

GUNS & GANGS STRATEGY 2023-2025

EDMONTON
POLICE
SERVICE





Perspectives From Leadership	2
<hr/>	
Creating the Strategy	3
BACKGROUND	3
THE ENVIRONMENT WE'RE WORKING IN	3
WHAT'S DRIVING GANG-RELATED VIOLENCE	4
OUR EXPERTISE	6
<hr/>	
At a Glance	7
<hr/>	
Strategy in Detail	8
PRINCIPLES	9
STRATEGIC PILLARS	9
FOCUS AREA 1: FOCUSED DETERRENCE	10
FOCUS AREA 2: INVESTIGATIVE EXCELLENCE	11
FOCUS AREA 3: YOUNG PEOPLE INTERVENTION	12
<hr/>	
Appendix A: Glossary	13



A MESSAGE FROM

Dale R. McFee
Chief of Police

Over the last two years, Edmonton has seen an unacceptable trend in illegal ownership and violent use of firearms with one confirmed shooting happening roughly every 48 hours. Our officers are seizing more firearms when responding to calls for service, and the level of victimization and violence perpetrated by those involved puts the safety and security of our community at risk.

These acts of violence are closely linked with organized crime groups – from street level gangs to sophisticated networks – that not only use firearms to commit their crimes but also facilitate their trafficking and participate in other illegal activities, such as trafficking street drugs. As criminal networks become more sophisticated, their disregard for the safety of Edmontonians and the rule of the law grows more brazen.

Edmonton is not the only jurisdiction facing these challenges. Firearm and gang-related crime has been steadily rising across Canada; however, this strategy is a local solution for tackling the factors driving serious crime in our city. The Edmonton Police Service's 2023-2025 Guns and Gangs Strategy leverages our internal expertise and external partnerships with other enforcement and social agencies to strike a balance between education, suppression, intervention, and prevention.

It is not enough to simply address crime as it occurs: we require a concerted effort to build system-wide capacity that prevents gang membership and violent use of firearms before they happen. While portions of this strategy focus on high-quality investigations to hold offenders accountable for the severity of their crimes, it also considers how willing individuals, such as at-risk youth, can be led away from a life of gang activity and consequent entrenchment in the criminal justice system. Gang-related crime too often targets our city's most vulnerable, and we must make every effort to deter the harm and exploitation it causes.

These crimes are unacceptable, and the violence they impose on our community and invite into our streets will not be tolerated. Edmontonians expect and deserve a safe city.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. McFee'.

BACKGROUND

The Edmonton Police Service (EPS) Gun Crime Violence Reduction Strategy (GCVRS) was developed in 2019 and primarily sought to strengthen EPS' capabilities and capacity to close identified deficiencies in firearm investigations, firearm intelligence, firearms evidence collection processes, and policies and procedures.

EPS has remained tough on shooting crimes by investing in specialized units and equipment to strengthen investigations and leveraging its frontline resources to take illegal firearms off the streets. However, more effort is required.

A new Guns and Gangs Strategy will build on the foundation of the GCVRS and establish a plan to reduce harm and hold offenders accountable in line with the current state and outlook for the public safety environment in the City of Edmonton.

The desired outcome is that gun and gang activity in Edmonton is reduced to enhance the safety of communities.

THE ENVIRONMENT WE'RE WORKING IN

The work of EPS is influenced by regulatory and external factors which have been taken into consideration while developing this strategy.

Regulatory

- Firearms are regulated by the Firearms Act and Part III of the Criminal Code, overseen by the Canadian Firearms Program and administered by the provincial or territorial Chief Firearms Officer.
- Bill C-95 (1997) gives law enforcement agencies additional powers to combat organized crime.
- In 2021, the Federal Government introduced Bill C-5, which seeks to address systemic issues related to sentencing. If passed, judges will have more flexibility in sentencing for certain types of offenses.
- In 2022, the Federal Government introduced Bill C-21, which proposes measures to strengthen gun control in Canada.
- The Civil Forfeiture Act makes communities safer by allowing the Provincial Government, through court orders, to take property (forfeited property, goods, and cash) that, based on a police investigation, appears to be derived from or used to commit a violent or profit-motivated crime.

