

**DATE:** September 8, 2020

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** School Resource Officer (SRO) Program  
(Response to Request for Information #075)

**ORIGINATOR:** Laurie Barnstable, Director Division Support Services

**RESOURCE  
STAFF:** Grace Cooke, Gail Haydey, Karen Mills

**REFERENCE:** [June 9, 2020, Board meeting](#)

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**ISSUE**

The following information on the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program was requested by Trustee Stirling at the June 9, 2020, public Board meeting:

## Funding and Governance:

- What is the full annual cost to Edmonton Public Schools of the SRO program, and what is the total cost of the program (EPSB and EPS total)?
- What are the intended outcomes of the program, and how are these outcomes measured and reported?
- What are the criteria for schools to be designated as having an SRO, and are there any programs or services that are interrelated or contingent on SROs being present in schools?
- What training or background is required for an officer to become an SRO, and what additional training do they receive to be prepared to work in schools? Beyond criminal record checks, what is EPSB's practice in examining disciplinary records for SROs before and during their time working in schools?

## Search and Investigations:

- What are the processes and protocols for searches of students, lockers, and student property conducted by or in the company of SROs?
- What are the processes and protocols around the unlocking, accessing, and search of students' cell phones by or in the company of SROs?
- What are the processes and protocols regarding entry and search of bathrooms, locker rooms, and other similar areas?
- Are bait phones still being used in Edmonton Public Schools? What is the purpose of this practice? Are other similar practices used in schools?

## Data Collection:

- In cases where SROs are engaged in investigations of students, what are the nature of these investigations, how many are criminal versus non-criminal in nature, and how many result in arrests,

charges, and prosecutions? How many fines are issued to students, and what is the total dollar amount of those fines annually?

- What is the demographic breakdown for students disciplined or arrested in relation to SRO investigations? Include data around race, socioeconomic status, gender, FNMI identification, ELL, immigration status, disability, and mental health status.
- Are SROs armed on school property? If so, how often are firearms drawn in a year, and do we keep records of the use of other weapons such as batons, pepper spray, tasers or other forms of force or restraint?
- Have any research studies or evaluations been conducted on the SRO program in Edmonton Public Schools? If so, what were the findings?

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1979, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS), Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) and Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD) embarked on a collaborative partnership placing four constables in Edmonton high schools on a cost-shared basis. The joint venture focused on supporting safe and caring school communities through proactive support, education, crime prevention and deterrence, solution-focused decisions, and, where needed, law enforcement, working alongside school administration.

Since its inception, the SRO program has expanded in both Edmonton school divisions along with recent expansion to include the Edmonton Islamic Academy. Currently, full-time SROs are assigned to 11 EPSB high schools and one K-12 school. Seven EPSB junior high schools, plus one junior high/high school share an SRO equally with another EPSB or ECSD school. In addition, Institutional Services Schools (Aspen Program) has a full-time Youth Intervention Officer.

In terms of organization, each SRO is under the supervision of one of the SRO Unit Sergeants, and also works in close partnership with designated staff members from Alberta Health Services (Mental Health and Addictions) and Children's Services.

## **CURRENT SITUATION**

The following information is provided in response to the Request for Information made by Trustee Stirling at the June 9, 2020, public Board meeting. Subsequent to the Request for Information, on June 23, 2020, the Board voted unanimously to proceed with an independent review of the SRO program. The comprehensive review of the SRO program within the Edmonton Public Schools context will be undertaken during the 2020-21 school year.

The majority of the following information has been provided to the Division by the EPS, and for the most part remains unedited by the Division.

## **KEY POINTS**

### **Funding and Governance**

- **What is the full annual cost to Edmonton Public Schools of the SRO program, and what is the total cost of the program (EPSB and EPS total)?**

As per the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the SRO program costs are shared by EPS and the Division, with each partner contributing 50 per cent of the cost of SROs assigned to Division schools for the 10-month school year. EPS assumes the salary costs for the SROs during July and August.

The current cost for a Division school with a full-time SRO is \$67,726. Schools pay \$33,863 when they share an SRO equally with another school. In 2016, the principal of Institutional Services Schools requested a 12-month full-time officer for the Aspen Program out of concern for student and staff safety. As EPS advised that the request was outside the scope of the SRO program, EPS placed a Youth Intervention Officer at the Aspen Program, at a current cost of \$135,630.

