

The cost of poverty in Calgary

There is no question that poverty, particularly sustained poverty, imposes loss of well-being on those who experience it. In addition, poverty also imposes costs on members of society beyond those deemed "poor."

Poverty has been associated with increased spending resulting from greater need for health care, reduced high school completion rates, the need for more early childhood and special education services, additional demands on the criminal justice system, and costs associated with the provision of income and social support.



In an effort to determine these "external" costs of poverty in the city of Calgary, and use this information to help build a compelling case for sustained poverty reduction, United Way of Calgary and Area commissioned a report by the Centre for Health and Policy Studies at the University of Calgary.

The external costs of poverty represent the potential savings that could be realized were Calgarians to implement an effective and sustained programme of poverty reduction in the city. They are just one component of the social benefits of poverty reduction. The existence of these costs provides one component of a case for a programme of poverty reduction, even if one is not convinced of the need for such a programme on the grounds of social justice alone.

The report's findings suggest:

- Increased costs of health care in Calgary of at least \$3.35 million per year and possibly as much as \$16.3 million
- Increased costs associated with the schools system of at least \$4.9 million and perhaps as much as \$7.9 million
- Costs elsewhere in the economy could amount to as much as \$32.6 million per year

To read the report, click [here](#).