External

- Organized crime represents a significant risk to our community. These groups do not follow the rules of law that keep our communities safe.
- The organized crime landscape in Edmonton is continually evolving, with fluid membership in these groups. It is important to note that gun and gang violence is a citywide issue in Edmonton, as it is not limited to a small geographic area.
- Within the justice system, the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service (Specialized Prosecutions - Firearms), Public Prosecutions Service of Canada (PPSC), and the Civil Forfeiture Office have scaled up their operations to better prosecute firearms and drug related offences and seize assets derived from organized crime activities.
- Other external partners like Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT) address organized crime across Alberta and provide consistent support to EPS to address organized crime, gang, and gun violence in Edmonton.
- EPS has the opportunity to formalize partnerships with social agencies to provide diversion programs for those interested in exiting gang life. Similarly, EPS will work with the wider system to support programs that prevent young people from getting involved with gangs and organized crime.

WHAT'S DRIVING GANG-RELATED VIOLENCE

Increased possession and use of firearms by organized crime/gang members

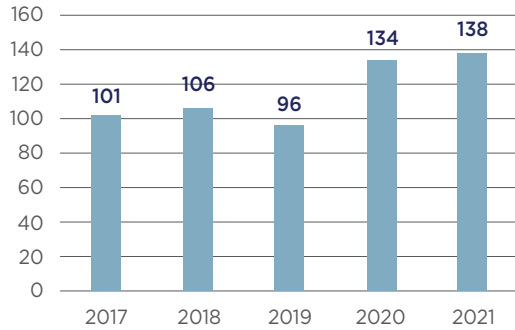
- EPS is seizing more firearms while responding to calls for service or other interactions during their work.
- Gang members appear to have minimal concerns about possession of illegal firearms.
- The sources of illegal firearms in Edmonton are typically straw purchasers, inter-provincial trafficking, and residential/business break and enters.

Increased harm caused by the trafficking of street drugs

- The consumption of street drugs like fentanyl and methamphetamine is a leading cause of death and a significant impact to community safety and well-being in Edmonton.
- Addiction to street drugs can often influence some crimes like shoplifting, theft, break and enters, and firearms straw purchasing to acquire money for drugs.
- Drug trafficking facilitates the possession of illegal firearms—those involved feel the need to arm themselves with firearms for protection against others in the trade.
- EPS has a responsibility to tackle the supply side of the drug problem; the demand side requires a broader public health and system-wide approach.

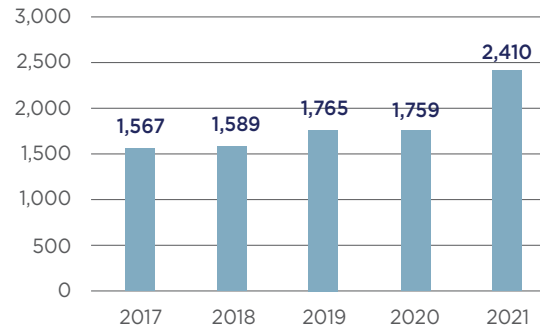
Over the last two years, Edmonton has seen an unacceptable trend in illegal ownership and violent use of firearms, with a confirmed shooting being registered at a rate of about one every 48 hours.