The current annual cost of the program to EPSB is \$1,219,246 (including the Youth Intervention Officer at Aspen).

- **What are the intended outcomes of the program, and how are these outcomes measured and reported?**

According to the current MOU, the overarching goal of the SRO program is to:

“provide quality dedicated service to students, schools, and community partners. The SRO program is a collaborative partnership designed to impact the safety, well-being and development of youth in the education system. [The] program focuses on problem-orientated policing; proactive support; and education, inclusion and the prevention of crime, disorder, and victimization for students, schools and the community.”

EPS has provided the following descriptions of the specific intended outcomes of the SRO program and related indicators:

***School Safety***

*As noted in the MOU, “the primary function of the SRO is to assist the school administration in providing a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and working environment for students, staff and the surrounding community.”*

*The role of the SRO is to ensure the safety of staff and students on a daily basis ranging from planning and conducting lockdown drills to being accessible for individual or group discussions on topics related to school safety and security. SROs are in constant communication with school administration and staff; however, they also serve as a first line of crime prevention in school, helping to proactively deter incidents such as bullying, vandalism, theft, drug-related activity, sexual harassment, assault, threats or the use of weapons. In alignment with the Division Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) protocol, when SROs build relationships with students and staff, they can gain valuable intelligence about any threats to the school community and can investigate and intervene promptly. In the most extreme circumstances, SROs are certified in single officer active attacker training to move rapidly and directly to an active threat to neutralize the threat to prevent further injury or loss of life.*

***Positive Youth Engagement***

*Given that the mandate of this program is prevention, education and overall safety, SROs are not to be primarily used as a security function. SROs work in collaboration with school administration, staff, students, and parents to identify and address school concerns or problems. Embedding an SRO within the school community allows them to have a visible presence in the school and community to build connections with youth through counselling, class presentations, continual interactions, mentoring, and distribution of educational resource materials. General exposure to*

*police officers in a non-confrontational role who have a special understanding of and commitment to youth policing, allows students to see officers as adults they can rely on. In addition, it often emboldens students to open up and discuss issues that may be troubling them such as questionable experiences or decisions among their friends, family or relationship dynamics, or when they simply need advice on peer relationships.*

### ***Diversion***

*SROs within a school can play a pivotal role in guiding and assisting youth who are, or who may become, involved with the criminal justice system. SROs work with school administrators, EPS colleagues, and community programs to navigate youth away from traditional involvement in the justice system while improving their access to community resources. One of the key diversion methods SROs use is the Police Assisted Youth Oriented Formative Fitness (PAYOFF) program. Instead of paying a fine or going to court for a relatively minor offence like drug use/possession, shoplifting or fighting, PAYOFF gives students the opportunity to make amends. This may include having the student engage in restorative processes to repair the harm done to individuals or the school community, providing community service to the school such as assisting teachers with leadership or extra-curricular activities, or even committing to a schedule of fitness workouts with the SRO. The underlying goal of diversion is to help students learn about accountability while building trust and making their school community stronger. Most importantly, diversion seeks to dissuade youth from repeating past behaviours and, ultimately, to help them stay out of the criminal justice system.*

### ***Collaboration with Community Programs to Support Youth***

*An SRO has a dedicated role, primarily focused on proactive, solution oriented processes, that support and encourage safe and inclusive practices and initiatives with an overall guiding principle to promote a secure and caring learning and working environment. Throughout the school year, SROs collaborate with school and community programs to support youth and their families. Examples include SROs connecting with AHS to support students facing challenges linked to mental health or addictions, partnering with the University of Alberta Faculty of Nursing to educate teens on the health risks of vaping, or connecting parents and guardians to The Canadian Centre for Child Protection resources to help keep their children safe online.*

### ***Education around Youth Topical Issues***

*In their informal daily interactions and mentorship with students, SROs play an important educational role in the school. In addition, SROs also work cooperatively with school administration, teachers and the community, to proactively identify and address school concerns or problems through structured class presentations, assemblies and parent presentations, including to School Councils. These awareness and education sessions cover a variety of topics such as drug use, healthy relationships and consent, online safety, and safe driving. The topics and format of lectures and presentations are tailored to fit the specific needs of the school community.*

## Measurement of Outcomes

Principals of schools with assigned SROs have formal and informal reporting mechanisms in place; both internal to EPSB and with the SROs' chain of command or the EPS in general. It is expected that timely communication among principals, SRO sergeants, and Division Support Services can take place at any time on any issue, and is strongly encouraged whenever deemed necessary. As stated in the MOU, the "participant's liaisons will meet and/or communicate, as required to review and assess the operation and effectiveness of this MOU and any other matter of mutual interest".

