Vibrant COMMUNITIES Calgary

VCC in motion!

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2 SPRING 2007

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES CALGARY

IN THE NEWS:

- **On March 20th, the Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force delivered its recommendations to address homelessness and affordable housing to Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Ray Danyluk**
- **On April 1st, Calgary's temporary "Brick" shelter closed after 3.5 months of operations, impacting up to 200 homeless Calgarians**

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS:

United Way of Calgary and Area

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
La fondation de la famille J.W. McConnell

The Calgary Foundation

Vibrant Workplaces!

Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) is pleased to announce the launch of our Vibrant Workplaces initiative.

The initiative begins with a call for submissions to the inaugural edition of our Vibrant Workplaces *HR Options for Action Guide*.

This brochure will champion local businesses engaged in innovative HR practices that businesses can use to attract and retain employees.

Selected businesses will be profiled free of charge to over 5,000 Calgarians, and will have the opportunity to network and learn from the best practices of other progressive Calgary businesses.

The vision for the new Vibrant Workplaces initiative is predicated on the knowledge that healthy, happy workers make for healthy, thriving businesses. It envisions a vibrant business community that is able to retain qualified staff and enjoy greater employee loyalty and productivity. This vision includes a vibrant workforce in which employees earn a good living and can exit the cycle of poverty.

The *HR Options for Action Guide* will feature approximately 15 Calgary private sector employers engaged in progressive actions benefiting their employees, the community and their businesses.

VCCõs *HR Options for Action Guide* is modeled on a successful Vibrant Communities initiative called the Quality of Life CHALLENGE in BCõs Capital Region. For more information visit:

www.qolchallenge.ca

Affordable Transportation Across Alberta

As VCCõs Fair Fares Action Team works to secure sustainable funding for Calgaryõs Universal Low Income Transit Pass program, we are pleased to see the growing support for affordable transportation initiatives in other parts of Alberta.

On March 13th, it was announced that a combined federalï provincial investment of $666,666 in the Municipal District of Big Lakes will provide a low-fare transit option for residents.

The funding comes from the Canada-Alberta Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (CAMRIF)ð a joint initiative between the Governments of Canada and Alberta that enables communities to address local infrastructure needs.

That same day, the Mayor and Council for The Town of Banff voted unanimously to provide a free Banff transit pass to: adults 18-64 years of age and their children living under Statistics Canadaõs Low Income Cut Off lines for communities under 30,000, as well as all recipients of the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), and seniors age 65 years and older who are eligible to receive the Alberta Seniors cash benefit.

Vibrant Communities Calgary applauds these progressive new programs that will enable low income residents to more fully participate in the social and economic life of their communities.

It is hoped that the Government of Alberta will partner with rural and urban municipalities to help ensure all low income Albertans have access to affordable transportation.

Federal Budget Snapshot

The 2007 Federal Budget saw no funding allocated for affordable housing, and single people received little new funding. However, the Budget takes modest steps towards helping to ease the economic burden of raising a child.

A new $2,000 child tax credit will provide up to $310 in tax relief for each child under the age of 18.

Also introduced was a tax credit to encourage businesses to create up to 25,000 licensed child care spacesð helping to remove a significant employment barrier. However, the Budget does not offer a universal, accessible and affordable national child care program.

The Budget included $50 million over two years beginning in 2007 to improve the Temporary Foreign Worker Program by expanding the online application system, maintaining lists of occupations where there are known shortages of workers, and processing work permits more rapidly.

Vibrant Communities Calgary welcomes the introduction of the new Working Income Tax Benefit, which provides an employment incentive. Individuals age 19 and over earning an income between $5,500 and $9,500 will receive up to $500 per year, families earning between $8,000 and $14,000 will receive up to $1,000.

An increase in the basic personal amount for lower income spouses will provide families with a credit of $209.

However, as introduced in the 2006 Budget, the lowest income tax rate is being increased from 15.25% in 2006 to 15.5% in 2007, negatively impacting the poor, and negating some of the more positive aspects of the Budget.

Ipsos Reid Survey: Saying Hello

Thinking about your community and the people who live within it, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statement:

"People in my community will often say "hello" when walking past someone on the street."

