



Social impact audit finds \$7.5 billion spent annually on Edmonton's social safety ecosystem

Key findings show a need for better integration of services to optimize funding

In a social impact audit conducted on behalf of the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) and Edmonton Police Commission (EPC), social technology innovation company HelpSeeker, has identified an estimated \$7.5 billion in investments made annually into social support and community services in the City of Edmonton.

The audit takes into consideration publicly available data on funding from all levels of government, as well as charitable donations and fundraising proceeds directed toward Edmonton's social safety net system. The social safety net is composed of a range of programs, benefits and supports delivered by diverse actors, including: local, provincial/territorial, and federal governments, public and non-public charities, non-profit organizations, and private sector entities.

Included in the \$7.5 billion figure is: \$2.1B to community social service charities, excluding public health or education entities; \$298M in public and private foundations; \$1.3-1.5B in addictions and mental health services; \$782M in budgets for first responders (Fire, EMS, EPS), and \$3B in direct government cash transfers to individuals such as social assistance and low income.

[As part of the research](#), a total of 2,033 entities, inclusive of charities, non-profits, and other human services, were identified as providing roughly 12,900 services in Edmonton. Financial information for \$3.2B could be traced to 460 of these entities. The balance of the remaining entities is unknown.

"Edmonton has a tremendous opportunity to rethink its approach to social challenges, especially in light of the inequities precipitated by the pandemic; this is the time to dig deeper and transform the whole of the social safety net to be human-centered, integrated, and efficient," notes HelpSeeker Co-founder Dr. Alina Turner.

HelpSeeker was engaged by EPS at the direction from Edmonton City Council to conduct an [in-depth analysis](#) of all monies spent annually on Edmonton's social safety net ecosystem following public hearings on police reform in June 2020.

Findings highlight a lack of coordination within the ecosystem, resulting in duplication and overlap of services and causing public confusion about what supports exist or how they can be accessed. This

inconsistency creates challenges in tracing funding impacts systemwide due to limited or varied data collection and reporting practices from service provider to service provider.

“Despite all the funding channeled into Edmonton’s social safety ecosystem, we still have countless citizens falling through the cracks,” says EPS Chief Dale McFee. “We see this play out in our communities as rising domestic violence, increasing emergency room visits, a growing homeless population, and higher calls for police service. This is no longer a discussion about moving money from one organization to another, but about recalibrating the system to bring all service providers – police included – into alignment under increased accountability. Our citizens deserve better outcomes for the considerable amount of money being invested.”

The audit’s immediate call to action is directed toward the provincial government to create an Integrated Investment Framework is required to coordinate disparate funding streams and recalibrating services toward a recovery-oriented structure with clear, measurable outcomes.

The EPS will continue to advocate for collaboration between all service providers and levels of government on bringing alignment to the social safety ecosystem.

-30-

Media Contacts

Cheryl Sheppard

Communications Advisor

Edmonton Police Service

cheryl.sheppard@edmontonpolice.ca

780-421-2671

Dr. Alina Turner

Co-founder, HelpSeeker

alina@helpseeker.org