Division principals are also asked by the SRO supervisors to complete a year-end review of their SRO. The information gathered on the [Principal Feedback Form](#) aligns with program outcomes. In addition to ongoing communication throughout the year in relation to the intended outcomes, the feedback form also provides a link between schools and sergeants to address and formally document any concerns. On the feedback form, which was developed by EPS, principals rate the SRO on a 10-point scale and provide comments in relation to the following performance categories:

- Engagement with School Administration
- Engagement with Students
- School Safety
- Proactive Policing
- Investigations
- Initiative

In addition, SROs complete a daily activity tracking sheet which is submitted monthly to the SRO sergeant. EPS has secured the services of a data scientist from the EPS Business Intelligence Section to assist with the compilation of the data.

- **What are the criteria for schools to be designated as having an SRO, and are there any programs or services that are interrelated or contingent on SROs being present in schools?**

Over the span of the partnership, there have been occasions when the EPS Chief of Police has advised the Division of an opportunity to expand the SRO program by placing SROs in additional schools. When this occurs, EPS invites the Division to identify school(s) which would benefit most from having an SRO placed within the school community. The decision to request the SRO partnership be expanded to a specific Division school or schools is based on collaborative feedback and dialogue primarily involving Principals, Assistant Superintendents, and Division Support Services.

Based on this feedback, the Superintendent of Schools submits a written request for an SRO at a Division school to the EPS Chief of Police. EPS then conducts an internal selection and hiring process; EPSB staff participate in the interview portion of the screening process.

## Programs and Inter-related services

EPS advises that with respect to programs and inter-related services, throughout the school year, SROs work with school administration, student services or counselling staff, and various EPS specialty units for the best outcomes for youth. On a less formal basis, SROs will engage in discussions with school staff and EPS personnel to 'bounce ideas' off each other regarding programs and services that will benefit the school community.

One key example of an inter-related process is the Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) protocol in place in the form of the multidisciplinary partnership, Edmonton Community Threat Risk Intervention Support Protocol (C-TRISP). The partnership comprises several key local agencies including EPS, RCMP, EPSB, ECSD, AHS, and Children's Services. VTRA partners work together to identify and proactively respond to high-risk situations involving an individual who may be moving on a pathway toward serious violence. At its core, the VTRA protocol relies on a strong understanding of a student's baseline behaviour in order to identify any shifts in that baseline that may signal a potential high-risk situation. Early intervention and support greatly reduces risk and prevents acts of serious violence in schools and against youth and the community. The strength and success of the VTRA protocol to assess and respond to any threat to school safety rests with strong relationships and daily interactions with students.

In addition, SROs have delivered educational sessions to students, parents, and staff around topical issues impacting youth. Upon recognizing issues like drugs, sexual violence and technological crimes impacting youth, EPS advises that SROs have secured strategic partnerships for the creation and delivery of youth-focused education including the following topics and information campaigns:

- **Fentanyl Awareness** campaign delivered to tens of thousands of students in partnership with AHS and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
  - **'Without Consent It's Not Sent'** campaign includes presentations around 'sexting', online safety and intimate images in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection
  - **Gender Based Violence** education strategy relating to topics of sexual consent, bystander approach, and situational awareness in partnership with the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
  - **Project V.A.P.E.** (Vaping Awareness Prevention Empowerment) in partnership with the University of Alberta Faculty of Nursing.
- **What training or background is required for an officer to become an SRO, and what additional training do they receive to be prepared to work in schools? Beyond criminal record checks, what is EPSB's practice in examining disciplinary records for SROs before and during their time working in schools?**

### **Training and background to become an SRO**

EPS advises that they have a robust selection process in place for officers applying to join the SRO Unit. Advantage is awarded to officers with certified EPS training or external police training which is specifically relevant and beneficial to the SRO position. Officers are required to demonstrate a strong commitment to youth work and community collaborations by providing evidence of recent, relevant and repetitive youth engagement both on and off the job.

