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# foundations for change

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2014 Report to the Community

First Annual Report of the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative

June, 2014

**enough**  
(for▲all)

## **My Neighbour's Strength is My Strength.**

The Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative (CPRI) is a long-term, community-based project that aims to reduce poverty in the city. Launched in January 2012 by The City of Calgary and the United Way of Calgary and Area, its mandate is to build a:

“...community where no human being is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power to acquire and maintain self sufficiency while being able to be an active participant in society.”

The initiative has achieved significant results in its first two years of operation.



### On Getting It Right

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“If I had one hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first fifty-five minutes determining the proper question to ask.”

- Albert Einstein

This first annual report to the community offers an overview of the CPRI's accomplishments to date, as well as a guide to its ongoing plans and future developments.

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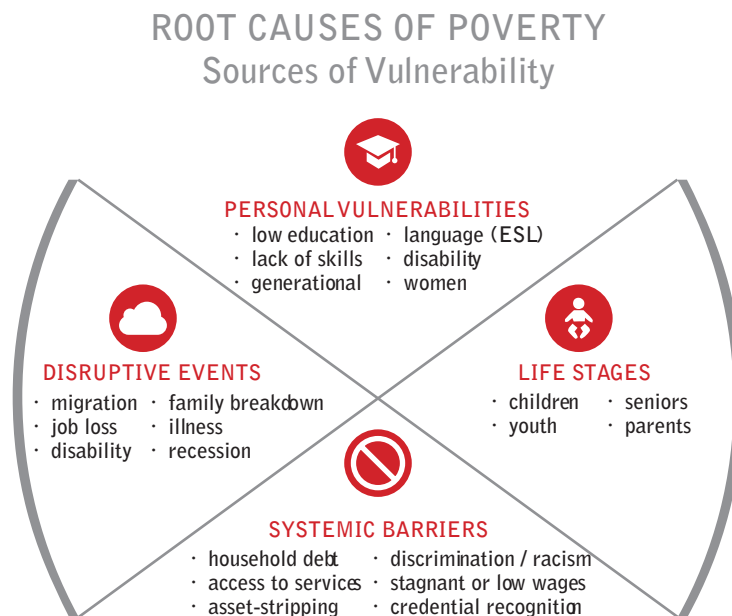
## ▶ OVERVIEW

### May 2013: Unanimous Support of the CPRI Strategy

One year ago, the CPRI's strategy report **Enough for All** received unanimous approval from both Calgary City Council and United Way of Calgary and Area's Board of Directors. Drawing on 18 months of research and analysis, as well as over 15,000 hours of community consultation, our report provided the city with a blueprint for effective poverty reduction. Its ultimate goal is to halve Calgary's poverty rate within the next ten years.

To facilitate the success of this ambitious target, the report outlines four fundamental goals:

- ▶ All Calgary communities are strong, supportive and inclusive
- ▶ Everyone in Calgary has the income and assets needed to thrive
- ▶ Everyone in Calgary can easily access the right supports, services and resources
- ▶ All Aboriginal people are equal participants in Calgary's prosperous future



## June 2013: The 2013 Alberta Flood hits Calgary's Streets

The flood revealed two important truths about poverty in Calgary. First, it showed that Calgarians have a tremendous capacity to support and care for one another. Second, it uncovered the depth of financial and social vulnerability for those Calgarians who had previously flown under the radar. While many flood-afflicted residents found help with friends and family, those isolated because of their age, income and/or physical and mental health needs came to The City's evacuation centres because they had no one else to turn to. In addition, those already homeless prior to the disaster now found themselves in an even more precarious position.

The flood demonstrated the need in this city for a poverty reduction strategy like nothing else could. Similar to many disruptive events—including personal ones such as job loss, family breakdown, illness (including mental illness and addiction) and recession—the flood did not discriminate based on income or socio-economic status. The flood showed us that we are all vulnerable to crisis and change, no matter how well we plan ahead. Furthermore, we learned that it is through community-building that we have our best chance at improving our personal and collective resilience. Recovering from the flood is going to mean a heightened investment in the quality of our city, and in the quality of our relationships with each other.

