

FFwd Weekly

Calgary families barely 'surviving,' says report

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A growing number of families in Alberta aren't making enough to pay for their basic needs, according to a recent report put out by the Poverty Reduction Coalition (PRC).

The report shows that single-mother families and single people with disabilities are among the most vulnerable. The PRC looked at eight types of low-income Alberta families and found that four have monthly financial shortfalls. "These numbers re-confirmed, for us, the plight that too many families find themselves in," says Jim Dinning, the PRC's co-chair. "A lot of our fellow citizens live exactly the way these families live."

For example, a person receiving Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) benefits gets \$1,050 a month from the province. Using extremely conservative estimates (\$723 for rent, \$181 a month for food), the PRC found that a single person on AISH would have almost a \$200 shortfall every month — and that's not factoring in medical expenses. A single mother working full-time for minimum wage has a \$158-a-month shortfall, according to the report. That's factoring in only \$37 a month for transportation and \$200 a month for child care. "We'd like to see more Calgarians — Albertans — banging their fist on the table and saying, 'damn it, we can do better,'" says Dinning.

A City of Calgary report says that if all levels of government don't properly support families, approximately 19,000 households in Calgary will be at risk of homelessness next year.