Candidates with advanced post-secondary education are awarded greater points in the selection process. They also indicate specific police courses they have completed. Of the multitude of courses and certifications available to officers, there is a specific [list of courses](#) that are deemed to be of highest value in the SRO selection process.

The candidate's current and previous supervisors provide an assessment of the candidate's suitability for the SRO role. A panel of SRO supervisors and staff from EPSB and ECSD score the candidates in an interview process that assesses the candidate's demonstrated competencies

around the role of the SRO including, but not limited to, school emergency preparedness, understanding of relevant education legislation including the Alberta *Education Act*, as well as questions showcasing accountability, communication, decision making, teamwork and developing self and others.

### **Additional training to be prepared to work in schools**

EPS further advises that training is an ongoing aspect of policing. SROs are exposed to multiple training opportunities, with emphasis around courses, conferences, observational and experiential learning that specifically prepare them to work with youth in schools.

The SRO Unit utilizes a mentorship model where new SROs 'shadow' and are mentored by experienced SROs. They are also encouraged to liaise with their police supervisor and the school leadership staff on an open and as-needed basis. SROs attend a mandatory SRO Orientation Week prior to the start of every school year where topics covered include, but are not limited to, officer conduct expectations, data collection, trauma-informed policing, racial injustice/unconscious bias awareness training, team investigation of child sexual assaults (with Zebra Centre), diversion, mental health awareness and resources, school active attacker training, school emergency preparedness training, SRO portfolio review and sign-up, student engagement and proactive hours review, review and accessing of youth presentations, and a review of investigative techniques and procedures around complex investigations.

In terms of ongoing training, EPS advises that once an officer joins the SRO Unit, the EPS would facilitate the completion of as many additional [SRO relevant courses and certifications](#) as possible. As per the MOU, an SRO must also complete FOIP training provided and approved by the EPSB. In addition, SROs participate in Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) certification training.

Additional role-specific training and seminars provided to SROs by EPS include:

- Trauma informed approach (includes de-escalation)
- Bias awareness / inclusivity / racism
- Resiliency
- Mental health literacy, supports and resources, and de-escalation strategies
- PSECA (Protection of Sexually Exploited Children)
- PCHAD (Protection of Children Abusing Drugs program)
- Single (and team) officer active attacker training\*
- School emergency preparedness (lockdowns / on alerts / evacuations)
- Digital threat assessment (dealing with online threats, plus sexting and luring investigations)

\*SROs regularly train in 'single officer rapid response' (SORR) training. EPS advises that this training is more specialized than what a general patrol officer receives, and is unique to SROs since, as the title suggests, they are the lone officer in the school setting and waiting for backup is not realistic in the event of an emergent high risk situation. The SRO Unit received SORR training certification from the 'Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training' program at Texas State University. SROs with this certification in their training portfolio have the capacity to lead the other SROs in training around SORR. SROs meet as an entire unit throughout the school year to practice the training.

## Disciplinary records

EPS advises that all candidates applying to the SRO Unit go through a vetting process with the [Professional Standards Branch \(PSB\)](#). Live and ongoing PSB investigations preclude the applicant from being selected as an SRO. Further, as stated in the application process, “evidence of previous actions or behaviours bringing disrepute to the EPS or SRO Unit may disqualify the applicant from selection”.

In 2014, Sergeant Emuel Chan assumed the role of supervisor of the SRO program. Sergeant Chan advises that no member with any past disciplinary concerns or actions that may call into question their suitability for the SRO role or bring concern or disrepute to the SRO Unit has been hired during his tenure. Under the current organization and supervisory structure, no member with disciplinary records as per above would be selected to the SRO Unit. In addition, EPS Human Resources personnel has confirmed to Sergeant Chan that, at minimum, disciplinary records for SRO candidates have been reviewed since 2012. EPS has not provided the Division with information regarding disciplinary records of SROs hired to the unit prior to 2012; however, EPS advised that there are no SROs currently in the unit who would have been assigned as an SRO prior to 2012.

As outlined in the MOU, SROs are employed by the EPS and fall under the direct command of the SRO sergeant. Division staff do not have direct access to the disciplinary records of EPS personnel. If any concerns or disputes arise, these are addressed through mutual discussion and consultation.