## September 2013 to the Present: CPRI Partners Roll Up Their Sleeves

In the **Enough for All** report, we recommended an ambitious set of strategies. Following its adoption, the role of the CPRI has been to build partnerships and facilitate coordinated action among them. These partners have been brought together in a network of Implementation Teams which worked with The City's Project Management Office to create project charters for each of the recommended strategies. As projects develop, these Implementation Teams will provide partners with an ongoing forum to share progress, learnings and identify new opportunities for collaboration.

## ► LAYING THE FOUNDATION

### Establishing a Sustainable Framework for Future Work

#### Governance

A primary role of the CPRI is that of "convener", which means that much of its work involves building partnerships and coordinating the activities of a diverse set of stakeholders around a common vision and goals. As a result, we have worked hard to foster consensus, identify shared principles and measures, and develop mutually-reinforcing activities with which to forward these goals.

Following the approval of the **Enough for All** report, the next step has been to find CPRI a home, to transition it from a project into something more sustainable. With assistance from the management consulting firm Conroy Ross, a recommendation was brought to City Council in April 2014 to study the feasibility of assigning the CPRI implementation to Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC / Momentum)—a local non-profit organization dedicated to poverty reduction. At the time of this writing, the outcome is still pending.



#### On Getting the Work Done

Backbone organizations  
must balance the tension  
between leadership and staying  
behind the scenes to preserve  
collective ownership

- FSG Social Impact Consultants

## Partnerships

Besides The City of Calgary and United Way, we have established key partnerships with several other local, provincial and national partners. On the local level, a strong alliance has developed between the CPRI, VCC and Action to End Poverty in Alberta (AEPA). Since these organizations share similar values and objectives, it is important that we remain aligned and mutually supportive. Indeed, through our partnership with AEPA, we have strengthened our connections to poverty reduction initiatives across Alberta, making us an active participant in a growing provincial network. Nationally, we remain an active member in the Cities Reducing Poverty network—a cross-Canada project facilitated by the Tamarack Institute.

As the provincial poverty reduction strategy develops, we have also continued to forge strong relationships with The Government of Alberta. In October 2013, the CPRI hosted a community forum, in which the Province sought input regarding its poverty reduction strategy. This forum, which was attended by over 100 stakeholders from our network, generated several important proposals and recommendations. And one month later, we were invited by the Solicitor General to attend a provincial forum on Civil and Family Justice, which has resulted in a continuing partnership.

## Research

We continue to support poverty research in Calgary. Examples of this include:

- ▶ **Poverty Profiles**  
A collaboration between the United Way, VCC and The City of Calgary to develop a profile of poverty in the city, employing 2011 census data and information acquired through the National Household Survey.
- ▶ **Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership**  
A nation-wide research initiative examining patterns of poverty neighbourhoods of major cities across Canada.
- ▶ **Financial Vulnerability Index**  
In partnership with Prosper Canada, The City of Toronto and the RM (rural municipality) of Wood Buffalo, we are developing an index to measure financial vulnerability that takes into account income, credit and debt.

## RAISING THE WALLS AND ROOF Fostering Strong, Supportive and Inclusive Communities

### Community Hubs

A fundamental objective of **Enough for All** is the development of strong, supportive and inclusive Calgary communities. To this end, the Neighbourhood Hub Pilot Project—a partnership between The City of Calgary and United Way—is working in four pilot communities to explore hub development in the neighbourhood context. Augmenting this strategic work, the CPRI has continued to explore other opportunities as they arise, which will further inform the project. To this end, we are working with The Alberta Ministry of Human Services in planning five multi-service sites to be launched across the city over the next two years. Meanwhile, a partnership with United Way is evaluating existing Community Resource and Family Resource Centers, with the aim of increasing their functionality as community hubs. And the future holds even more developments. This fall, for instance, we will join forces with faith communities to assist them in determining their capacity to act as community hubs.

