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# EDMONTON SOCIAL IMPACT AUDIT

## *Research Overview*

## Introduction

In June 2020, the City of Edmonton directed the Edmonton Police Service to probe the response to mounting social, community safety, and health issues, and the current approach to these challenges.

Across Alberta, communities are similarly challenged by a siloed and uncoordinated response to social issues that include mental health, addiction, homelessness, and poverty. These issues have tremendous impact on individuals and communities, particularly during the current COVID-19 pandemic. While COVID-19 has undoubtedly increased financial, health and wellbeing pressures for individuals and families, it has also served to expose fault lines in the social safety net — including discrimination and inequitable treatment — that existed long prior to the pandemic. To fully understand the scope of change needed, a thorough understanding of the social safety net and its challenges is required.

To probe these issues further, the Edmonton Police Service engaged HelpSeeker, a social technology innovation company, to develop a Social Impact Audit analysis of diverse funding sources in Edmonton, and to propose ways for transforming responses across all sectors engaging in the delivery of social services, including police.

This analysis builds on existing calls for transformation in the delivery of health, education, justice, and social services. While this research focuses in the short term on funding of the social safety net, it also supports the case for a paradigm shift — across the entire social safety net — towards a transparent and coordinated system that champions equitable wellbeing. Of note, this report aims to amplify the calls for social change across Canada's

institutions by bringing additional insights from a financial perspective to conversations on systems transformation.

*Disclaimer: This report has been prepared for the exclusive use and benefit of the Edmonton Police Service and solely for the purposes of conducting a Social Impact Audit analysis of diverse funding sources in Edmonton and to propose areas for consideration in systems transformation. Limitations with respect to the data collected and presented within are provided throughout this report. HelpSeeker does not accept any liability if this report is used for an alternative purpose from which it is intended, nor to any third party in respect of this report.*

## Findings

Canada's Social Safety Net, including Edmonton's, is composed of a wide range of programs, benefits, and supports delivered by diverse players including: local, provincial/territorial, and federal government, public and non-public charities, non-profit organizations, and private sector entities.

Some of these supports are delivered directly by service providers to people who need them (for example, shelters provide beds to those experiencing homelessness), while other programs offer a benefit (such as income assistance, tax credits, and other programs).

This Social Impact Audit was intended to bring together as much information as possible about money flowing into all these activities. Of note, a complete picture of Edmonton's Social Safety Net remains unknown (see page 4 for more information on limiting factors).

*At this time, the known funding coming into the Edmonton social safety net is estimated at*

# **\$7.5B per year**

*This figure includes community social services charities, and public health for mental health and addictions programming, first responders (EPS, EMS, Fire) and direct government transfers to individuals.*

### **The \$7.5B includes the following:**

1. Edmonton 2018 community and social services charities revenues totaled **\$2.1B**. This does not include public health or education entities such as hospitals, schools, and colleges. As a result, it is likely an underestimate as such institutions provide social

*supports - however, there was no means to discern to what extent this was the case at this time.*

2. About **\$3B** comes in the form of direct government cash transfers to individuals in Edmonton, based on Census 2016 data. *These transfers are for services such as social assistance, or low income, unemployment, disability, and seniors' financial supports. These supports are one of the most common components of social safety nets internationally as well.*
3. In total, **2,033** entities (including charities, non-profits, and other types of organizations) were identified through systems mapping in Edmonton providing about **12,900** service elements in the city. Financial information for a total of \$3.2B could be traced to 460 entities - **23%** of these were mapped. The balance remains unknown.
4. **\$298M** in public and private foundation money was identified for 2018. A total of **53%** of these monies flowed through to qualified donees who provided services.
5. Using public health spending data from 2019, a further **\$1.3-\$1.5B/year** was estimated to be spent on addictions and mental health services in Edmonton.
6. First responders' 2020 budgets totaled **\$782M**; this includes the full budgets for EPS, Fire, and EMS in Edmonton.

## **Towards Systems Transformation**

The presence of thousands of service elements and considerable investments coming into Edmonton present an opportunity to change siloed and reactive approaches to social issues.

**The growing public discourse around police funding presents just a critical opportunity to create a more transparent, equitable social safety net. To rebuild a system that champions equitable wellbeing, all sectors including health, child welfare, charitable and nonprofit, and more, must commit to unpacking the inequities and inefficiencies that exist across the service delivery spectrum.**

To this end, a number of considerations are suggested to enhance individual and community outcomes, maximize equitable impact, and use of funds. This involves rolling out an all-hands-on-deck focus on solutions to align resources towards recovery and wellbeing across all funding streams, and applying a systems approach to data, governance, and service delivery.

A community-based approach, reinforced by a whole-of-government model, can drive the alignment of resources and paradigm shift to equitable wellbeing and recovery. Ultimately, resolute leadership will be needed to achieve transformational systems change.

1. Develop an evidence-based **Integrated Investment Framework** for any funded or government-delivered interventions, programs, services, or benefits. All investment should flow through a consistent procurement and performance management process, with strategic governance and oversight provided by the Community Systems Integration Table. Philanthropic and other government funders should be encouraged to co-invest/stack through the same mechanism to maximize impact.

Improved funding coordination will support enhanced transparency, service quality and outcomes at the end-user and system levels. Ultimately, this will support improved decision-making and service delivery, while maximizing frontline support through current investments.