of People Injured or Killed by a Firearm



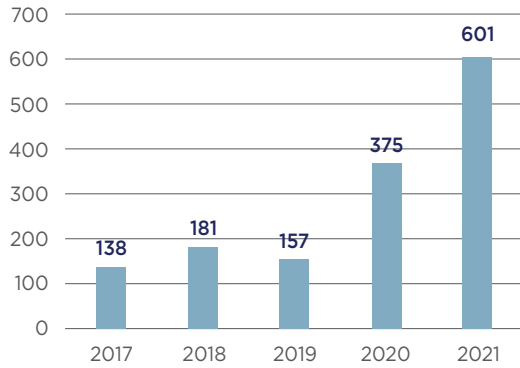
Source: Edmonton Police Service

of Seized Firearms & Airguns*



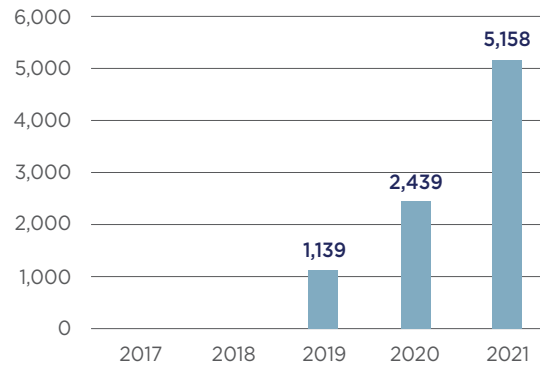
Source: Edmonton Police Service

Trend of Non-Pharmaceutical Opioid Poisoning Deaths



Source: Government of Alberta¹

of Overdose-specific Calls for EFRS**



Source: Edmonton Fire and Rescue Services

*Airguns are included because they are similar in appearance to firearms and are consequently used in many violent assaults, robberies, and home invasions. Additionally, with the federal freeze on handguns, it is likely that illegal conversions of airguns into firearms will increase.

** 2021 data is inclusive as of Nov. 30, 2021

OUR EXPERTISE

EPS has the expertise, tools, and structure to combat serious drugs and firearms offences through these specialized teams/programs:

Edmonton Drug and Gang Enforcement (EDGE)

Monitors, targets, and investigates criminal organizations, street gangs, and individuals involved in drug and gang-related crime.

Firearms Investigation Unit (FIU)

Targets the unlawful possession, shooting, trafficking, importing, and exporting of firearms.

Gang Suppression Team (GST)

Suppresses, intercepts, or prevents activities of known gang members and affiliates through the judicial system or targeted intervention.

Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Commission Integrated Investigative Team (AGLC-IIT)

Detects, prevents, combats, and controls the growth of illegal activities related to the AGLC's mandate.

Firearms Examinations Unit (FEU)

Processes firearms evidence to help further investigations.

Criminal Analysis and Intelligence Section (CAIS)

Provides crime analysis services to EPS frontline and investigative operations.

Community Relations Section (CRS)

Solves safety concerns by building relationships with communities and promoting education and awareness between police and various communities.

Community Policing Bureau (CPB)

Builds public safety and trust through appropriate response to events, conducting investigations, gathering intelligence, and the suppression and disruption of crime and disorder. This includes Patrol, Beats, and Investigative Response Teams.

Community Safety and Well-being Bureau (CSWB)




Navigates individuals to the appropriate services and systems to reduce harm using a person-centered, collaborative approach.

- **Youth Services Section** provides a variety of youth initiatives that focus on providing effective supports and connections to differing youth populations along a broad risk spectrum.
- **Youth Integrated Services Section** provides youth-based programs, education, safety, and protection.

AT A GLANCE

SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY: This strategy focuses on identifying, suppressing, investigating, and preventing gun and gang activity in Edmonton. Drug activity is also in scope for this strategy because of the links between gun use, gang activity, and drug trafficking.

OUTCOME: Gun and gang activity in Edmonton is reduced to enhance the safety of communities.

PRINCIPLES		TOP 3 FOCUS AREAS	WHO IT TARGETS	WHO WILL DO IT
EDUCATION Providing training, awareness, and support to build system-wide capacity (within EPS and the community) to successfully reduce gun and gang activity	SUPPRESSION Reduce the sources of gun and gang violence or activities	 Focused Deterrence Take proactive actions to persuade frequent violent offenders to exit the criminal lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shooters Organized traffickers Violent gang members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIU EDGE GST CAIS CSWB
		 Investigative Excellence Conduct high-quality investigations that lead to swift and certain justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shooters Straw purchasers Firearms traffickers Organized drug traffickers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIU FEU EDGE CPB
	INTERVENTION Intervene where gun and gang violence or activity occurs or is expected to occur	 Young People Intervention Divert young people away from gangs and the justice system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gang-involved youth High-risk youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDGE GST CPB CSWB CRS Community Partners
	PREVENTION Prevent gang membership and gun violence before it happens	Work with partners to provide the right education and resources to communities to prevent gun and gang violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government Community groups Social agencies EPS

STRATEGIC PILLARS			
PARTNERSHIPS	AWARENESS	INTELLIGENCE	INTEGRATION

EPS' Guns and Gangs Strategy is a plan to reduce harm and hold offenders accountable in line with the current state and outlook for the public safety environment in the City of Edmonton.