	Total	Calgary CMA	Ottawa CMA	Montreal CMA	Vancouver CMA	Toronto CMA	Edmonton CMA
Strongly agree	31%	30%	30%	14%	24%	24%	32%
Somewhat agree	45%	49%	40%	45%	49%	46%	46%
Somewhat disagree	18%	16%	21%	30%	21%	21%	16%
Strongly disagree	6%	5%	10%	11%	6%	9%	6%
Total agree	76%	79%	69%	59%	73%	70%	79%
Total disagree	24%	21%	31%	41%	27%	30%	22%

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted for the National Post and Global News fielded from February 24 to March 2, 2007. For the survey, a representative sample of 8,431 residents of the six largest CMAs in Canada were interviewed via an on-line survey vehicle. The sample used in this study has been weighted according to 2001 Census data to accurately reflect the general populations of these CMAs. With a sample of this size, the aggregate results are considered accurate to within ±1.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population of Toronto been polled. The Calgary sample size was 292, resulting in a ±5.7 percentage point margin of error.

Did You Know?

- Calgaryôs population grew by 12.4% between 2001 and 2006. (Statistics Canada, 2006)
- In 2004, the average family income among the top 20% of Calgary income earners was $125,000, compared to just $22,300 among the 20% with the lowest incomes. This $102,700 gap is up by $20,200 from 1996. (Statistics Canada, 2006)
- 54% of Calgarians agree that housing prices are so high that many people canôt afford to live here. (Ipsos Reid, 2006)
- Alberta ranked highest in Canada (28%) for the percentage of people who agreed with the following statement: ñI have had to use a food bank.ò (DOSE, 2006)
- In the last six months of 2006, over 94,000 employed Calgarians, approximately 17%, made less than a Living Wage of $12 an hour. (Statistics Canada, 2007)
- Alberta has only 10% of Canada's working age population but created 27% of all new jobs in the country in 2006. (Annual Labour Market Review, 2007)
- An estimated 58,555 Calgary households are in need of affordable housing because they earn less than $38,000 and spend more than 30% of their income on housing. (The Calgary and Region Socio-Economic Outlook 2005-2010)
- The number of millionaires in G7 countries is expected to double by 2016. Canada tops the list and is expected to increase the number of millionaires six-fold in the coming decade. (Barclays Wealth Study, 2006)

In March, The Calgary Chamber of Commerce released its 2007 Member Priorities, based on the results of a member survey conducted in December 2006. The number one business issue, rated as critical or somewhat important by 78% of Chamber members, was Labour Shortages (lack of workers, education, immigration, temporary foreign workers and employee retention).

The Rich and The Rest of Us

On March 1st the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released a study showing that Canadian families are putting in more work time, yet mostð 80% of themð are getting a smaller share of Canadaôs growing economy compared to families in the late 1970s.

The report titled ñThe Rich and The Rest of Usò finds Canadaôs income gap between the rich and the poor is growing, largely because the vast majority of Canadaôs economic growth is going to the richest 10% of familiesð those with incomes greater than $131,200 in 2004.

The bottom half of families raising childrenð those earning less than $60,000 in 2004, earned less or stayed the same, in inflation-adjusted terms, compared to a generation ago. Those in between worked more hours just to keep pace.

The average Canadian family with children clocked almost 200 more hours of work in 2004 compared to nine years earlier. Only the richest 10% of families didn't work more hours between 1996 and 2004. And yet they were the only ones to see major increases in earnings.

In 2004, the richest 10% of families earned 82 times more than the poorest 10%ð almost triple the ratio of 1976, when they earned 31 times more. In after-tax terms the gap has reached a 30-year high.

It should be noted that the study only accounts for earned income and doesnôt consider returns from investments and other assets, which could further increase the wealth gap.

Economist Hugh Mackenzie, a research associate with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, blames the growing income gap on several factors:

- Minimum wages that haven't kept pace with inflation.
- The loss of well-paying manufacturing jobs and rise of lower-paying service sector work.
- The decline in unionized workplaces.
- The increase in contract and temporary employment.