## Search and Investigations

- **What are the processes and protocols for searches of students, lockers, and student property conducted by or in the company of SROs?**

Division Support Services and General Counsel are available to provide support to school administration regarding such searches based on the *Education Act* and relevant case law. Further, General Counsel [presents](#) to various groups of administrators on the topic of “Searches in Schools” from year to year, either as a standalone presentation or as a portion of a larger presentation. The presentation is based on case law, including from the Supreme Court of Canada:

The issue of student searches has been addressed in *R. v. M.(M.R.) [1998] S.C.J. No. 83*. The Supreme Court ruling articulated the overarching principle of ensuring safe and orderly school environments:

“Teachers and those in charge of our schools are entrusted with the care and education of our children. It is difficult to imagine a more important trust or duty. To ensure the safety of the students and to provide them with the orderly environment so necessary to encourage learning, reasonable rules of conduct must be in place and enforced at schools.”

The *R. v. M.(M.R.)* decision guides practices related to school searches, in tandem with the mandated responsibility outlined in the *Education Act* for the Board to provide a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging (s. 31(1)(d)), and for the principal to maintain order and discipline in the school, on the school grounds, and during activities sponsored or approved by the Board (s. 197(f)).



School authorities do not require a warrant or police assistance to conduct a search on school property, nor is there a requirement to advise a student of any legal rights prior to a search. The school authority must have reasonable grounds to believe that there has been a breach of school regulations or discipline and that a search of a student would reveal evidence of that breach. School authorities will be in the best position to assess information given to them, and relate it to the situation existing in their school. The following may constitute reasonable grounds in this context:

- information received from one student considered to be credible,
- information received from more than one student,
- a teacher's or principal's own observations, or
- any combination of these pieces of information which the relevant authority considers to be credible.

Any searches by school authorities should be carried out in a reasonable manner, with appropriate consideration of the gender of the student and the searcher, and where the search is conducted. The permissible extensiveness of the search will vary according to what the school authority believes the search may reveal. If the school authority believes the student is carrying a weapon, the Supreme Court said it would be reasonable for the school authority "to take immediate action and undertake whatever search is required."

The ruling went on to state, "the existence of an immediate threat to the students' safety will justify swift, thorough and extensive searches." A lesser standard would apply to searches for less serious items.

### **SRO involvement in searches of students**

EPS has provided the following information regarding SRO involvement in searches of students. SROs will only participate in searches according to authorizations under the *Criminal Code of Canada*. A search may include an emergent warrantless search and seizure of firearms, where time and imminent safety is at stake.

SROs may, at the request of the principal, accompany the principal for safety purposes or be in the company of the school administration for their search under their authority of the *Education Act*. The *Criminal Code* section that covers warrantless search and seizure by police officers is provided below:

**117.02 (1)** *Where a peace officer believes on reasonable grounds*

*(a) that a weapon, an imitation firearm, a prohibited device, any ammunition, any prohibited ammunition or an explosive substance was used in the commission of an offence, or*

*(b) that an offence is being committed, or has been committed, under any provision of this Act that involves, or the subject-matter of which is, a firearm, an imitation firearm, a cross-bow, a prohibited weapon, a restricted weapon, a prohibited device, ammunition, prohibited ammunition or an explosive substance, and evidence of the offence is likely to be found on a person, in a vehicle or in any place or premises other than a dwelling-house, the peace officer may, where the conditions for obtaining a warrant exist but, by reason of exigent circumstances, it would not be practicable to obtain a warrant, search, without warrant, the person, vehicle, place or premises, and seize any*

*thing by means of or in relation to which that peace officer believes on reasonable grounds the offence is being committed or has been committed.*

**487.11** *A peace officer, or a public officer who has been appointed or designated to administer or enforce any federal or provincial law and whose duties include the enforcement of this or any other Act of Parliament, may, in the course of his or her duties, exercise any of the powers described in subsection 487(1) or 492.1(1) without a warrant if the conditions for obtaining a warrant exist but by reason of exigent circumstances it would be impracticable to obtain a warrant.*

Although ‘exigent circumstances’ is not defined in this section, it is defined in s. 529.3(2) as circumstances in which the peace officer

*(a) has reasonable grounds to suspect that entry into the dwelling-house is necessary to prevent imminent bodily harm or death to any person; or*

*(b) has reasonable grounds to believe that evidence relating to the commission of an indictable offence is present in the dwelling-house and that entry into the dwelling-house is necessary to prevent the imminent loss or imminent destruction of the evidence.*

For an SRO, this would mainly apply to situations where there is an immediate safety concern for students and school staff. Firearms would be the best example but there could be other situations. If, for example, there was a concern for explosive devices, the SRO would likely have people evacuate the building for their safety and have the EPS Bomb Unit attend the scene to deal with the device.

