

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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As an 11-year Public School Trustee, I have come to rely on ESPC to help ensure my decisions are grounded in evidence, and my focus remains on the big picture: for example, the 51,540 children in poverty highlighted in a recent Lunch & Learn. My only regret is that these sessions are not mandatory for all elected officials in Alberta who could learn about the pressures and challenges facing our community. In this cluttered social media time, with increasing distraction and decreasing media and journalistic capacity, organizations like ESPC are needed more than ever as the guardians of our democracy and the public interest. Now is the time for more data, more rigour, more analysis, and more ESPC.

**Michael Janz**

Trustee & Former Board Chair  
Edmonton Public School Board

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While some individuals and families access food directly from Edmonton's Food Bank, we are a central warehouse and referral centre for over 250 agencies, churches, schools, and food depots. We specialize in food programs and food security. We have always appreciated Edmonton Social Planning Council's (ESPC) efforts to research and create community discussion around the issues that create poverty. ESPC has been and is a leader in generating tough conversations and creating a path forward .

**Marjorie Bencz**

Executive Director  
Edmonton's Food Bank

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# WHO WE ARE

The Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan social research organization with registered charitable status. Our focus is social research, particularly in the areas of low-income and poverty. ESPC is a source of knowledge and expertise on social issues within our community.

We are dedicated to encouraging the adoption of equitable social policy, supporting the work of other organizations striving to improve the lives of Edmontonians, and educating the public regarding the social issues that impact them daily.

## *Our Vision*

A community in which all people are full and valued participants.

## *Our Mission*

Through rigorous research, detailed analysis, and community engagement, we deepen community understanding of social planning issues, influence policy, and spark collaborative actions that lead to positive social change.

# 80TH ANNIVERSARY

ESPC achieved an important milestone in 2020 which marked our 80th anniversary as a non-profit organization operating in Edmonton.

ESPC has a long and rich history and has played an important role in building inclusive communities in Edmonton. Sometimes this long and rich history is not fully understood or acknowledged. To share this history and bring about greater awareness, *80 Years of Community Building* is a retrospective publication that seeks to inform ESPC's membership, supporters, partners, and the general public about its valuable contributions.



## **80 YEARS** *of Community Building*



The publication gives a comprehensive overview of ESPC's history, broken down into sections covering each decade since its origin (which includes a failed start to form the organization in 1929) up until the present day. Along the way, the publication notes the evolution and shifting roles and priorities of ESPC, adapting to the changing times and needs of Edmonton and the various communities that make it a vibrant city. Through these changes, a consistent pattern of commitment to building a strong community and prioritizing the voices of the marginalized is evident throughout the publication.

In addition, a companion timeline provides a concise bullet-point overview of notable dates and milestones in ESPC's history. You can access these publications on our website:

<https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/2021/01/05/80-years-of-community-building-the-history-of-the-edmonton-social-planning-council/>

# ESPC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### SOCIAL EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

We are dedicated to helping our community become more inclusive and equitable.

### INDEPENDENT VOICE

We are an independent and non-partisan organization that does not speak for or represent the views of other organizations, governments, or political parties.

### ACTIONABLE RESEARCH

We do relevant and timely research that helps others identify and implement solutions to social planning issues.

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

We value accessible information that helps a wide range of audiences understand community challenges and opportunities.

### STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

We collaborate with diverse partners to achieve shared goals without duplicating the work of others.

### COMMUNITY CAPACITY

We build knowledge and skills in our community by openly sharing our learning, experience, and expertise with others.

## THE OUTCOMES WE SEEK TO ACHIEVE

### INFORMED COMMUNITY

A community that is knowledgeable about social planning issues, challenges, and potential actions to improve the lives of all.

### ENGAGED COMMUNITY

A community that works together to determine priorities and to organize efforts to achieve common goals.

### CHANGED COMMUNITY

A community that advocates for and benefits from positive social change.

## STRATEGIES WE USE TO ACHIEVE OUR OUTCOMES

Conduct, aggregate, and disseminate research to help our community understand current issues, government policies, and systems, and identify potential courses of action.

Achieve shared goals and make best use of resources by leading and participating in collaborative partnerships focused on producing positive, sustainable change.

Work with decision-makers and influencers by sharing our comprehensive, evidence based research in a timely manner so they are able to make informed decisions.

Share our expertise to help individuals, organizations, governments, and community groups better achieve their goals.

Act as the community's go-to organization for relevant and quality research on social planning issues.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Six years ago, I was asked by two close friends to offer myself to the Board of the Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC). During their Board service, they had identified a gap of knowledge and persuaded me to lend my experience to close that gap. I'm happy to report how this gap no longer exists and how it's mostly due to Brett Lambert and

Sandra Ngo's hiring, which dramatically improved ESPC's communication effectiveness.

Last year, I was elected to chair the ESPC Board. At the time, I speculated on how I might be the only chair to serve without ever holding an in-person meeting. Events of the past year dramatically changed the landscape around which ESPC operates; the impact on our affiliated organizations, project clients, supporting agencies, and relationship with the public was changed.

We've seen much more interest, by the general public, in the very issues we focus on than at any other time. Food security went from a vague issue for future consideration to an everyday reality for nearly every citizen. Poverty rose, and went from something that happens to other people to a possibility for a much larger segment of working people at the lowest income levels. Income security itself (along with the notion of a "living wage") was an underlying theme for many news reports and financial circles. The problem of homelessness became more visible, drawing immediate concern from our civic leadership as well as from our supporting agencies.

A global pandemic, and unthinkable levels of danger, forced people to confront situations previously only imagined in the minds of preparedness experts and risk management consultants. Issues of communication, supply management, personal accountability, and the perception of citizenship were confronted by everyone as they adjusted to sheltering in place or serving in essential services. This city experienced a change, unlike anything we could have anticipated. Interpersonal contact, overwhelmed institutions, family life, and economic uncertainty took over from schooling, festivals, movies, parties, weddings, and funerals. We are a long way from recovery, both emotional and institutional. I believe this organization will be a major contributor to this recovery.