According to study author Armine Yalnizyan, ñCanadaôs gap is growing at a time when Canadian families are playing by all the rulesð working harder, contributing to a growing economyð but most arenôt getting payback.ò

To see the full report, visit www.growinggap.ca or www.policyalternatives.ca

Vibrant COMMUNITIES Calgary

1227 Kensington Close NW
Calgary, Alberta T2N 3J6
E-mail: info@vibrantcalgary.com
Fax: (403) 283-2105
www.vibrantcalgary.com

Director
Phone: (403) 283-2122

Project Coordinator
Phone: (403) 283-2197

Research & Policy Analyst
Phone: (403) 283-2180

Vibrant Communities is a Pan-Canadian Learning Community convened and supported by The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, Tamarack - An Institute for Community Engagement, and the Caledon Institute of Social Policy. Nationally, Vibrant Communities provides a process and a working environment where diverse community leaders from fifteen communities across Canada work together to share ideas, practices and policies that strengthen their community-based poverty reduction initiatives. For more information, please visit: www.vibrantcommunities.ca

VCC is online!

Vibrant Communities Calgary has launched our website, providing a valuable resource for poverty reduction strategies and information.

Please visit us at www.vibrantcalgary.com

Vibrant Communities Calgary Partners

Cathy Abel, *RBC Financial*
Amy Alexander, *City of Calgary*
Jamal Ali, *Community Representative*
Victoria Bailey, *Community Representative*
Julie Ball, *Calgary Talent Pool*
Kristi Baron, *Community Representative*
Michelle Bogdon, *Shell Canada*
Terry Bullick, *Bullick Writing & Communications*
Karen Cameron, *Calgary Transit*
Greg Campbell, *Calgary Catholic Family Service*
Rob Campbell, *Community Representative*
Debra Carnat, *Calgary Health Region*
Lisa Caton, *Momentum*
Gordon Christie, *Calgary and District Labour Council*
Lynn Cox, *Community Representative*
Murray Crosby, *Community Representative*
John Currie, *Community Representative*
Dani DeBoice, *First Calgary Savings*
Tasha Dobrovolsky, *City of Calgary*
Joan Farkas, *City of Calgary*
Debbie Farrell, *Daylight Cleaning Systems*
Christy Fisher, *Progressive Alternatives Society*
Aviv Fried, *Community Representative*
Susan Gillies, *Women's Centre of Calgary*
Sue Gudmundson, *Calgary Health Region*
Brian Hoffart, *United Way of Calgary and Area*
Walter Hossli, *Momentum*
Samantha Hubka, *Killfish Media*
Colleen Huston, *Disability Action Hall*
Bonny Johannson, *Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre*
Janet Keeping, *Sheldon Chumir Ethics Foundation in Leadership*
Candice Koch, *Aspen Family and Community Network Society*
Michelle Kristinson, *Multiple Sclerosis Society*
Jake Kuiken, *City of Calgary*
Rosita Kwan, *Creative Bloom*
Mezaun Lakha-Evin, *Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta*
Lynda Laughlin, *Community Representative*
Carol Lawson, *Public Interest Alberta*
Loraine Lundquist, *Calgary Housing Company*
Bonnie Mallach, *Homeless Awareness Calgary*
Becki McKee, *Single Parent Support Program*
Bob McInnis, *Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids*
Bill Moore-Kilgannon, *Public Interest Alberta*
Tim Moro, *Ipsos Reid*
Brian Murphy, *CottageCare Canada*
Carol Oliver, *United Way of Calgary and Area*
Bonnie Pacaud, *Community Representative*
John Pentland, *Hillhurst United Church*
Gayle Peters, *Governors for Children*
Tammy Poirier, *Community Representative*
Fred Robertson, *Community Representative*
John Rook, *Salvation Army*
Jenny Saarinen, *Momentum*
Gurbir Sandhu, *Calgary Workers' Resource Centre*
Yvonne Schmitz, *Community Representative*
Bev Sheckter, *Jewish Family Service*
Maureen Sheppard, *Innovention Inc.*
Mona Smart, *Knox United Church*
Barbara Stein, *Uptown 17 BRZ*
John te Linde, *City of Calgary*
Lori Villebrun, *United Way of Calgary and Area*
Lori Willocks, *Calgary Immigrant Aid Society*
David Wilson, *Momentum*
Terry Wilson, *City of Calgary*
Leo Wong, *Momentum*
Joy Zerke, *City of Calgary*