- **What are the processes and protocols around the unlocking, accessing, and search of students’ cell phones by or in the company of SROs?**

EPS advises that SROs may, at times and at the request of the principal, accompany the principal for safety purposes or be in the company of the principal for their search under the authority of the *Education Act*. SROs require written consent or judicial authorizations (warrant) to unlock, access or search a student’s phone. Police officers understand the ‘test of court’ and that evidence seized without proper methods will be dismissed in court; at the jeopardy of losing the case and harm to the officer’s reputation.

From a school authority perspective, further to the information provided in the previous question, Division Support Services and General Counsel provide support to school administrators based on the case of *Ratt v. Tournier, 2014 SKQB353*, which involved a complaint relating to a cell phone search. This case provides context and governance for cell phone searches:

*“Students may expect some degree of privacy respecting the contents of their cell phones. As a general rule the (school administration) or teachers will not be scrolling through the contents of their cell phones. In the circumstances where the student is using the cell phone and text messages in clear violation of school policy, a policy of which the student is aware, the student can anticipate a reduced degree of privacy.”*

*“In circumstances where the student’s behaviour is extremely out of the norm ... and the [school administration] establishes a reasonable basis for his concern for violence or threats to personal safety of a student or the general student body, an*

*individual student's right to privacy is outweighed by the duties and responsibilities of the teaching staff."*

- **What are the processes and protocols regarding entry and search of bathrooms, locker rooms, and other similar areas?**

Unless entry and search is conducted for emergent purposes or exigent circumstances as outlined above, SROs and school administration respect the privacy of bathrooms and locker rooms. If a search is deemed necessary, efforts are also taken, when practicable, for the SRO to be in the company of a school staff member. Gender considerations, privacy and dignity are always key considerations.

- **Are bait phones still being used in Edmonton Public Schools? What is the purpose of this practice? Are other similar practices used in schools?**

EPS advises that a single bait phone was purchased by the EPS in 2013. It has been used a total of two times, once at Eastglen School in 2013 and once at Ross Sheppard School in 2014. The bait phone was not deployed following the 2014 use at Ross Sheppard School.

The Eastglen deployment resulted in one student being found in possession of the bait phone. A warning was issued to the student involved. No charges were laid in relation to either of the two bait phone deployments.

In terms of context and purpose of this previous practice, SROs and school administration recognized a spike in reports of student locker thefts in gymnasium change rooms. For obvious privacy reasons, there is no video surveillance in change rooms, and these thefts were specifically targeting students' cellular phones. The thought at that time was to have students aware that school administration, in cooperation with police, had the means to investigate thefts. In response to frustration from students, parents, and staff, the desire was to identify the student(s) committing these thefts both to hold the student(s) accountable, and to restore trust and a sense of personal security within the school. A further belief was that word of this would spread amongst the student population and act as a deterrent to theft.

#### **Data Collection**

- **In cases where SROs are engaged in investigations of students, what are the nature of these investigations, how many are criminal versus non-criminal in nature, and how many result in arrests, charges, and prosecutions? How many fines are issued to students, and what is the total dollar amount of those fines annually?**

EPS has provided the following information regarding data collection.

A 'police information report' documents information that is provided to the SRO, or that is discovered by the officer over the course of duty. A police information report is essentially any information piece that an officer chooses to document and enter into the records management system. Information in these files may include, but is not limited to, mental health interventions, a traffic complaint, a school trespasser situation, an update to the SRO's schoolyard discarded needle pick-up initiative, a VTRA report, or a referral to Children's Services.

The 'disposition' of a police information report can include a variety of outcomes, including, but not limited to:

- Submitted for information only
- Concluded pending further information
- Unfounded
- Unsubstantiated
- Concluded with charges (bylaw offense, provincial act offence, or criminal charge)
- Concluded with referral to diversion
- Warning given

Based on the range of disposition routes for a police information report, it is somewhat simplistic to categorize or track police reports or SRO interactions as either criminal or non-criminal as the nature of the matter may appear "criminal", but then may be concluded in a manner that does not elevate it to be dealt with as "criminal". For example, an SRO may investigate a sexual assault complaint where one student allegedly touches another person in a sexual manner without consent violating that person's sexual integrity. The content of this report in this instance is of a 'criminal' nature as it relates to sexual assault. However, the complainant may decide to not proceed 'criminally', such as in a case where the complainant may tell the officer they just want it documented in a police report, but does not want to pursue any criminal charges. So even though the police information report is technically a 'criminal' report, the disposition is a 'concluded pending further information' in this case.