THIS STRATEGY ALIGNS WITH AND SUPPORTS THE:

- EPS Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026
- EPS Young People Strategy 2021 - 2024
- EPS Justice Clients (Offender Management) Strategy 2022 - 2024
- Government of Canada Gun and Gang Violence Program and the Building Safer Communities Fund
- Alberta Crime Prevention Grant

OUTCOME

Gun and gang activity in Edmonton is reduced to enhance the safety of communities

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Meeting these performance measures will help EPS achieve the overall outcome of reducing gun and gang activity:

- Increased solve rate on non-homicide gang-related shooting occurrences
- Increase in rate of convictions for shooters, drug traffickers, and firearms traffickers
- Decrease in proportion of gang-related homicides
- Decrease in rate of growth for firearms-related offences
- Increase in the number of known gang members that participate in EPS recommended diversion and gang-exit programs
- Increase in grant funds for municipal, community, and social support partners to provide recreation, supports, and mentorship programs for youth
- Increase in the proportion of young people put through out-of-court programs versus criminally charged

PRINCIPLES

The following principles will inform and guide the approach EPS takes to identifying, addressing, and preventing gun and gang activity in Edmonton:

PREVENTION

Working to prevent gang membership and gun violence before it happens.

INTERVENTION

Targeted supports to intervene in areas or instances where gun and gang violence or activity is occurring or is expected to occur.

SUPPRESSION

Stopping or taking action to reduce the sources of gun and gang violence or activities.

EDUCATION

Providing training, awareness, and support to build the system-wide capacity (within EPS and the community) to successfully reduce gun and gang activity.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

Strategic pillars are the foundation needed to effectively and efficiently achieve the activities identified in the focus areas. The following strategic pillars have been identified to reduce gun and gang activity in Edmonton to enhance the safety of communities:

PARTNERSHIPS

Formal arrangements to promote collaboration with law enforcement partners and social agencies to address organized crime and provide intervention and prevention support.

AWARENESS

Education of stakeholders to create awareness, buy-in, and organizational support for a holistic approach to prevent and address gang-related crime in communities.

INTELLIGENCE

Use of a robust intelligence model to identify and target violent gang and organized crime. The intelligence model will be GBA+ focused and aligned to potential Statistics Canada race-based data collection practices.

INTEGRATION

Increased collaboration across EPS areas to efficiently utilize our resources and expertise.



FOCUS AREA 1

FOCUSED DETERRENCE

How We Do It

Blend enforcement, social service, and community approaches to change the behaviour of repeat violent offenders. Make offenders aware they are the target of these actions.

ACTIONS

- Double EPS' overt gang suppression capacity by adding a second Gang Suppression Team to enable everyday coverage of the city.
- Identify high-risk persons and places and remove unregistered firearms from them. Targeting potential users of firearms and intervening before they can shoot or be shot at.
- Continue to eject known high-risk patrons from licensed premises and other public venues to protect business owners, their customers, and the public from violence and harm.
- Monitor gang members' compliance with bail or parole conditions.
- Integrate community engagement sessions into our gang suppression approach.
- Disrupt street-level drug trafficking activities.
- Identify social networks that perpetuate violent crime.
- Provide all frontline patrol officers with regular briefings on gang conflicts and about any violent gang members believed to be in the city.
- Partner with social agencies to provide supports to people willing to exit the criminal lifestyle.

