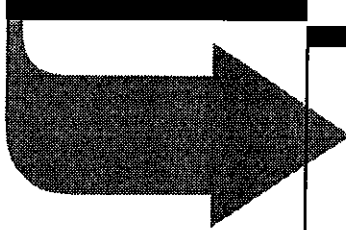


# Quickfacts

Edmonton Social Planning Council

## THE FACTS

APRIL 1999



### Feed the Children—More than 20,000 Edmonton children hungry, another 28,000 at risk

- In Edmonton, at least 9,965 children have unmet persistent hunger needs.
- 10,093 Edmonton children have intermittent hunger needs. They often or sometimes face hunger.
- Another 28,114 Edmonton children live on poor quality diets and risk malnutrition.
- In total, 32.1 per cent of Edmonton children (48,172 children) are hungry or at risk of malnutrition.
- In Calgary, 6,636 children have unmet persistent hunger needs.
- 9,536 Calgary children have intermittent hunger needs.
- Another 28,889 Calgary children live on poor quality diets.
- In total, 23.7 per cent of Calgary children (45,061 children) are hungry or at risk of malnutrition.

In Calgary, a committee known as Feeding Calgary's Children has released a report on child hunger and poverty in Calgary. The Edmonton Social Planning Council has developed a follow-up report on child hunger and poverty in Edmonton. Here are our findings.

*Feed the Children* talks about three types of poor nutrition—persistent hunger, intermittent hunger and poor quality diet. Children with unmet persistent hunger needs are always facing hunger. Children with intermittent hunger needs are often hungry. Children with poor quality diets live in families with incomes below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO). These children may not be hungry but may still be at risk of hunger or malnutrition.

In Edmonton, at least 9,965 children face persistent hunger. Another 10,093 Edmonton children have intermittent hunger needs

and are often or sometimes hungry. Another 28,114 may live on poor quality diets because their families are too poor to purchase the basics of food, shelter and clothing. In total, one in three Edmonton children (48,172 children) are hungry or at risk of malnutrition.

In Calgary, 6,636 children have unmet persistent hunger needs. Another 9,536 have intermittent hunger needs. In addition, 28,889 children live in low-income households and may be at risk of malnutrition. In total, 45,061 children are hungry or at risk of malnutrition.

#### Always Facing Hunger—Children with Unmet Persistent Hunger Needs

To measure the number of children with persistent hunger, the Calgary committee used the number of children living in Supports for Independence (SFI) welfare households. Nine thousand, nine

hundred and sixty five (9,965) Edmonton children and 6,636 Calgary children lived in households which received SFI.

Statistics Canada uses LICO to measure how many Canadians live in low-income families. Families that rely on SFI live well below LICO.

A single parent with two children receives an SFI allowance of \$11,724 a year or about \$977 a month. The SFI allowance for a family of three is just 44 per cent of LICO.

A family of two parents and two children receives an SFI allowance of \$12,120 a year or \$1,010 month. This allowance is 37.6 per cent of the LICO for a family of four in an urban environment.

#### Often or Sometimes Facing Hunger—Children with Intermittent Hunger Needs

To measure the number of children with intermittent

See page 2

## **Feed the Children** **Continued from page 1**

hunger, the Calgary committee used the number of children who use the food bank. It estimated low, calculating the lowest possible number of children using the food bank.

Due to the ever-increasing demand, food banks must restrict the number of times a family can receive food. On average, a family can use the food bank six times a year. The Calgary committee therefore took the number of children using the food bank and divided that number by six to arrive at the lowest possible estimate.

Since Edmonton's Food Bank and the Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank are not the only food programs in Edmonton and Calgary, the committee multiplied the lowest possible estimate by two. Finally, since one can assume that children living in SFI households would be regular food bank users, it subtracted the number of children receiving SFI.

In 1998, Edmonton's Food Bank served 60,174 children. The Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank served 48,709 children.

According to the formula, 10,093 Edmonton children and 9,536 Calgary children experience intermittent

hunger needs which go unmet.

### **At Risk—Children with Poor Quality Diet**

According to the Statistics Canada Federal Census data for 1996, 32.1 per cent of Edmonton children and 23.7 per cent of Calgary children live in households with incomes below LICO. In actuality this percentage represents 48,172 Edmonton children (0 to 17 years) and 45,061 Calgary children (0 to 17 years). Calgary's *Feed the Children* report states that, "it may be considered a safe assumption that children living in households whose incomes are below the low-income

cut-off point may have poor quality diets."

### **Hungry Children**

In total, one in three Edmonton children (48,172 children) are hungry or at risk of hunger or malnutrition.

In Calgary, 6,636 children have unmet persistent hunger needs. Another 9,536 have intermittent hunger needs. In addition, 28,889 Calgary children live in low-income households which may be too poor to purchase the basics.

In total, 45,061 Calgary children are hungry or at risk of hunger or malnutrition. □

## **WHY ARE CHILDREN HUNGRY?**

There are several reasons why a child may live in a family that cannot provide adequate nutrition for a growing child. The number one reason is income. After rent and utilities, there is often little money left for food.

Family types most likely to experience difficulty are:

### **Lone parent families**

The number of lone parent families in Edmonton and Calgary constantly grows. In 1971, there were 9,370 lone parent families in Calgary. In 1996, Statistics Canada reported

34,495 lone parent families in Edmonton and 29,005 lone parent families in the Calgary. In 1996, 15 per cent of Calgary children lived in lone parent families.