ESPC has always needed to be nimble, resourceful, and flexible in order to provide Edmonton with the facts. Our particular set of skills became more valuable to partners, supporters, as well as civic leadership in addressing some of the areas in which we are

recognized as experts. People were thirsty for information to help them contribute to solutions and manage their own situations. ESPC continued to operate during this stressful time by managing an office, supporting staff, and raising safety levels, while continuing to provide our clients and affiliated agencies with valuable and timely information to help them make decisions or adjust their activities.

I have been sincerely honoured to be President of ESPC during this strange time. Working with this Board and the staff has been both rewarding and invigorating as I watch ESPC respond to the current crisis by serving an increasingly necessary role in the future direction of this city. Seeds are being planted today which will grow in importance as our city addresses the basic supports necessary for people in crisis. What the Board has been working on will become the foundation for sustaining the organization over the next couple of decades. Today's dedicated volunteers, and those to come, will keep this organization at the forefront of core issues by maintaining the value of facts over opinion, provable data over popular misconception, and good government over political posturing. Tracking our progress and reflecting on better policies will see a surge of attention within the Board. I believe ESPC will be a significant force in aiding the many research projects that will undoubtedly follow our emergence from this global health crisis.

This "new world"—which a good friend of mine has started calling it—will need people who gather facts, help explain their meaning, and guide leaders' decisions toward the best possible outcomes more than we ever have before. There is so much change I have seen in the past six years, and it seems obvious to me how it will only accelerate in the years to come. There are many challenges Edmonton will face going into the next decade, but I believe still—as I did when I attended my first Board meeting—that this organization will be on the front lines; operating with its reputation as a superpower for policy decision-makers to draw from through our collective efforts to overcome adversity and hold back the chaos of in the lives of everyday people.

It's been an honour to serve this vibrant and necessary organization.

Sincerely,

**Dave Trautman**, Board President

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



The year 2020 was a year of unprecedented disruption and upheaval with the declaration of the COVID-19 global pandemic in March alongside lockdowns and public health measures enacted in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. This upheaval was especially challenging for some of our most vulnerable and marginalized populations who were among the most affected by these measures. Rising unemployment, food

insecurity, housing instability, family violence, social isolation, and mental health challenges were just some of the impacts felt during the pandemic, in addition to the physical health risks of COVID-19.

All of these challenges make the work of ESPC that much more pressing. We remain committed to contributing positively to discourse and research surrounding social policy issues, sparking positive social change, and working toward building a community in which all people are full and valued participants.

This past year also happened to be our 80th anniversary. We first started operations in Edmonton in February, 1940, as the Second World War was brewing abroad and the country was recovering from a years' long Great Depression. These challenges meant the need was urgent for a social planning agency to coordinate relief efforts for individuals and families in need. Edmonton has grown and evolved significantly in the subsequent 80 years, and our organization has grown and evolved with it. Our commitment to building strong communities has remained consistent and will no doubt continue for the next 80 years to come.

The pandemic sidelined us from celebrating our anniversary in a meaningful way. However, these strange times enabled us to reflect on our storied history and compile a retrospective publication, *80 Years of Community Building*, put together by Brett Lambert, our Community Engagement Coordinator, with editing assistance by Jenn Rossiter, our Research Services and Capacity Building Coordinator. Furthermore, a special companion issue of *The FActivist*, our quarterly newsletter, captured additional elements of our extensive history with a number of articles written by ESPC volunteers. These additional details explored the various social policy issues we have taken on and contributed positively to in the ongoing struggle to build more inclusive communities in Edmonton. It is a daunting task to try to capture the depth and breadth of our storied history, but I commend everyone for capably taking this on.

The pandemic forced us to re-think the ways in which we hold events, when indoor physical gatherings were no longer a viable option. As a result, we shifted to virtual formats to stay socially connected during a physically distant time. Our Annual General Meeting was postponed and later re-vamped as a virtual event on Zoom and held in the summer. Subsequently, our Lunch & Learn events—traditionally held in person at the downtown branch of the Edmonton Public Library (going as far back as the 1980s)—were also re-tooled as virtual gatherings. They have served as a welcome and much-needed outlet for continuing community conversations as well as for sharing knowledge and information about pressing social policy topics. We were pleased to hold virtual Lunch & Learn sessions about the history of the WIN House women's shelter, food security initiatives in Edmonton during COVID-19, the launch of our *Vital Signs* and Alberta child poverty reports, the case for a basic income in Alberta, and programming at HIV Edmonton. We have been very pleased with the increased engagement and attendance these events have inspired since the shift online. The virtual format has enabled us to increase our reach, with attendees logging on from locations outside of Edmonton—and even other provinces. We will continue in this format for as long as the pandemic is considered a pressing concern and then re-evaluate our events once

vaccinations for the general public have been administered.

In 2020 we said farewell to our Research Associate John Kolkman, who retired in March after serving our organization for 14 years. In addition to being an exceptional researcher and passionate advocate for the city's vulnerable populations, he also made an impact in our office with his mentorship, calm and clear policy analysis, and warm sense of humour. Before his departure, he managed to complete a very significant research report, *The High Cost of Waiting: Tenant-Focused Solutions to Enhance Housing Affordability*. His report amplified the voices of many low-income tenants in Edmonton who have been forced to wait on the bottom of a years-long wait list to receive rental assistance. The report has proven to be invaluable in our advocacy work, guiding engagement sessions and a written submission to the Government of Alberta's Affordable Housing Review Panel. The province's recent announcement of a revamped Rent Assistance Benefit and a Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit is no doubt influenced by our rigorous research into progressive social policy options. Although we miss John greatly, we know he has earned a well-deserved retirement!

