



# THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

**The cost to end homelessness has been estimated at \$3.8 billion a year. Better integration of services to address homelessness can increase effectiveness while saving billions of dollars. New School of Public Policy report.**

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Calgary – In Canada, close to **40 billion dollars** is spent each year on a fragmented collection of **167,000** services that are provided by both government and non-profit organizations across the country. Those billions fund services that deal with homelessness and related issues including poverty, mental illness, addiction, domestic violence, poor health and childhood trauma. Ontario alone has roughly **60,000** social and community services in operation, while Alberta has **20,000**.

Despite this vast array of support, people who need help often don't know how and where to access these services or how to navigate the 'system' to get what they need. Clearly, a better, more coordinated and cost-effective way to realize results through this confusing maze of services is required, and it's even possible that better integration between those services will benefit those in need, while saving billions.

Today, The School of Public Policy, with authors Dr. Alina Turner and Diana Krecsy (President and CEO of the Calgary Homeless Foundation), released a report that discusses systems integration efforts related to homelessness. Providing perspective on how to better coordinate the tens of thousands of services provided by government and non-profits in addressing homelessness, this report examines key considerations for when and how integration is a useful approach to addressing complex social issues such as homelessness.

According to Krecsy, "Recognizing this challenge, efforts have emerged to consider how best to integrate these services for cost-effectiveness and to ease client access. However, there is evidence that some of these integration projects can in fact add even more layers of bureaucracy. When considering how best to integrate and consolidate services, the focus must remain on the clients rather than the systems or organizations involved." Dr. Turner adds, "Integration should not be considered a cure-all for what ails the system; rather, integration efforts should take a transformative and deliberate approach to collaboration and change, and this paper examines methods and proposes principles by which services can be integrated, yet still deliver efficient and effective assistance to vulnerable Canadians."

Where beneficial, our considerable assortment of resources needs to be arranged and integrated to create maximum impact and value for Canadians. Consolidation may be the answer in some cases, but so too may be the shutting down of some services whose roles are blurry or poorly defined. In the end, integration will not be about cutting back funding, but rather, using existing funding more wisely, strategically, and transparently.

Integration is so much more than piecemeal strategies aimed at repairing a broken system; it is a full-scale transformation of that system. The work needs to begin.

The paper can be downloaded at <https://www.policyschool.ca/publications/>

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