



Media Release
For Immediate Release, October 17, 2007

Surviving Not Thriving: The untold story of struggling Calgarians
Poverty Reduction Coalition releases new report

Calgary, AB ... Alberta is at the heart of Canada's economic growth and produces prosperity not just for our province, but for the entire country. Even amidst the wealth and prosperity in Calgary there is great poverty. This reality is highlighted in a new report, which examines poverty in our city, called **Surviving Not Thriving: The untold story of struggling Calgarians**.

The unprecedented growth in Calgary has contributed to an ever-increasing cost of living. Full-time employees are having difficulty meeting basic needs and 50 per cent of the people in our shelters are employed full time, part time or occasionally.

The report, released by the Poverty Reduction Coalition, presents eight typical low-income families, each surviving on different income sources. Despite the cautious calculations, half of the families in the report fall further and further into debt each month. According to Statistics Canada, for half the population in Calgary, average household expenses exceeded average household incomes in 2004.

“Surviving Not Thriving: The untold story of struggling Calgarians is focused on lower-income Calgarians, but we must recognize that any family could find themselves in this position,” says Nancy Laird, co-chair of the Poverty Reduction Coalition. “Many are trying to make ends meet with low-paying work or multiple part-time jobs.”

In 2004, there were 127,000 Calgarians living in poverty. By 2008, it is estimated that 19,000 households in Calgary will be at risk for homelessness if solutions are not found to properly support families like the ones outlined in our report.

The report forms the basis for the work being done by the Poverty Reduction Coalition, a community collaborative initiated and supported by United Way of Calgary and Area, dedicated to reducing the incidence of poverty in Calgary, one of the city's most complex and far-reaching issues.

Jim Dinning, co-chair of the Poverty Reduction Coalition says, “Poverty comes at a very high cost for the people who endure it and the communities in which they live. When people live in perpetual poverty, the whole community pays. The Poverty Reduction Coalition believes that poverty can be reduced in Calgary, and that the resources we need to do so, both human and capital, are available.”

The Poverty Reduction Coalition believes there is a role for everyone in identifying and implementing solutions to poverty in Calgary. It hopes this report will inspire others to work with businesses, agencies and individuals to develop action plans to address poverty. “If the community works together, we can instigate the changes needed in Calgary to ensure all Calgarians have the resources they require to live with dignity in our great city,” says Laird.

For more information on the report, **Surviving Not Thriving: The untold story of struggling Calgarians**, or the work of the Poverty Reduction Coalition visit www.reducepoverty.ca.

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