## Peer Support

In order to develop an effective poverty reduction program in Calgary, as well as to foster strong relations with its partner organizations, we have evaluated various avenues for peer support. One of these has involved Catholic Family Service (CFS)—an organization with substantial experience in the development and implementation of peer support services. Together, recommendations are being developed. The CPRI has also established a strong partnership with the Metro Alliance for the Common Good (MAC-G). This alliance, which unites local faith communities and labour organizations, seeks to provide its congregations and union locals with peer support opportunities. Funding options for the development and delivery of such initiatives are currently being explored.

## Public Awareness

Keeping the conversation about poverty in the civic spotlight has continued to be a high priority. Accordingly, CPRI staff and Stewardship Group members have presented key information in a variety of settings, including:

- ▶ Classes at the University of Calgary
- ▶ Presentations at the Asset Building Learning Exchange (ABLE) 2013 Conference
- ▶ Talks at various Rotary clubs across the city
- ▶ Lectures at the Soul of the City speaker series
- ▶ A Presentation for the Canadian Federation of University Women
- ▶ Public information sessions regarding the nature and function of cooperatives
- ▶ A Presentation at the Poverty Talks annual forum
- ▶ Presentations at the Calgary Regional Immigrant Employment Council leadership forum
- ▶ Participation at International Women’s Day celebrations
- ▶ Participation at strategic sessions for ImagineCalgary and Calgary Economic Development

Over the last year, we have enjoyed positive media coverage. Upon its release, the **Enough for All** report received excellent reviews in both local and national news outlets.

## ▶ A COLLECTIVE PRIDE OF HOME

### Ensuring Adequate Access to Income and Assets

#### Centre of Excellence for the Social Economy (working title)

A major step in the direction of poverty reduction is the development of a thriving social economy. Accordingly, we are working hard to establish a Centre of Excellence for the Social Economy (CESE), which will provide technical support, resources, research and training for up-and-coming social entrepreneurs. In order to realize this goal, we have joined forces with the Calgary Centre for Global Community and the Trico Foundation to determine the direction and feasibility of such a project. At present, the CPRI is searching for an ideal partner to provide an organizational home for the centre.



### On Multi-Sectoral Engagement

“I cannot get to a place  
of unknowing by myself,  
or with those who think like I do.  
But it is to that place of unknowing  
that I need to go, if I am  
ever going to know.”

- Paul Born

## Co-op Development Strategy

Our vision is that Calgary will boast a thriving co-operative sector by 2023. To realize this vision, the CPRI—aided by a co-op development consultant—is creating a co-operative development strategy for the city. This has led to the formation of several important collaboration and capacity-building networks, such as:

- ▶ **Monthly “Co-opreneur” networking meetings** for those interested in developing co-operative enterprises.
- ▶ **A Co-op Stakeholder Network**, which connects established co-ops in Calgary and identifies new opportunities for collaboration and growth with the co-op sector.
- ▶ **A Co-op Development Steering Committee**, which connects stakeholders interested in co-op development, as well as guides the development and implementation of our co-op development strategy.

As part of this strategy, meetings have taken place with the leadership and boards of several prominent Calgary co-ops, including First Calgary Financial, Servus Credit Union, Calgary Co-op and Desjardins Financial. This has generated strong local support for the co-op development strategy, with several significant co-op initiatives having sprung up in the wake of these initial efforts.