Alongside John's departure, we were pleased to welcome some new faces to ESPC. In June, we welcomed Sydney Sheloff as our Research Officer. Her knowledge and expertise on a number of social policy issues relating to housing and homelessness have been a great asset for our team. We also hired Tom Ndekezi as a student research assistant during the summer, who contributed invaluable assistance to a number of projects and publications.

In addition to the pandemic, 2020 was also a year of reckoning with systemic racism—something that has permeated our institutions for far too long. ESPC published a statement addressing this pernicious social ill in the wake of global protests after the police-involved killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. We published some thoughtful reflections through a series of blog posts looking at the various ways systemic racism has shaped Canada—both historical and contemporary. To be sure, ESPC has always worked toward the inclusion of all Edmontonians—particularly those from racialized groups—but these renewed and intensified conversations have redoubled our commitments to addressing the pernicious effects of racism in our society.

As always, I extend my sincere thanks to ESPC staff for a job well done under the unusual circumstances of COVID-19. It was interesting to see how quickly everyone adapted to online meetings and working from home. My sincere thanks again to the ESPC Board of Directors for their guidance and direction. Your continued involvement was instrumental in helping to guide our ship through uncharted waters. Finally, my special thanks to our ESPC members and funders who continued to provide financial support. The year was very precarious, especially from a funding perspective, and we are grateful for your continued belief and support in the important work that ESPC does to produce accurate and meaningful information for our community.

We ended 2020 on a hopeful note with the approval and initial administration of vaccines against the COVID-19 virus in December. While it may still be a while until we regain a semblance of "normal" in our lives, life-saving vaccines have provided a meaningful pathway out of this crisis situation. So long as the most vulnerable groups are prioritized for vaccination rollouts, a just and inclusive recovery will be possible!

Stay safe and be kind to one another, as always.

Sincerely,  
**Susan Morrissey**, Executive Director

# MEET OUR STAFF



## Susan Morrissey, Executive Director

Susan Morrissey has been with ESPC for over 16 years. As Executive Director, Susan works collaboratively with others in Edmonton's non-profit sector toward moving the needle on the bigger social issues facing the community.



## Sandra Ngo, Research Coordinator

Sandra Ngo graduated from the University of Alberta with a master's degree in Agricultural Economics. Before coming to ESPC, Sandra was the community Resource Coordinator with the Multicultural Health Brokers and ENRICH. Sandra was instrumental in starting the Grocery Run, a program that provides fresh fruits and vegetables to refugee families living in crisis. She has been very active in the food security scene in Edmonton for several years.



## John Kolkman, Research Associate

John has several decades of experience working as a public policy researcher, both in the not-for-profit sector and at the political level. Since joining the Council in May 2006, he has worked on social policy issues related to poverty; wealth and income inequality; the removal of employment barriers for those with low and modest incomes; social determinants of health; affordable housing; and neighborhood revitalization. John retired from ESPC on March 31, 2020.



## Justine Basilan, Executive Assistant

Justine Basilan graduated from the University of Alberta with a bachelor's degree in Psychology. After graduating and prior to joining ESPC, she invested much of her time volunteering for other non-profit organizations.



## Jenn Rossiter, Research Services and Capacity Building Coordinator

Jenn Rossiter completed her master's degree from York University, Toronto, in international Development Studies, during which time she studied child protection policies and informal child care practices. Recognizing the importance of community development, she has since aimed to translate her international experiences into local practice. Jenn spent several years working at the University of Alberta, most recently with the Faculty of Native Studies, learning more about Alberta and Treaty 6. Respectfully connecting this knowledge with her social sciences background has been rewarding and a practice that grounds her ongoing work.



## Brett Lambert, Community Engagement Coordinator

Brett Lambert has worked in several communications roles at the University of Alberta and non-profit organizations such as Native Counselling Services of Alberta and Public Interest Alberta. Brett has a diploma in Journalism from Grant MacEwan, and a bachelor of arts and master's degree in Library and Information Studies from the University of Alberta. Brett lives on the south side of Edmonton with his wife, Diana, and two young sons.



## Sydney Sheloff, Research Officer

Sydney Sheloff recently graduated from the University of Alberta with a master of arts degree in Sociology. Her research focused on youth inequality and homelessness. Her master's thesis explored what it meant for homeless youth to pursue a successful future in a social, economic, and political landscape that marginalized them and limited their opportunities. In addition, she studied the criminal justice system and the criminalization of impoverished and racialized people. She also studied the unique experiences of Indigenous people in Canada. Sydney is dedicated to investigating social issues through the eyes of those most harshly affected by them. In this position, Sydney is excited to turn her research into action and advocate for social change. In her free time, Sydney enjoys embroidery, baking and trying new recipes, and exploring all the local shops, restaurants, artists, and sites Edmonton has to offer.

# SUMMER & PRACTICUM STUDENTS

Tom Ndekezi

Canada Summer Jobs Research Assistant

Natalie Schmitt

University of Alberta Practicum Student

Aastha Tripathi

Concordia University Practicum Student

## OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dave Trautman

Board President

Danielle Dolgoy

Policy & Governance Committee Chairperson

Vanessa Zembal

Finance & Audit Committee Chairperson

Peter Schalk

Treasurer

Bill Howe

Board Director

Charlotte Bennie

Board Director

Jalene Anderson-Baron

Board Director

Katherine Weaver

Board Director

Nicole Smith

Board Director

Paula Kirman

Board Director

## BOARD REPORTS

### FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

**Vanessa Zembal (Chairperson); Peter Schalk (Treasurer); Charlotte Bennie**

From a financial perspective, 2020 was like many other areas of our lives: filled with uncertainty and cautious optimism. Near the beginning of the pandemic, the Board approved a COVID emergency fund for ESPC staff to ensure that employees felt supported during these uncertain times. The committee and Board felt it was important to show our support and provide an opportunity for staff to apply for funding and relieve some financial stress if necessary.

The year ended with higher revenue than 2019 and a surplus of around \$23,000. Despite changes to work environments, ESPC staff continued to work on projects and contracted research, and expenses were much lower than in previous years due to less travel, decreased costs of research activities, and virtual Board meetings.