A 'criminal file' can include any information report that is categorized by a crime type. For instance, a sexual assault, bomb threat, shoplifting, distribution of drugs, vandalism, pointing a firearm, break and enter, etc. These are all 'criminal files.' Again, although categorized as a 'criminal file,' it does not automatically lead to criminal charges being laid. A crime may have taken place but police may:

- not have a complainant interested in pursuing charges,
- not have the grounds (evidence) to lay a charge,
- not have a reasonable expectation of a conviction after consultation with crown,
- not be able to identify a suspect, or
- end a charge for referral to the Diversion First program.

SRO charges include any charges laid on behalf of student victims or on behalf of the school itself. An analysis of SRO tracking information is underway and will continue as part of the upcoming review process. From January to December of 2017, there were a total of 2996 SRO investigations recorded (this includes both for EPSB and ECSD). Of those, 1863 were generally classified as "non-criminal" investigations, and 1133 were "criminal". In 59 of these investigations (approximately 2 per cent), charges were laid. Similarly, previous data from the 2012 calendar year shows that of 3451 investigations by SROs, 2547 were non-criminal, while 904 were classified as criminal files (specific number of charges is unavailable at this time). It is important to consider that not all charges laid by an SRO are issued to Division students. For example, an SRO may charge a person who does not attend or work at the school, with trespassing or another criminal charge.

From a city-wide perspective, a 2017 analysis was conducted of all youth charged (by EPS as a whole) for minor criminal offences (e.g., theft, possess stolen property, mischief, common assault). Specifically, the EPS Value and Impact Division conducted an internal statistical database review of all youth charged in minor crimes. This review was conducted at the request of the EPS Diversion First Unit and determined that, of the youth charges that went to court:

- 67.2 per cent of charges were withdrawn
- 31.1 per cent of charges went to extrajudicial sanctions
- 1.6 per cent went to a guilty plea

Based on this analysis, and their knowledge of youth, SROs recognize the multi-dimensional challenges and implications of charging youth. Therefore, the focus is with Diversion and 'PAYOFF.'

As a layer of checks and balances, all EPS members are required by an internal policy (in place since 2017) to participate in a pre-charge consultation with a police staff sergeant prior to charges being laid. The staff sergeant must ensure the grounds for arrest are lawful and the member has clearly articulated the circumstances of the arrest in their summary of the event.

### **Fines issued to students**

EPS advises that this amount is difficult to determine and the Provincial Court Records Section would have to be consulted for the final dollar amount. If a police officer chooses to issue a fine, they are guided by the specified penalty listing under the relevant statutes and regulations of Alberta. If the matter then goes to court, the dollar amount of the fine will vary from case to case, depending on the prosecutor, defence lawyer and the judge. For example, a \$100 fine issued by an officer may be significantly reduced, dismissed, or increased at the request of the lawyers' recommendation, and at the discretion of the judge.

It is the focus of the SRO to implement a Diversion/PAYOFF approach to summonses. SROs recognize that tickets often default to parents for payment. As such, it is counterintuitive and therefore discouraged for most cases. SROs practice utilizing warnings and proactive education over the ticketing of youth. For example, efforts around the U of A/SRO vaping initiative and the partnership with the AMA distracted driving education campaign are evidence of the approach preferred by the SRO Unit. Many SROs do track when a ticket is issued, but it is not currently an expected consistent practice. Going forward, SROs will engage in standardized processes and tracking of tickets and criminal charges that are diverted through Diversion and PAYOFF.

- **What is the demographic breakdown for students disciplined or arrested in relation to SRO investigations? Include data around race, socioeconomic status, gender, FNMI identification, ELL, immigration status, disability, and mental health status.**

EPS advises that this information is not available as it is not collected or tracked by the EPS. The focus is on collaborative problem solving including diversion, education, and interventions and resources for students who are in need of support and/or who are engaging in high-risk activities.