“The largest reductions are generated by focused deterrence strategies that target criminally active gangs or groups, followed by programs that target individual chronic offenders and drug market interventions”.²



FOCUS AREA 2

INVESTIGATIVE EXCELLENCE

How We Do It

Invest in training and tools that enhance evidence collection and handling, intelligence gathering, and analytics. Enhance investigative expertise across all frontline and specialized units. Increase members' knowledge of Canadian case law, search and seizure laws, charter rights, disclosures, arrests, and major case management.

ACTIONS

- Double EPS' Firearms Investigation Unit capacity to respond to and investigate shooting events, specifically non-homicide gang related shootings.
- Develop systems (technology and analytics) and routines (processes, touchpoints) to gather real time data, build intelligence and share actionable intelligence.
- Focus EDGE investigative teams on high-risk targets to disrupt supply networks. The seizure of drugs, firearms, cash, and vehicles from organized crime groups hinders their ability to operate.
- Increase the use of civil forfeiture processes on criminal property to disrupt organized crime activities.
- Develop investigative capacity within the frontline through secondments, training, and project teams.
- Ramp up investigations of straw purchasers and firearms traffickers to stem the supply of illegal firearms.
- Perform analytics on bullets, cartridges, or casings, and trace all crime guns within the processes of the crime gun intelligence model.
- Enhance cross-agency collaboration, by working and sharing intelligence with other police agencies and partners.

“EPS recognizes that both crime and the related investigative procedures have become increasingly complex over the years and that by conducting comprehensive, high quality investigations, the EPS will solve more organized and high harm crimes, holding offenders accountable and contributing to reducing victimization in our communities.”



FOCUS AREA 3

YOUNG PEOPLE INTERVENTION

How We Do It

Use timely, out-of-court approaches to deal with young people who are involved in less serious offences to keep them away from gangs and the justice system.

Options are:

1. Diversion only (counsel and release)
2. Diversion with referral to social service programs
3. Diversion with EPS-led restorative justice programs

ACTIONS

- Develop systems and routines for information sharing between the Gang Suppression Team, EDGE Unit, and Young People Support Branch to identify and provide intervention support for at-risk youth involved with gangs or drugs.
- Led by the EPS Young People Support Branch, work with partners to create sustainable alternate pathways and supports to divert young people already involved in gang activities.
- Led by the EPS Young People Support Branch, work with credible messengers for intervention and outreach in communities.
- Led by the EPS Young People Support Branch, support communities in developing accessible, culturally appropriate recreation and mentorship opportunities for children and youth.

“Effective intervention should address the brief window between the early belonging stage and the age of first arrest. A second window of opportunity exists between the time gang members are arrested for their first property crime and when they might graduate to more serious violent offenses.”³

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

EDGE Edmonton Drug and Gang Enforcement

EPS Edmonton Police Service

FIU Firearms Investigation Unit

FEU Firearms Examination Unit

GST Gang Suppression Team

CPB Community Policing Bureau

CSWB Community Safety and Well-Being Bureau

CRS Community Relations Section

CAIS Criminal Analysis and Intelligence Section

STRAW PURCHASER

An individual or group that purchases a firearm (or multiple firearms) for someone who is prohibited by law from possessing one, or for someone who does not want his or her name associated with the transaction.

ORGANIZED CRIME GROUP CATEGORIES

In general terms, organized crime groups are categorized as:

- Organized crime group
- Criminal network
- Street gang

The delineation between the three rests with the level of organization, sophistication, and capacity that the group, network, or gang has to complete its illicit activities.

-
- ¹ https://healthanalytics.alberta.ca/SASVisualAnalytics/?reportUri=%2Freports%2Freports%2F1bbb695d-14b1-4346-b66e-d401a40f53e6§ionIndex=0&sso_guest=true&reportViewOnly=true&reportContextBar=false&sas-welcome=false
- ² Braga, A.A., Weisburd, D. and Turchan, B. (2018), Focused Deterrence Strategies and Crime Control. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 17: 205-250. <https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.1111/1745-9133.12353>
- ³ Development Services Group, Inc. 2014. "Gang Prevention." Literature review. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Gang_Prevention.pdf