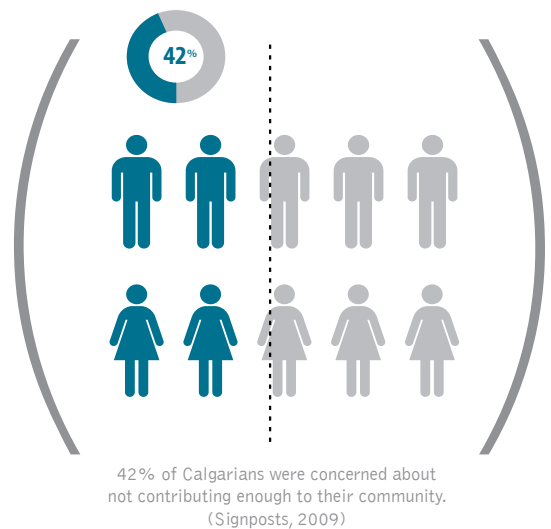
## Community Economic Development

From January to June 2014, Thrive hosted Simon Fraser University’s Community Economic Development (CED) certificate program in Calgary. 22 practitioners (17 of them local) completed the program, allowing them to further CED work in the city. The certificate finished with a social enterprise challenge for both the Calgary and Vancouver cohorts: 3 of the 4 winners were Calgarians resulting in over \$16,000 in prize money to help develop and launch local CED initiatives. As part of this program, City of Calgary Community Social Workers (CSWs) and Community Recreation Coordinators (CRCs) received training on these CED principles, which will inform their subsequent work in the community. The City of Calgary’s Community and Neighbourhood Services, alongside United Way, continue to support CED work in priority neighbourhoods.

## Community Investment Fund

With an eye to economic development, we have sought to provide Calgarians with the social finance tools needed to support community economic development CED activities and social enterprise. The Alberta Community Co-operative Association (ACCA) has led the development of “Opportunity Development Co-operatives” (ODCs) across Alberta. These co-operatives have already been successfully implemented in Nova Scotia and have proven to be a powerful tool in support of local economic development. The ACCA has also established several ODC initiatives throughout Alberta, with one or two additional projects being considered for development in Calgary. We have had the pleasure of also participating in several stakeholder meetings, in which future projects have been identified and discussed. These projects would align with the goals and values of the CPRI—such as accessible food and affordable housing.

## CONCERN ABOUT COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION, 2009





## Poverty Fund

The Prasino Group has been developing a fund that will provide expansion capital to companies—with two important conditions. First, recipients must employ workers who are in or at risk of poverty. Second, it is essential that these workers be provided with an adequate living wage. Since the project aligns with the goals and values of the CPRI, we have opted to help the Prasino Group recruit stakeholders and develop partnerships with various employment training organizations.

## Financial Empowerment Strategy

In November 2013, many of us within the CPRI network met with the Director of New York City's Office of Financial Empowerment and several representatives of Prosper Canada (formerly the Social Enterprise Development Institute [SEDI]) to discuss the implementation of a Financial Empowerment model in Calgary. Following this meeting, we established an internal working group to develop an implementation proposal based on the successful NYC model. Pursuing this is the Financial Futures Collaborative (FFC) through our **Enough for All** asset-building recommendations. Through three aligned project charters, which will guide its work over the next year, the FCC is exploring a strengthened governance structure, a matched-savings pool project and a "Money Coaches in the Community" project.

## "Rise of the Cash Store" Committee

The **Enough for All** report advocates the accessibility of appropriate financial products and services, which will lessen the need for non-traditional financial services like payday lenders and other fringe financial services. Under the leadership of Momentum, a community committee has been established in the greater Forest Lawn area, which will develop strategies for curbing the proliferation of payday lenders in the community.

## Living Wage Policy Development

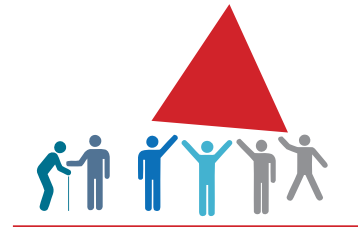
Employing the findings of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), a partnership between ourselves, Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) and the United Way of Calgary and Area has initiated a refresh of living wages for Calgarians. This will result in the establishment of a new living wage for 2014, one that will be consistent with the calculation of other Canadian cities. Once an acceptable living wage rate has been determined, work will begin to promote the development of living wage policies for major public and private institutions throughout Calgary.