### **Families who rely on welfare for income**

A family on welfare receives less than half the income needed to purchase the basics of food, shelter and clothing. According to the National Council of Welfare, Alberta has the lowest welfare rates in Canada. Our welfare rates are so low, children are going hungry. Welfare benefits include a shelter allowance for rent, utilities

and insurance. In Edmonton, the average two-bedroom apartment rents for \$585, while the shelter rate for a parent with one child is just \$428. A lone parent on welfare would need another \$157 just to pay the rent and at least another \$50 to cover utilities.

### **Families where the parents rely on income from low paying jobs**

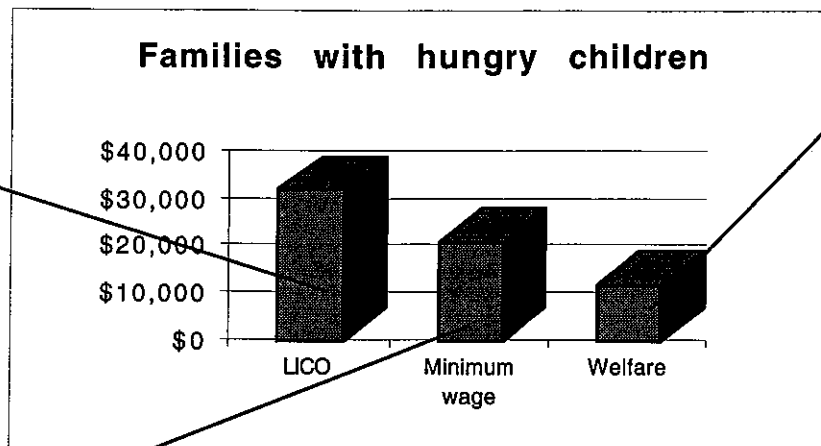
Working families are not immune to the issues of child hunger and malnutrition. A family of four with two parents working full time, full year at minimum wage jobs would receive an

income of \$1,808 per month before tax. After deductions, they would take home \$1,604.68.

According to Alberta Agriculture, the cost of food for a month for the average family would be \$508. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment would average \$585 a month. If the family has two children in day care, the maximum subsidy available would be \$380 per child. Since day care costs average around \$550, this family would pay \$340 for child care, for a total of \$1,433 per month. This leaves \$171.68 for insurance, transportation, clothing, utilities, telephone, household supplies and personal needs. □

# THE STATISTICS

Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) for a family of four is \$32,238. LICO is not a poverty line. However, families below LICO may have difficulty purchasing all their basic needs. Families below LICO include all families earning less than the cut-off. These families may be living on minimum wage or welfare and may earn just a fraction of LICO.



A single parent with two children receives an SFI allowance of \$11,724 a year or \$977 a month. This is 44 per cent of LICO. A family of two parents and two children receives an SFI allowance of \$12,120 a year or \$1,010 month. This allowance is 37.6 per cent of the LICO for a family of four in an urban environment.

Alberta's minimum wage is currently \$5.65 per hour. On October 1, 1999, it will rise to \$5.90 per hour. Currently, two parents working full time for minimum wage earn \$21,696 a year or \$1,808 per month before taxes. A lone parent working for minimum wage earns half that amount—\$904 per month.

- Persistent Hunger (= number of kids on SFI).** Alberta Family and Social Services numbers from March 1999 show 14,500 children living in SFI families in the Edmonton Region. The Edmonton Region includes several municipalities outside Edmonton. The 1998 Edmonton Region population was 896,746—including only those communities appearing on the official population list. The City of Edmonton population for the same period was 616,306, or 68.73% of Edmonton Region's population. As we are unable to obtain a count specifically for Edmonton, we have assumed the number of SFI children is distributed evenly, which they are probably not, so the figure of 9,965 is an underestimation.
- Intermittent Hunger (= number of kids using the Food Bank).** In 1998, the Edmonton Food Bank fed 60,174 children. To replicate the Calgary study, we divide the total number served by the number of times a family can use the Food Bank in a year. In these two studies, it is divided by six. The result is the lowest estimate of children served. We then multiply the estimate by two, since Edmonton's Food Bank and the Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank are not the only food banks. This gives 20,058. To avoid double counting, we subtract the number of children living in SFI households. The total number of children with intermittent hunger is 10,093.
- Poor Quality Diet (= number of kids living in poor families).** A special data run by Statistics Canada for the Canadian Council on Social Development shows that 32.1% (40,400) of children aged 0 - 14 in the City of Edmonton live in families whose incomes are below LICO. The 1996 Census data shows that the total population aged 0 - 17 years in the City of Edmonton is 150,070. Assuming normal distribution, there are 48,172 children aged 0 - 17 living in poor families. This means that, in addition to those children with persistent or intermittent hunger, there are another 28,114 children at risk of hunger or malnutrition.
- Total Lone Parent Families.** Based on 1996 Census (20% sample) data, Edmonton and Calgary Census Metropolitan Areas.
- Average Rent.** Based on Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Rental Market Report, October 1998 survey. The 1998 average \$552; 6% increase projected for 1999. Average is for the City of Edmonton.

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