

The Calgary Sun

Poverty report busts myths; Calgarians struggling in midst of plenty

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For the first time in as long as she can remember, a local single mom who has lived in poverty for most of her life doesn't have to feed her six-year-old son this month through a food bank.

But self-employed house cleaner Kathleen MacDonald knows she isn't out of the woods just yet.

"It's still a struggle," said MacDonald, who lives in Calgary Housing and works full-time to keep her son, Jaden, fed and clothed.

"People judge you. They can't understand why you're working so hard, but still can't afford to pay for things."

Of those who access city food banks, 40% are employed, and McDonald is one of those faces.

To battle that statistic, the Poverty Reduction Coalition in Calgary released a report called *Surviving Not Thriving: The untold story of struggling Calgarians*, released yesterday at the United Way.

The report outlines the issues surrounding poverty in Calgary and shows the city's booming economy is only hiding the problem.

"We need changes around housing, child care and taxation," said Susan Gillies, executive director of the Women's Centre.

Gillies said women are the hardest hit by poverty, as they continue to make lower wages than men in already lower-paying jobs while still managing family duties.

"Right now the future of these women is very bleak," she said.

Shirley Purves, executive director of the Aspen Family & Community Network Society, said the middle-class is shrinking.

"The poverty we see now is hopeless poverty; these families see no hope."

The report busts myths such as the strong economy means Albertans are wealthy and if it stays strong, poverty will be eliminated.

The report suggests the federal government implement a national affordable housing plan and asks people living in poverty in Calgary to come forward and share further ideas.

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