

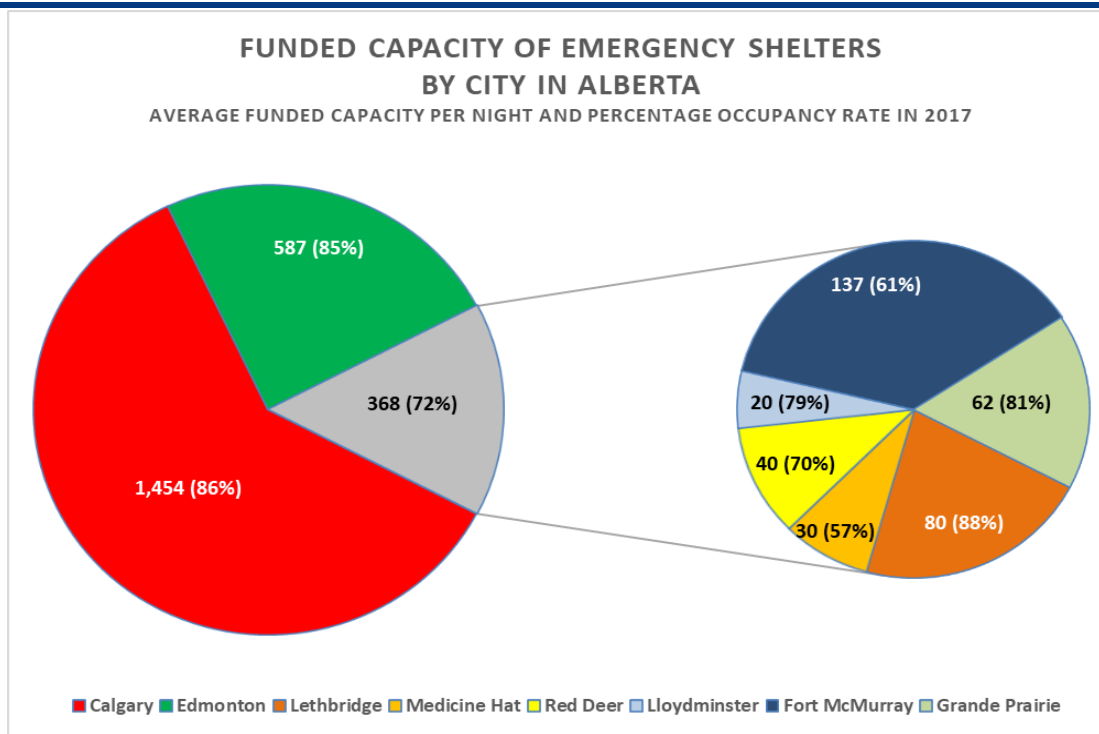
EMERGENCY SHELTER CAPACITY BY CITY IN ALBERTA, 2017

In 2017, an average of 1,454 funded emergency shelter beds were made available in Calgary each night, but only 587 in Edmonton.

On a typical night in Alberta in 2017, funding was provided for an average total of 2,409 emergency shelter beds for people in need. The first value in each of the pie charts on the right shows how many of those funded shelter beds were provided on average per night in communities across the province. The second value in brackets is the average shelter occupancy rate.

In 2017, nearly two-thirds of all funded emergency shelter beds in Alberta were made available in Calgary, while only about one-quarter were supplied in Edmonton. The fact that the province's two largest cities had the greatest share of all the emergency shelter beds is perhaps not surprising. This is because homelessness is typically considered to be a big city problem. What might be surprising is that two cities so comparable in size, with the same provincial social assistance policies, as well as similar economic shocks, should provide such dis-similar numbers of funded emergency shelter beds.

In 2017, an average of 2,010 emergency shelter beds in total, were occupied each night in Alberta, filling 83% of the funded shelter capacity.



Source: Government of Alberta, <https://open.alberta.ca/opendata/funded-emergency-shelters-daily-occupancy-ab> and author's calculations.

The number of emergency shelter beds funded in a city is a measure of that jurisdiction's response to homelessness as well as an indication of the size of the homelessness problem. It is difficult to separate the two as explanations for the number of shelter beds provided. For example, in Vancouver only [477](#) emergency shelter beds were made available in 2016, but this is not to suggest that the city does not have a larger number of people experiencing homelessness.

The number of people using emergency shelter beds varies by time of the year. Research at the School of Public Policy has shown that the number is sensitive to the state of the [labour](#) and [rental markets](#) and to the [weather](#) conditions. For example, in 2017, emergency shelters in Calgary were filled to 99% of funded capacity on January 9th, one of the coldest days of the year. On July 29th just over 70% of available beds were used.