



FOR RELEASE

DATE Oct 17 2022 in recognition of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

HEADLINE

Child poverty is a significant issue in Lethbridge and south western Alberta.

LETHBRIDGE-The Social Health Equity Network of Lethbridge & Area, also known as SHENLA, is releasing a new report titled **2022 Lethbridge Child and Family Poverty Report: Laying the Groundwork for a Just Recovery**¹.

The report, prepared by HELPSEEKER with financial support from the City of Lethbridge, identifies rates of child and family poverty in Lethbridge and the surrounding area, and those most affected by poverty. The report considers poverty in relation to the social determinants of health, and identifies a variety of recommendations for collective action.

SHENLA spokesperson, Sharon Yanicki explains that once we have sufficient knowledge about local poverty issues, we need to mobilize action. Failing to end “child poverty is one of the most costly mistakes that society can make.”² Yanicki stated, “creating provincial and municipal strategies to end child poverty are prudent fiscal policies.”

“Collective action is really important to address complex issues such as child poverty. SHENLA brings a variety of partners to the table, and it’s exciting to see the passion and drive our members have for this work and the potential that exists to break down barriers, implement effective approaches², and achieve local impacts.

Executive Director, Jaci Zalesak noted, “The United Way of Lethbridge and South Western Alberta is partnering with SHENLA. By working together, we can break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and work to end child poverty in our communities.”

The report is being released on Oct. 17, in recognition of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, and can be accessed at SHENLA’s LinkedIn page, and the United Way of Lethbridge & Southwestern Alberta’s website.

“When we’re looking at issues of poverty, it’s important to look at data and statistics,” Yanicki said. “But it’s also important to engage directly with people who are experiencing poverty. This fall, SHENLA will be working with members and partners to gather local stories and experiences of poverty and to engage people with lived experience in this important work.”

How widespread is Child Poverty? Based on the 2016 National Census, 12,755 people, including almost 4,000 children and youth aged 0 - 17 were living in low-income in Lethbridge. In 2019, 15.2% of children and youth in Lethbridge’s census metropolitan area (CMA) were living in low income (CFLIM-AT)⁴. Children aged 0-5 years experienced the highest rates of low income across all age groups. While federal and provincial child benefit have resulted in a small reduction in child and family poverty over time, further action is needed.



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Who is differentially affected? Child poverty rates (0 - 17 years) in Lethbridge CMA were highest for children living in lone-parent (46.6%), First Nations (42%), and Indigenous [identity] (26.9%) families. Current rates of poverty for Indigenous children highlight the connection between historic colonial practices, historic trauma, and income and racial inequalities.

How does living in poverty impact child health and wellbeing? Access to housing and food security, and children's early child development and educational attainment are all impacted by living in poverty. In the early years (0 - 5), living in poverty impacts children's ability to learn, to actively engage in school, and to develop skills at the pace of their peer group.

Why should people care about child poverty? Child poverty results in higher costs for health care, social services, education and policing, and impacts the economy through higher unemployment rates and lost workforce potential⁵. In 2012, the cost of poverty in Alberta was estimated to be between \$7.1 and \$9.5 billion per year⁶; adjusted for inflation, the cost of poverty in 2022 would be between \$8.4 or \$11.4 billion per year.

What needs to be done? Addressing child and family poverty is a keystone priority for Lethbridge and area. All children need support and opportunities for optimal development and wellbeing. Everyone has a role to play in ending poverty: community members, businesses, service providers, local funders and decision-makers, community partners, and all levels of government.

Find out what you can do to support action: <https://lethbridgeunitedway.ca/>

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BACKGROUNDER

The Social Health Equity Network of Lethbridge & Area (SHENLA) is an umbrella organization promoting social health equity. SHENLA's vision is vibrant, inclusive, and safe communities where people from all walks of life are able to meet their basic needs with dignity, participate in community life, and have opportunities for optimal development, well-being and health.

SHENLA works with community stakeholders and partners to bring awareness to community issues impacting social health equity. Child poverty has been identified as a pressing issue for collective action.

SHENLA works with members (community members and member organizations), partners in the non-profit sector, businesses and corporations, and governments to advocate for the health equity needs of citizens of Lethbridge and communities in southwestern Alberta.

REFERENCES

1 Social Health Equity Network of Lethbridge and Area [SHENLA]. (2022). The 2022 Lethbridge Child and Family Poverty Report: Laying the Groundwork for a Just Recovery. Retrieved from United Way of Lethbridge & Area: <https://lethbridgeunitedway.ca/> & SHENLA LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/14004967/>
Also See SHENLA partner websites:

2 End Child Poverty. (2022). 7 Reasons why child poverty matters (Part 2). Retrieved from: <https://endingchildpoverty.org/en/blog/298-7-reasons-why-child-poverty-matters-part-2>.

3 Tamarack Institute. (2021). The end of poverty: Eight pathways that are ending poverty in Canada. Retrieved from: <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/the-end-of-poverty-eight-pathways-that-are-ending-poverty-in-canada>

4 Statistics Canada. (2019). Census Family Low Income Measure After Tax (CFLIM-AT). This measure is calculated annually by the federal government, using T1 Family File data. This data is not available for two years after collection.

5 Raphael, Dennis. (2011). Poverty in Canada (2nd Edition). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

6 Briggs, A. & Lee, C.R., (2012). Poverty costs: An economic case for a preventative poverty reduction strategy in Alberta. Retrieved from: https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet-rcdec.ca/files/ccednet/documents/poverty_costs.pdf