## ▶ PATHWAYS TO NEEDED AMENITIES

### Guaranteeing Appropriate Access to Services

#### Common Intake

The **Enough for All** report calls for the improved accessibility of poverty reduction programs and services. Accordingly, we are developing a common intake system that will facilitate the exchange of information between various service providers, and ensure that people “only tell their story once.” Enlisting the pro bono support of Accenture Management Consultants, the initiative has already created a high-level functional design for the proposed system. The project is now being overseen by a working group, which has identified several technical solutions that may satisfy the system’s requirements. The next step will be to determine which of these solutions best meet the needs of both service users and providers.



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#### On Making a Difference

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“Collective Impact is a hard, slow and messy process - but it brings results and a new sense of hope to the participants.”

- FSG Social Impact Consultants

#### Social Worker in the Field Project

The Calgary Public Library is considering the development of a “Social Worker in the Field” project, as a means of aligning its activities with the CPRI. A collaboration between the Library and local service agencies, the project will propose to “embed” community social workers in the Library itself to enhance direct service to vulnerable populations. At present, a feasibility study is being conducted to assess the need for such a project, as well as its resource requirements.

#### Strength-Based Service Delivery Training

United Way of Calgary and Area has been working with three other agencies to shift practices towards a strength-based approach, which is based on a Developmental Approach to Practice and is believed to result in longer-lasting impacts. By creating a welcoming, non-judgemental agency environment, in which an individual can develop personal strengths and capacities, the approach encourages dignity and self-determination. At the same time, the approach acknowledges, identifies and takes action towards the structural and systemic inequities that exacerbate the effects of poverty.

Beginning in Fall 2013, United Way—aided by partner agencies—began to host workshops on the implementation of this model of service-delivery. Since then, 40 front-line service workers have received this training, which will be directly applicable to their everyday roles. United Way plans to offer more training sessions in the fall of 2014 for interested practitioners.

#### Justice Information Needs Assessment

The problems of poverty often carry a legal dimension, which means that it is crucial for all Calgarians to have access to justice. Unfortunately, service agencies are frequently unfamiliar with legal issues, rendering them unable to provide the necessary advice and recommendations. To address this issue, our Justice Sector Constellation—invigorated by their continued involvement with the CPRI—has established a needs assessment program, which will oversee the development of a training program for the city’s service providers. This program, in partnership with the Centre for Public Legal Education in Alberta (CPLA), will educate service providers in the legal issues surrounding poverty. Roll-out of a training program is planned for the beginning of 2015.

## Justice Sector Database Project

Alberta currently runs three parallel justice databases—each in varying states of completeness and currency—that inform on various justice services. With help from informAlberta, we are working to consolidate these databases into a single, consistently updated one, which will prove an invaluable resource to service providers and the public alike. The CPRI is also developing a taxonomy that will allow users to easily find the justice services they need.

## Housing Initiatives

Several waiting lists currently exist for low-income Calgarians vying for social housing through the city’s multiple agencies. One of the recommendations of the **Enough for All** report is the establishment of a Central Housing Registry. Working with The Calgary Housing Company, a scoping report will be developed over the course of 2014 to provide recommendations for its implementation. The CPRI is also a stakeholder in The Community Affordable Housing Strategy development process. Led by the Office of Land Servicing and Housing (OLSH), The Community Affordable Housing Strategy will be a community-based plan to address the need for affordable housing in Calgary.