In response to murmurs of funding changes in 2021, the Board chose to allocate the majority of the 2020 surplus to the operating reserve fund. This was a proactive decision to ensure ESPC's sustainability and its financial health during what may be some challenging years to come. In addition to the operating reserve, we created a capital purchase and renewal fund for replacing capital assets. Previous purchases were made from surplus funds

and this new reserve fund will ensure staff have access to up-to-date technologies and equipment.

We approved a deficit budget for 2021. This is unusual for the organization, but it was strategic to ensure our staff complement could remain the same and continue to do good work and raise the presence of the organization. The organization has grown in the past few years, and investing in it will keep this momentum going. And as a precaution, we have some reserve funds if funding sources change throughout the year. As a Board, we are comfortable with this decision, the financial position we are in (including deferred funding), and the confirmed projects already bringing in revenue for 2021.

ESPC was scheduled to have a casino in the spring of 2021. However, because casinos have been postponed due to COVID-19, casino funding has been deferred. To prepare for this, we held off withdrawing from the casino fund in 2020 and used the saved revenue (due to decreased expenses in 2020) to pay off expenses normally paid for with casino funding.

We are grateful to Susan for ensuring financial tasks are well presented and for providing any explanations or answering any of our questions. Susan is an important asset when it comes to responding to budget or funding changes and communicating these to the Board so we can make sound and appropriate decisions.

# BOARD REPORTS Cont.

As we continue to write and approve finance-related policies, we hope that these policies help guide some of the financial processes and decrease the amount of Board input required for financial decisions, such as determining how to allocate surplus amounts. In the end, this will hopefully allow Susan and other staff members more time and energy to focus elsewhere within ESPC and bring us up-to-date with other organizations that are making similar financial decisions throughout their calendar year.

Our 2020 audited financial report will be presented at the AGM by Carla Walker of Peterson Walter LLP and is available to members upon request. Feel free to contact the ESPC office at [info@edmontonsocialplanning.ca](mailto:info@edmontonsocialplanning.ca) for more details, to submit your questions, or to help with our committee (we welcome external members with open arms!).

## MEMBERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**(Revolving Chairperson) Bill Howe; Nicole Smith; Paula Kirman**

The advent of COVID-19 in early 2020 certainly impacted the Membership and Engagement Committee's ability to fully execute the Membership Review and Action Plan established for the year, but progress was made nonetheless. The committee's activity in 2020 involved continuing a strategic review of membership with ESPC, including: an environmental scan of membership function with comparable organizations across Canada, a review of ESPC membership surveys (2007–2016), and an analysis of membership engagement, renewal, and retention. The intent of the strategic review is to explore the purpose and function of membership with ESPC, gain a deeper understanding of its perceived and real value for members and the organization alike, and examine our assumptions related to the impact of membership on the organization. This review will ultimately inform the work of the committee moving forward.

The committee did not select an Award of Merit recipient for 2020 as the format of the AGM changed significantly to accommodate pandemic-related requirements (e.g., moving to an online format).

## POLICY & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**Danielle Dolgoy (Chairperson); Peter Schalk; Jalene Anderson-Baron; Katherine Weaver**

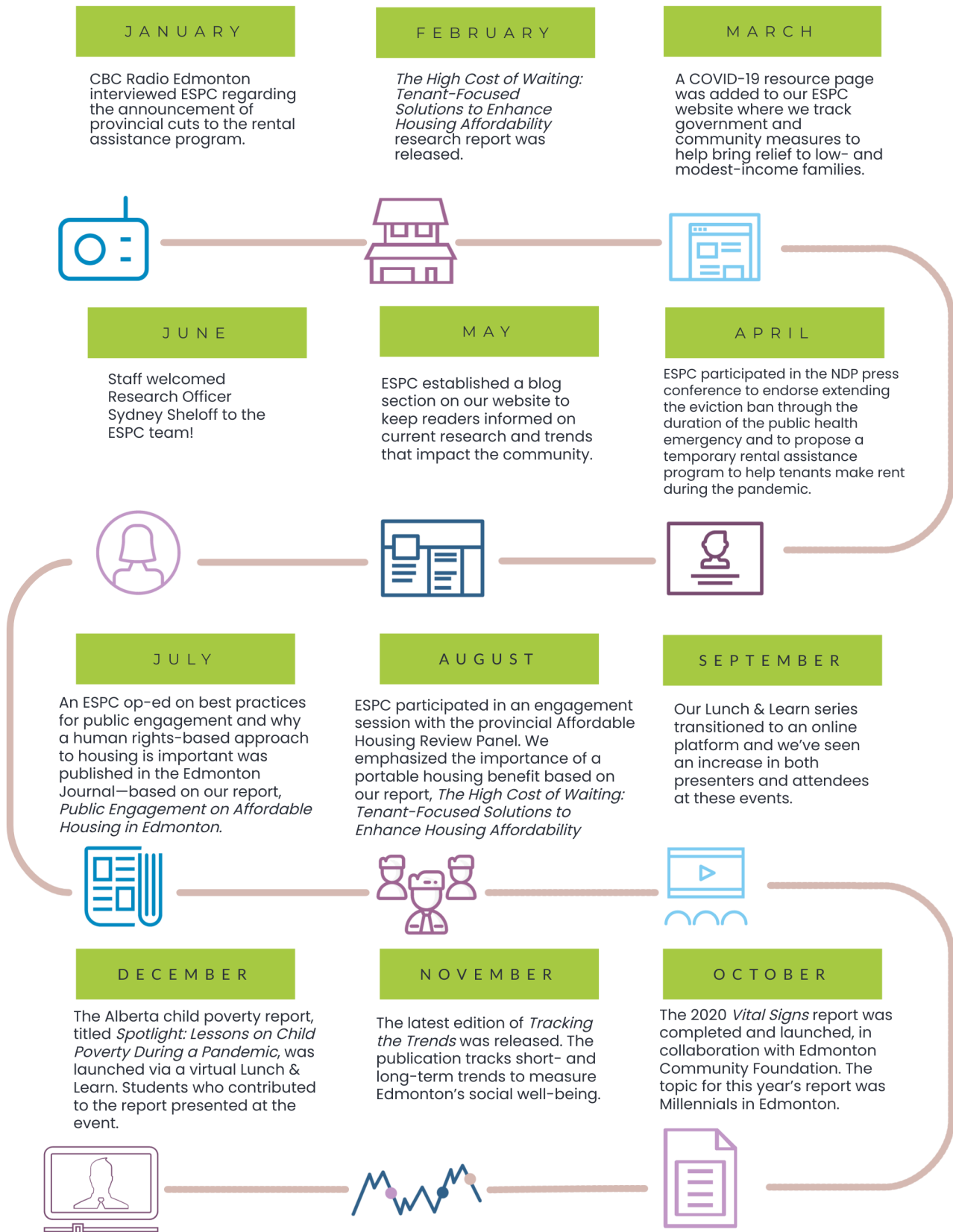
If ever there was one, 2020 was a year for thoughtfulness, reflective practice, and deep listening. The Policy and Governance Committee was active in dialogues and foundational information gathering. Given the major turnover on this committee and the abruptness with which all work stopped last spring, we faced some challenges in getting new colleagues up to speed on our previous work. We quickly shifted into risk management mode, assessing the risks and pressing needs of the organization while so much was uncertain and rapidly evolving.