All personal information collected by the Division is done in accordance with legislation including the *Education Act*, the *Student Record Regulation* and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* ("FOIP"). Under Section 33(c) of FOIP, "no personal information may be collected by or for a public body unless that information relates directly to and is necessary for an operating program or activity of the public body." For any personal information collected by the Division, a clear purpose must be articulated for the collection that is tied to the operating program of the Division. If such a purpose is identified, then parents must be informed of the purpose and use of the information.

Personal student information pertaining to race and socioeconomic status is not collected by the Division. The Division [Student Registration Form](#) allows parents to select male, female or "X" to indicate their child's gender. Information about self-identification as a First Nations, Metis, or Inuit person is

collected on the EPSB student registration form; however this information is optional and parents are informed of the purpose for which the information is being collected.

Personal student information regarding English Language Learner (ELL) identification, immigration status, and disability are used solely for the purpose of determining programming and supports for the student, including accessing funding where appropriate. Immigration status of a student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) is reviewed by school administration at the time of registration, and prior to the start of each school year, to ensure the student is eligible to access funded education in Alberta according to the Funding Manual for School Authorities. SROs do not have a role in this administrative work.

In accordance with the Student Record Regulation (3(1)(a) (iii)), any confidential counselling notes or information related to a student's mental health are not included in the student record. This information may be collected informally and anecdotally for the purpose of providing programming and supports for the student.

- **Are SROs armed on school property? If so, how often are firearms drawn in a year, and do we keep records of the use of other weapons such as batons, pepper spray, tasers or other forms of force or restraint?**

EPS advises that since an SRO is a fully trained, sworn police officer, SROs wear the same standard uniform and equipment that any other police officer would wear. As a core priority of the SRO is to ensure school safety, the full uniform provides the best ability and accessibility to facilitate safety in the school when emergent circumstances arise, and in the broader community. When an SRO is on duty, the expectation is that they are in uniform; however, within the school context there are times when SROs are participating in extracurricular activities, athletics, youth engagement events and various meetings where civilian attire is appropriate.

EPS policy requires the reporting and documentation of any use of force event. Since 2014, there have been no instances in which an SRO has drawn his or her firearm or used any weapon including those listed in the question. SROs have arrested and restrained youth as well as adults in the course of duty; however, there is no record from 2014 to today of an EPS Professional Standards Branch complaint in relation to SROs and use of force. Records prior to 2014 were not provided.

- **Have any research studies or evaluations been conducted on the SRO program in Edmonton Public Schools? If so, what were the findings?**

Feedback and communication between the SRO, the principal, the supervising SRO sergeant, and Division Support Services provides ongoing feedback about the SRO program, including successes and areas for refinement or improvement.

In addition to engaging with the independent research review being conducted by the Division in the 2020-21 school year, EPS advises that it is in the process of conducting its own 10 year review of the SRO program and will share the data with the Division.

EPS Deputy Chief David Veitch stated in the August 15, 2020, edition of the Mill Woods Mosaic that, "a number of evaluations have examined the SRO program over the years, including formal reviews in 1998, 2000 and 2003." ... "More recently, two separate research studies conducted by the University of Alberta found that SROs had overwhelming positive impacts on students identifying as LGBTQ2s+...". At

the time of writing this report, a summary of the data and findings of these reviews has not yet been made available to the Division.

EPS advises that the EPS SRO Unit has been recognized nationally and internationally. For example, EPS was the first police agency in Canada to be recognized as the 'Model Agency Award' by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) in 2014. Other notable external awards and recognition received as a direct result of the work of SROs include:

- 2018 – Alberta Health Services [President's Excellence Award](#)
- 2017 – The Order of St. John, Life Saving Award (SRO Constable Tammy Buchberger)
- 2015 – Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) Motorola Award, [Excellence in Emergency Preparedness](#) (for work on lockdowns)
- 2014 – NASRO, [Life Saving Award of Valour](#) (SRO Constable Stacy Miskolczi)
- 2014 – Oil Capital Kiwanis Club of Edmonton, [2014 Top Cop Award](#) (SRO Constable Rob Brown)
- 2014 - Dempsey Service Award (SRO Constable Rob Brown)
- 2013 – NASRO, SRO Practitioner Awards (Staff Sergeants Kelly Rosnau and Raymond Wood). The EPS was the first police agency in Canada to be awarded this designation.

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