn, some prevention programs and services may be absent or insufficient.	2 - Unlikely	2 - Moderate	4 - Low	The development of the Strategy has actively involved Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services as key stakeholders.	Ensuring that there is a sufficient number and a diversity of stakeholders involved in the implementation process will result in decreased vulnerability should some stakeholders withdraw.
Project Management	Effective project management will be required for the development of the implementation plan as well as the implementation process. Should this not occur, delays in program or service delivery may	2 - Unlikely	2 - Minor	4 - Low	There are sufficient resources in place for project management, and a high likelihood that stakeholders already engaged in the Strategy will continue to be involved in the development of an implementation plan.	There is internal City of Edmonton expertise in project management should additional support be required.

	result.					
Public Perception	Recent media coverage of the High Level Bridge barriers may hinder support for the strategy.	2 - Unlikely	1 - Minor	2 - Low	Communications has developed key messages for the media about the upcoming Strategy. The broad and diverse engagement of various stakeholders in development of the Strategy.	Communications will develop key messages that clearly outline the content of the Strategy.

### Metrics, Targets and Outcomes

Metric	Target	Outcome
City of Edmonton Suicide Rate - 13.8 per 100,000 people (2013)	Not Applicable.	Fewer numbers of suicides in Edmonton.
Edmonton Capital Region Suicide Rate - 13.6 per 100,000 people (2013)	Not Applicable.	Fewer numbers of suicides in the Edmonton Capital Region.

To address current information limitations in the knowledge of suicide in Edmonton, an evaluation framework (including metrics, targets and outcomes) will be developed as a part of the strategy implementation.

### Public Consultation

The Edmonton Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee and staff from the City of Edmonton's Office of Public Engagement agreed that the stakeholder engagement process was appropriate for this consultation as it allowed for a more focused engagement that was of greatest benefit to the Edmonton Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee.

Three types of stakeholders were engaged: representatives from non-profit community agencies; those who work directly with individuals at higher risk of suicide; and stakeholders from communities that have higher suicide rates, including those from Indigenous communities, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit and Queer communities, middle-aged men, and those experiencing poverty. There were 80 participants over the three sessions which occurred on March 15, 22 and 30, 2016. As a

result of the engagement, the Edmonton Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee developed a better understanding of suicide in Edmonton, and the insights shared by participants contributed to the development of the Strategy.

### **Budget/Financial Implications**

The development of an implementation plan for Edmonton will not require additional financial resources as this work falls under the Urban Isolation/Mental Health Initiative and will be funded within current operating budgets. Funding requirements to implement actions identified in the implementation plan will be determined once developed.

### **Justification of Recommendation**

1. Approval of the Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy will allow Administration to advance the strategy towards reducing suicide in Edmonton.
2. Direction to Administration to proceed with the Implementation Plan will ensure the roles, responsibilities and resourcing associated with the prevention of suicide in Edmonton are determined accordingly.

### **Attachment**

1. Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016 - 2021

### **Others Reviewing this Report**

- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services