## Community Broker Project

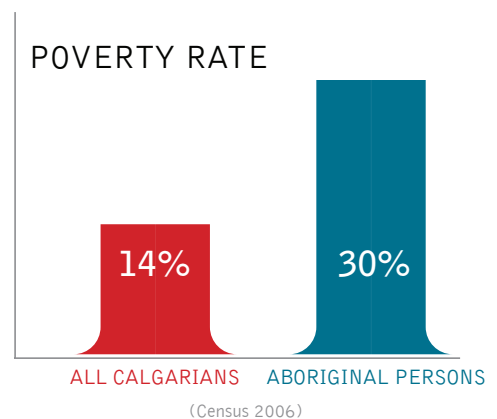
The **Enough for All** report envisions an enhanced community broker project, which has retained the interest of the Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary (ECCC). This project would train community volunteers to be sources of information and support to people in their community. In winter 2014, a funding proposal was prepared to support the development and implementation of the project. A funding decision is still pending.

## ▶ WITH A VIEW TO EARTH AND SKY Solidifying Prosperity for Calgary’s Aboriginal Persons

### Aboriginal Strategy Development

In January 2014, we began drafting our Aboriginal Poverty Reduction Strategy. The strategy will be to develop a holistic, culturally-appropriate model; one informed by the worldviews of Calgary’s various First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. It will mobilize support for the development of a specific location where Aboriginal people feel comfortable and accepted, and can begin the process of healing, reclaiming and revitalizing the knowledge and language of their ancestors. This strategic focus on inclusion—whereby Aboriginal Calgarians increase their participation in all social, cultural, economic, political and spiritual arenas within the city—will strengthen spirits to “change reality” and assist in becoming active participants in this vibrant city, using Aboriginal sustainable ways of well-being.

Other focus areas will involve the usual constellation of poverty-related issues, such as financial literacy, education, addictions, systemic barriers and housing, as well as a communication strategy to create awareness and understanding among mainstream Calgarians on the impacts of colonization and inter-generational trauma.



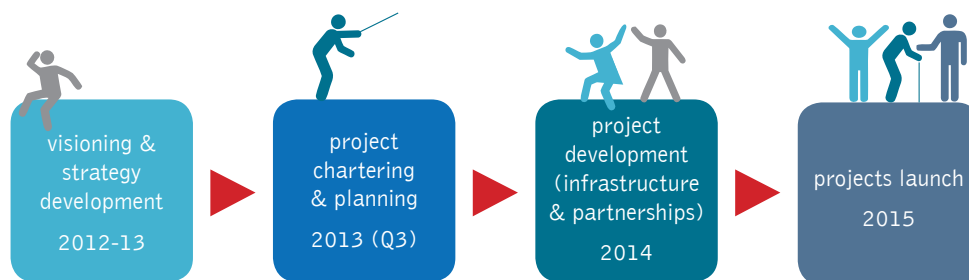
## ► BUILDING ON ENOUGH FOR ALL

### Moving Implementation Activities Forward

A sturdy building requires a blueprint, good planning and a stable foundation. But it also begins with a vision. The principles set out in this report have sustained us throughout our tenure. Beginning in 2012, we engaged with the community to develop a shared vision and blueprint– the **Enough for All** report. And with the unanimous endorsement of this blueprint, we then began work on the planning process. Finally, Fall 2013 saw the development of detailed charters, by which our recommendations were transformed into concrete projects.

In 2014, we have started the important task of laying the foundation for implementing these projects. This foundation requires the establishment of partnerships, the marshalling of resources, the completion of feasibility studies and the creation of structures to drive the plan forward. Together with our partners, the CPRI is articulating a common agenda, improving efficiencies and portioning off pieces of the work. All the while, we remain tethered to our main purpose: to create a community that cares and shares together.

This important planning work is expected to be completed by the end of the year, with projects to be launched throughout 2015. These projects will include new co-operatives and community economic development initiatives, community hubs, peer support programs, training initiatives, financial literacy programs and a common intake system. All together, these projects will become the sheltering walls of a new community, which we look forward to welcoming you into, through its ever-open doors.



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On dialogues that engage the strategic thinking of groups:

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“The goal really is to create a conversation that helps people to think together. At some stage, we would share opinions without hostility, and we would then be able to think together...whereas when we defend opinion, we cannot.”

~ David Bohm



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