In 2019 the Policy and Governance Committee undertook a major assessment of the organization's bylaws. That assessment revealed that significant work is required to revise and retool new draft bylaws for the consideration and approval by the Membership & Engagement Committee. Additionally, in 2019 our committee identified several areas for organizational and governance policy development. And so, in 2020 we began to harmonize those two projects. This required another close reading of the bylaws, flagging areas that could be moved into the realm of policy and noting areas requiring major or minor reworking. At the same time, a deeper look at the recommended policies for development revealed that several policy gaps could and must be addressed. Our committee is now working to create policy briefs for each of the Board committees, so that the Finance & Audit Committee takes the first pass at policies related to their terms of reference, the Membership & Engagement Committee is the first to consider and recommend policies relating to our members, etc. This work on bylaw review and revision and undertaking a major policy drafting initiative will require time, energy, and expertise. The committee anticipates that work on these projects will continue until next year's AGM, with plans to institute ongoing cycles of revision, affirmation, and course correction. If you're interested in supporting either project, our committee welcomes community members to join us in our work.

Finally, while COVID-19 has enabled us to come together virtually, effectively making up for some kinds of meetings, the committee recommended to the Board that our strategic planning process be paused for 2020. The kind of thinking and participation that makes strategic planning effective and most beneficial requires being together in one space, having face-to-face conversations, and really listening—to one another, to ESPC staff and members, and to the broader community of social services that we support.



# MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS



# COMMITTEES & COLLABORATIONS



# PUBLICATIONS

ESPC is a source of knowledge and expertise on social issues within our community.

## RESEARCH REPORTS

*The High Cost of Waiting: Tenant-Focused Solutions to Enhance Housing Affordability* (with Homeward Trust Edmonton)

*Confronting the Silent: Working to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Edmonton's Non-Profit Sector* (prepared for Edmonton Community Foundation and Muttart Foundation)

*Vital Signs 2020: Millennials in Edmonton* (with Edmonton Community Foundation)

- Financial Reality of Millennials in Edmonton
- Millennial Activism & Engagement
- Millennials & Technology

*Tracking the Trends 2020*

*Spotlight: Lessons on Child Poverty During a Pandemic* (with Public Interest Alberta and Alberta College of Social Workers)



## FACT SHEETS

- 2020 Provincial Budget
- Child Benefits in Alberta and Canada
- WINning: The Trials, Tribulations, and Triumphs of Opening a Women's Shelter
- Jobless Benefits During COVID-19
- Food (In)Security During COVID-19
- Basic Income: Can it Happen Here?
- An Overview of HIV Edmonton



## FACTIVIST NEWSLETTER

Feature articles from our fACTivist newsletters:

*Explaining Poverty to School-Age Children* by Sandra Ngo, Edmonton Social Planning Council

*A Lesson from COVID-19 about Early Learning and Care* by Jeff Bisanz, Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care

*Family Class Sponsored Immigrant Seniors in Canada: Income Dependency Challenges* by Jenn Rossiter, Edmonton Social Planning Council, in collaboration with the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op and Age of Wisdom

*Economic Insecurity Concerns During COVID-19* by Brett Lambert, Edmonton Social Planning Council

*School Resource Officers and the School-to-Prison Pipeline* by Sydney Sheloff, Edmonton Social Planning Council

# LUNCH & LEARNS

ESPC's Lunch & Learn events are a series of engaging lunchtime talks about social issues and organizations that have an impact in our community. Due to COVID-19, we had to transition our Lunch & Learn events to a virtual platform.



Alberta Child Poverty 2019, January 15, 2020

The History of WIN House: Edmonton's First Women's Shelter, August 26, 2020

Vital Signs 2020, October 8, 2020

Addressing Food Security in Edmonton During a Pandemic: Lessons Learned and Reflections from the Frontline, October 28, 2020

Basic Income in Alberta, November 25, 2020

Protect the Most Vulnerable: Alberta Child Poverty Report, December 8, 2020

An Overview of HIV Edmonton, December 14, 2020

Fantastic resources. Each presentation was informative, and very relevant to the clients my organization supports.