2. Enhance **collaborative, on-the-ground efforts** among social, health, and police partners to augment police interventions, with additional social support capacity to frontline responders managing community impacts immediately.
3. Champion the creation of a fulsome **Community Wellbeing and Recovery Strategy** that lays out community-wide priorities and advances funding and service integration across social issues. This strategy should identify consistent shared Key Performance Indicators, procurement, and service standards, regardless of funding sources.
4. Champion the creation of a **Community Wellbeing and Recovery Table** that brings the highest-level decision-makers from governments and private and philanthropic sectors to provide strategic direction to achieve better alignment on common social objectives, including homelessness, safety, mental health, and other needs. This could eliminate redundant committees, boards, organizations or positions, and redistribute resulting cost savings to frontline services.
5. Enhance future Social Impact Audits by encouraging publicly funded entities and donor recipients to enhance **data availability and service information** by:
  - Publishing revenues/expenditures and outputs/outcomes for each program, using Open Data standards;
  - Publishing outcomes and service use data disaggregated to enable equity analyses on gender, Indigeneity and race.
  - Publicly sharing clear and up-to-date information at the funded program's service level on eligibility, target end users, capacity/occupancy, hours of operation, regional catchment, output, and outcomes.
6. Explore a **phase 2 of research** to conduct a deeper dive into additional datasets and other Alberta jurisdictions. Probing correlations between financial investments and service levels on the one hand, and population outcomes, including race and gender, on the other hand, would provide data to help optimize investments.

7. Apply **Social Impact Modelling** to guide investing in the community's social service needs in a proactive and data-driven manner. This modelling can be applied immediately to find opportunities, in partnership with government and private funders, to maximize the benefit of current investments coming into the Edmonton social safety net.
8. Explore the application of **Digital Identity solutions** -- such as MyAlbertaID -- to better connect help seekers to financial support streams from diverse sources (AISH, income supports, rent supplements, etc.), which will reduce redundant administrative processes, re-traumatizing experiences of retelling information, and give better control of personal information.

## Datasets, Methodology and Limitations

Through the support of the Edmonton Police Service, HelpSeeker worked with key partners to secure and process the following datasets to analyze in this project. The data received is obtainable under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, and does not disclose any private information, but instead supports financial flows analysis on funding to entities in Edmonton's social safety net.

### Secured Datasets for Financial Analysis

DATASET NAME	TIMEFRAME
Alberta Grant Payments Disclosure Table	2018/19
List of Charities and Charity Information Return (Form T3010)	2017/18
Government of Canada Proactive Disclosure -- Grants and Contributions	2018
Edmonton 2018 Approved FCSS Funded Agencies	2018
Edmonton 2018 Community Facility Partner Capital Grant Funding	2018
Edmonton 2018 Community Investment Operating Grant Recipients	2018
National Health Expenditure Database	2018/19
EPS budget information	2020
EMS budget information	2020
Fire budget information	2020
HelpSeeker Data	2020
Homeward Trust budget information	2019/20

## Considerations

- This analysis relies on available data reported to and by various entities. As such, it must presume the accuracy of these datasets.
- There was a **time lag** of publicly available data in the main datasets used for this report. For example, the primary data source of financial information used in this report was provided by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The data contains information regarding Edmonton Charities' Information Return (Form T3010) and corresponding schedules for different fiscal years. While all charities are required to file their T3010 within 6 months of their fiscal year-end, some registered charities file their returns late.
- At the time of analysis, this time-lag limitation made 2017/2018 the fiscal year with the most complete financial information available, as of July 2020, for charities in Canada. Consequently, for comparison purposes, all other financial information used in this analysis was collected for the same fiscal year, whenever possible.
- This time lag means the effects of the **COVID pandemic** and other current factors are not reflected in the results, and this should be considered when reviewing the analysis.

### Some other limitations to this analysis include:

- **Service information** across diverse providers was limited in public searches, which in turn limited the analysis of the relationship between financial flows and service availability, hours of operation, eligibility criteria, service specialization, and target user.
- **Financial Data** was sometimes partial, unavailable, or not detailed enough on relevant entities receiving public funds to operate services in the social safety net.
- **Outcome and output information** was only partially available, which sometimes limited the capacity to track funds consistently against common priorities and key performance indicators across investments and funding sources.
- **Cross-city comparatives** were limited, due to a lack of unclear regional scope of investments that limits current capacity to compare Edmonton effectively to other cities.
- **Equity analysis** was not possible due to the institutions' lack of data enabling race and gender-based analysis.

Nonprofits that are not registered charities are not subject to the same levels of financial reporting as those that are, which means the financial information analyzed **does not** represent a full picture of all the monetary allocations to Edmonton's Social Safety Net. There are other entities, such as private counsellors or treatment centres, that may receive public funding or donations and fees for service. These services play key roles in the Social Safety Net, yet remain unknown from a financial analysis perspective.

Lastly, the report does not quantify the value added of Civil Society entities that advance wellbeing and safety outside the formalized entities, though these grassroots, voluntary, and natural supports are essential to the operation of the Social Safety Net.

These important gaps in the information must be considered in any interpretation of the findings presented here.

Despite these limitations, the analysis presented here is the first of its kind for Edmonton, and offers a new level of transparency on how the social safety net operates and is funded. This is in part thanks to transparency and accountability efforts by the Government of Alberta and the Canada Revenue Agency, as they continuously improve Open Data.

### ***Further Information***

To access the Social Impact Audit, including a full description of methodology and limitations, download the [Social Impact Audit: Technical Report](#).

To access a data visualization with key indicators from the Social Impact Audit, view the [online dashboard](#).

Questions about the Social Impact Audit, or media requests, can be forwarded to: [communications@HelpSeeker.org](mailto:communications@HelpSeeker.org)