ESPC has been a pleasure to work with! As a guest on the food insecurity panel, I felt the webinar was very well organized, prepared, and carried out. They provide a valuable service to our community in providing opportunities for education, networking, and advocacy for social issues in our communities. – Garnet Borch, Edmonton Lead Coordinator, Leftovers Foundation

# MEDIA INTERVIEWS



36% coverage on the Alberta Child Poverty Report

13% coverage on the High Cost of Waiting Report



## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Edmonton housing assistance waitlist balloons in the wake of provincial funding cuts—Edmonton Journal (February 2020)

Childcare an essential service—St. Albert Today (February 2020)

Affordable housing closure concerns over Alberta government's \$53M cuts to maintenance funding—Global News Edmonton (March 2020)

NDP call on UCP for financial support for renters, extension on eviction ban until July—Morinville News (April 2020)

Wednesday's letters: Pay essential workers a living wage—Edmonton Journal (June 2020)

All parties must be prepared to compromise to prioritize human-rights approach to affordable housing—Edmonton Journal (July 2020)

MLA's AISH experiment likely won't change government's mind, advocates say—CBC Edmonton (October 2020)

Hero-pay raises are the least we can do for frontline workers—Edmonton Journal (December 2020)

## BLOG POSTS

To keep our community informed on current research in the areas of low-income and poverty, we set up a blog section on the ESPC website where our staff can monitor recent trends and developments:

- Much-Needed Data on Rural Homelessness Broadens our Understanding of Housing Instability
- Civil Society in the Age of the UCP Government
- Gig Economy and Impact of COVID-19
- Financial Vulnerability: Who is at Risk if the Government Fails to Step Up?
- Parkland Institute Report on Migrant Workers Living Without Status
- COVID's Socio-Economic Impacts on Indigenous Populations
- Food Security in the Time of COVID-19: Thinking Long-Term
- Universalizing Child Benefits as a Means of Promoting Social Cohesion
- Impact of the Pandemic on the LGBTQI2S Community
- The State of Women's Housing Needs and Homelessness in Canada
- Literacy and Poverty Reduction: Exploring Barriers to Success
- The Need for Culturally-Informed Approaches to Food Security
- Youth Homelessness in the Face of COVID-19: Challenges and Innovations
- The UCP's Economic "He-Covery" Plan Doesn't Look Like Alberta
- The Renewed Push for a Basic Income During the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Poverty and Women's Incarceration in Alberta
- How the Pandemic Affected the Mental Health of Communities Made Vulnerable
- Restorative Justice and the Youth Offenders
- A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for Canada
- Social Determinants of Health

### Special Series: Systemic Racism in Canada

- Racism in Canada
- The Road to Black Lives Matter
- A History of Indigenous Resistance
- Contemporary Pressure Points: Defunding the Police
- Contemporary Pressure Points: Education Systems
- Using Race-Based Data as a Form of Transparency and Accountability

## SOCIAL WELL-BEING TRACKER

Over the past year, ESPC has developed an online social well-being tracker to aggregate local and provincial social indicators into one resource hub. This tracker is an adaptation of our biannual *Tracking the Trends* publication. Adapting *Tracking the Trends* into an online format allows us to update data as it is released, solidifying it as a source of timely and accurate information focused on our community. This data can assist you to learn about social issues, write reports, design programs, and inform your decision-making.

Our social well-being indicators are based on the social determinants of health. These indicators are the economic and social conditions that shape the health of individuals and communities. Social determinants of health also determine the extent to which a person possesses the physical, social, and personal resources to identify and achieve personal aspirations, satisfy needs, and cope with their environment. Social determinants of health are about the quantity and quality of a variety of resources that society makes available to its members, and their distribution amongst the population.

Despite the effects of the pandemic, this work continued to be of interest to multiple stakeholders such as EndPoverty Edmonton, United Way of the Alberta Capital Region, Edmonton Community Foundation, Bissell Centre, Community-University Partnership (CUP), Policy Wise for Families and Children, Homeward Trust Edmonton, and Alberta Health Services. The need to access real time data heightened as the pandemic evolved because community agencies and sector leaders needed up-to-date, quality data to inform their decisions.

For 2021, ESPC plans to launch this tracker tool with an awareness campaign geared toward agencies to increase their capacity efforts. For example, the tracker will allow direct service agencies to obtain accurate statistical data and trend analysis to support program planning and grant applications. Users can upload tables from the electronic dashboard directly into their own documents. With the tracker's completion underway, non-profit agencies have continued to reach out for updates on the project's status.

You can now access the Social Well-Being Tracker on our website: <https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/social-well-being/>

# CAPACITY BUILDING EFFORTS

ESPC was active in presenting and consulting on a variety of topics, at a variety of locations, and with a variety of organizations in 2020.

## PRESENTATIONS

John Howard Society, *Emerging Issues in Edmonton*

Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH), *The High Cost of Waiting: Tenant-Focused Solutions to Enhance Housing Affordability*

Norquest College: Social Policy Primer

University of Alberta: Business, *Board Governance*

University of Alberta: Nutrition, *Food (In)security*

University of Alberta: Career Centre, *Career and Education Advice from Faculty of Arts Alum*

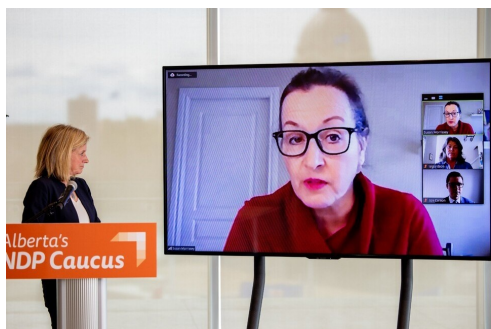
University of Alberta: Human Geography, *Social Determinants of Health*

Rotary Club of Edmonton, *Who is ESPC?*

Inclusive Supports for Marginalized Populations (ISMaP), *Tracking the Trends*

*Vital Signs* launch

NextGen, *Vital Signs 2020*



## ENGAGEMENT WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Affordable Housing Review Panel, Government of Alberta

Christina Grey, MLA Millwoods

Don Iveson, Mayor of Edmonton

Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta, MLA Calgary-Lougheed

Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Members of the Premier's Council

## OUTREACH

ABC Head Start

Alberta Health Services

Bissell Centre

Boyle Street Community Services

C5 North East Community Hub

Calgary Homeless Foundation

Capital Region Interfaith Housing initiative

Caregivers Alberta

City of Edmonton: Non-Market Housing Provider Working Group

Drive Happiness – Seniors Assisted Transportation

Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care

Edmonton Early Years Coalition

Edmonton Public School Board

Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council

Edmonton's Food Bank

EndPoverty Edmonton

Islamic Family and Social Services Association

M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region

Multicultural Family Resource Society

Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op

Norwood Child & Family Resource Centre

PEGASIS

RECOVER: Edmonton's Urban Wellness Plan

Terra Centre

University of Alberta: Community Service Learning

WAVE: Women's Initiative Edmonton

Wood Buffalo County

## CITATIONS

ESPC has a long-standing reputation for having our important work cited in other research reports and journals, both locally and internationally.

### Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention

(2020, July). *Issue Brief: Quality, Affordable and Healthy Child Care in Alberta*.

### Family Life Satisfaction in Midlife

Somerville, S.D. (2020) [Master's thesis]. University of Alberta.

### The 'Not Yet Being' of Education: How Hope Inspires Teaching Practice of Elementary Teachers in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Melissa, K. (2020). [Master's thesis]. University of Oulu.

### Parent-Child Relationships Among African Immigrant Families in Canada

Salami, B., Alaazi, D.A., Yohani, S., Vallianatos, H., Okeke-Ihejirika, P., Ayalew, T. and Nsaliwa, C. (2020), *Fam Relat*, 69: 743-755.

### Social assistance and trajectories of child mental health problems in Canada: evidence from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth

Comeau, J., Duncan, L., Georgiades, K., Wang, L., & Boyle, M. H. (2020). *Canadian journal of public health = Revue canadienne de sante publique*, 111(4), 585-593.

### Structural Inequality, Homelessness, and Moral Worth: Salvaging the Self through Sport?

Koch, J., Scherer, J., & Kafara, R. (2020). *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 49(6), 806-831.

### Submission to the Affordable Housing Panel

Yanicki, S. (2020).

## ANALYTICS



Daily infographics in 2020 increased drive to our platforms!



Traffic to the website increased by **35%** since 2019!

Total Average Across Platforms Increased since 2019!



**74%** Engagement  
**26%** Reach  
**71%** Views  
**81%** Followers

## VOLUNTEERS

In 2020, a total of 45 generous volunteers contributed more than 662 hours of their time to ESPC. Volunteers contributed by writing *Research Update* reviews and *The fActivist* newsletter articles, helping with research for our 80th anniversary project, supporting staff at online events, and serving on our Board of Directors and its committees.

On December 7th, ESPC held its first Volunteer Appreciation event to acknowledge the contributions and impact of our volunteers. Volunteers, Board members, and staff met virtually and shared reasons for volunteering with the organization.

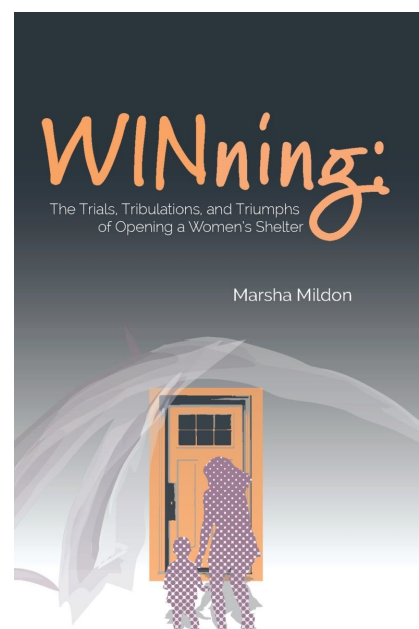
Because of my volunteer work with ESPC, I am able to learn more about a variety of social issues that I feel I would not otherwise get to. It's opened my eyes to different groups of people and has definitely made me appreciate the work that organizations including ESPC do.



“

The ESPC was instrumental in the development of the women’s shelter movement in the City of Edmonton. Initially, it provided support and staff to work on developing solutions to meet the needs of homeless or vulnerable women. The ESPC eventually took over the sponsorship of the Edmonton Women’s Shelter (EWS). Given its community development approach to addressing social issues, the ESPC was more aligned with the EWS than other organizations. Working collaboratively with community groups is still integral to the way the ESPC operates today.

### Housing for Women Book Society



*WINning: The Trials, Tribulations, and Triumphs of Opening a Women's Shelter* by Marsha Mildon <https://www.winningshelterbook.ca/>

## DONATIONS

Donations help to produce research reports and publications that we make accessible free of charge. Donations allow us to take on bigger projects and make a greater impact in our community. The strength of our voice is dependent upon the support from people and organizations concerned about social issues. By contributing, you add your voice and help those who lack the opportunity to speak for themselves. ESPC is a non-profit organization with registered charity status (Charity Tax# 107283194 RR 0001). Donations can be made directly through our website [www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca](http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca), or through Canada Helps and Benevity.

## COMMUNITY SPACE

Due to COVID-19, we decided to close our office from the public and have been unable to provide our community space to other service agencies in the city in order to protect everyone’s health and safety. ESPC staff continue to provide data and research support to various individuals and client-serving organizations in a virtual capacity.

## ENDOWMENT FUND

ESPC established an endowment fund in 2017 through the Edmonton Community Foundation ([www.ecfoundation.org](http://www.ecfoundation.org)). Giving to our endowment fund allow donors to provide lifelong gifts and support to our agencies. Contact the Edmonton Community Foundation for further information on how to donate and have a lasting impact for many years to come.



# 80TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Edmonton Social Planning Council  
80th Annual General Meeting  
July 16, 2020  
5:30 – 6:30pm

## WELCOME AND PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

The meeting was convened at 5:35 p.m. by Gwen Feeny, President of the Edmonton Social Planning Council, who welcomed everyone and delivered a brief opening statement recognizing that we are having this meeting on traditional Treaty 6 land. Gwen welcomed all ESPC members attending and introduced current Board members and staff members. Gwen thanked staff and volunteers for all of their work in planning the AGM.

## APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

**MOTION:** *MOVED* by Sandra McFadyen, seconded by Theresa Vladicka to accept the agenda as presented.

**MOTION:** *CARRIED*

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MAY 23, 2019

**MOTION:** *MOVED* by Darlene Kowalchuk, seconded by Theresa Vladicka to approve the minutes from the May 23, 2019 AGM as presented.

**MOTION:** *CARRIED*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Gwen Feeny acknowledged the challenges the Board faced this year but stated that Board members were able to form strong committees and adapt to our changing reality. This year's AGM was conducted online and at a later date due to the COVID-19 lockdown. The Board also decided to forgo keynote speakers and presentation of the Award of Merit as an online meeting was not conducive for such arrangements.

She thanked Board members and ESPC staff for their great work and achievements from the year. She reflected on large projects that the Board undertook, including the work on ESPC's Strategic Plan. Due to the pandemic, the Policy and Governance Committee was unable to present a finalized Strategic Plan at the AGM. Gwen also thanked Colin Johnson of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues who provided input and helped as facilitator during the strategic planning retreat. Work on the Strategic Plan will continue in the new term.

Each Board committee reviewed and developed new policies to better serve the Board and its committees. Further, ESPC secured a stable future with the work of the Board on the development of a strategic plan as well as the upcoming research being conducted by the Council.

A strong financial position was maintained, with work on policies and strategies to ensure financial stability and fundraising ability going forward.

Gwen thanked the Board and ESPC staff for their dedication and commitment, and for continuously producing the kind of important and timely research needed amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. She thanked the Executive Director for her calm leadership throughout this crisis and for representing ESPC in the community and provincially.

Gwen announced her resignation as ESPC President and thanked staff and Board members she has worked with during her years as president.

## OPERATIONS REPORT

Susan Morrissey, Executive Director, reflected on the work of the Council and change within our community and province for the 2019 year. She thanked Gwen Feeny for her leadership over her years as Board President.

She highlighted some of ESPC's major achievements in 2019 including the completion of the 2019 *Vital Signs* report, and the special *Vital Topic: Indigenous Women in Alberta* that focused on the significant contributions of Indigenous women in the province while addressing concerns about poverty. She also highlighted renewed funding from City of Edmonton's Family and Community Support Services that has allowed ESPC to help expand other agencies' research capacities.

ESPC has also been involved in two provincial projects: Keep Alberta Strong and the Alberta Living Wage Network. ESPC was involved in organizing and writing letters to both the Premier and ministers about how the governmental decisions being made are impacting those living in poverty. This work with provincial colleagues helped to extend the influence of ESPC province-wide.

# 80TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Further, ESPC visited George H. Luck Elementary school and facilitated discussions with grade 5 and 6 students about their understanding of poverty and homelessness, and how they think they might participate in being part of the solution. These discussions were considered very valuable as future generations will have the greatest impact on reducing poverty going forward.

She highlighted some of the upcoming activities planned for the 2020 year and welcomed new staff. The Council's 80th Anniversary will be celebrated with a booklet commemorating how EPSC has been involved in creating the community we have now. The coming year will also feature work on anti-racism—details will be released as projects are unveiled. The 2020 *Vital Signs* will be focusing on the lives of millennials.

Susan thanked John Kolkman, ESPC's Research Associate, who retired from ESPC in early 2020. She praised John's true compassion and desire for all Edmontonians to thrive, as well as his ability to make statistical information a little more interesting.

Susan Morrissey thanked the staff, volunteers, Board of Directors, funders, and ESPC members for their continued support of ESPC work.

## PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL REPORT

Vanessa Zembal, Chair of the ESPC Finance and Audit Committee invited Carla Walker, from Peterson Walker LLP, to report on the 2019 financials.

Carla Walker presented the 2019 Audited Financial statements.

**MOTION:** *MOVED* by Dave Trautman, seconded by Danielle Dolgoy to approve the audited 2019 financial statements as presented.

**MOTION:** *CARRIED.*

**MOTION:** *MOVED* by Paula Kirman, seconded by Katherine Weaver to appoint Peterson Walker LLP as Auditors for the 2020 year.

**MOTION:** *CARRIED.*

Vanessa Zembal thanked Carla Walker for her work.

## AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON BOARD RECRUITMENT

CALLS for nominations on the floor

No additional nominations.

Peter Schalk introduced the new nominees to the Board.

Charlotte Bennie (1st Term – 1st Year Candidate)

Bill Howe (1st Term – 1st Year Candidate)

Katherine Weaver (1st Term – 1st Year Candidate)

**MOTION:** *MOVED* by Peter Schalk, seconded by Dave Trautman to elect the above-mentioned candidate (s) to the Board of Directors to the Edmonton Social Planning Council for the 2020-2021 year.

**MOTION:** *CARRIED.*

Peter Schalk introduced the continuing Board members.

Vanessa Zembal (2nd Term – 1st Year Continuing)

Peter Schalk (3rd Term – 1st Year Continuing)

**MOTION:** *MOVED* by Darlene Kowalchuk, seconded by Theresa Vladicka, to reelect the above-mentioned candidates to the Board of Directors of the Edmonton Social Planning Council for the 2020-2021 year.

**MOTION:** *CARRIED.*

## OTHER BUSINESS

No further business called upon the floor.

## ADJOURNMENT – (ADJOURNED AT 6:32 PM)

**MOTION:** *MOVED* by Paula Kirman, seconded by Jalene Anderson-Baron to adjourn the business portion of the 80th ESPC Annual General Meeting.

**MOTION:** *CARRIED.*



## PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS





Edmonton Social Planning Council  
Suite 200, Bassani Building  
10544 – 106 Street NW  
T5H 2X6

[www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca](http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca)

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