

Still hungry

WHY

?

The Need Is Growing

*In January, 1986, the Foodbank fed 16,600 people, the highest number ever. In 1985 more than 54,000 people had to go to the Foodbank: 39% of these were under the age of 12, when malnutrition can cause permanent damage.

*The number of unemployed people continues to grow, as does the number of people who must depend on social assistance.

The Hungry Are Not Heard

*Recommendations made a year ago in the Hunger in Our City report have not been addressed. The problems stated in the report have not been refuted.

*No regular consultation process has begun.

*An updated report and letters to political leaders have been largely ignored.

There are 2 Ways of Caring

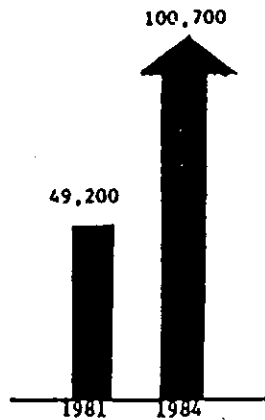
*Continue the generous support of the Foodbank.

*Let your representative know that you expect action now.

FOOD FOR PEOPLE...ACTION FOR CHANGE

FACTS WE CANNOT IGNORE

FAMILY POVERTY DOUBLES IN ALBERTA

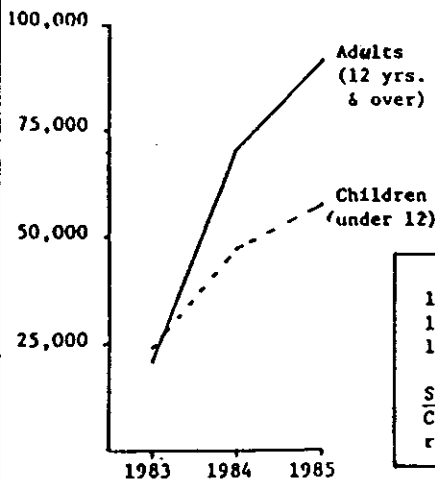


Number of families living below the poverty line.

Source: "Poverty in Alberta", National Council of Welfare, news release, October, 1985

NUMBER OF PERSONS ASSISTED BY EDMONTON'S FOOD BANK

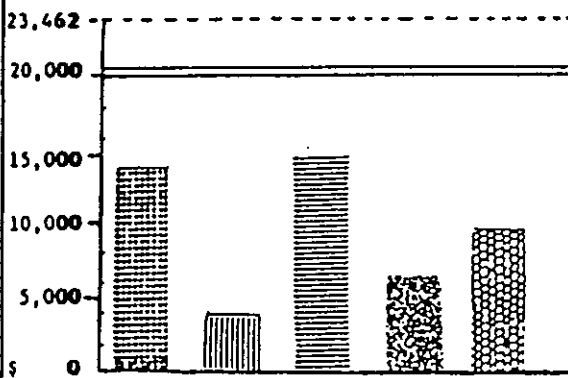
(person equivalents)



| | Adults | Children |
|------|--------|----------|
| 1983 | 20,426 | 24,622 |
| 1984 | 71,733 | 47,819 |
| 1985 | 91,101 | 57,861 |

Source: Hunger in Edmonton Reaches Crisis Proportions, information release, Edmonton Gleaner's Assoc.

THE POVERTY GAP IN ALBERTA



Total income required for a family of 4 to meet basic needs. (Source: Family Budget Guide, Boyle St. Coop, 1985)

Statistics Canada poverty line for a family of 4 in a city over 500,000 people = \$20,020.

*** Notice how far below the poverty line these income levels are for a family.

*** Over 50% of Alberta's poor are working poor.

*** When personal resources run out, making use of the food bank is one way people close part of the gap.

| UIC Max. | UIC at Min. Wage | Soc. Allow. | Min. Wage | \$5/hr Wage |
|----------|------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| \$14,060 | 3,770 | 14,296 | 7,014 | 9,610 |

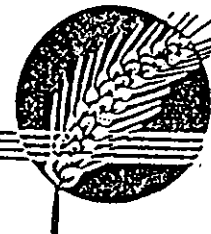
| Average income of the poorest 1/5 of Canadian families | | Average income of the richest 1/5 of Canadian families | |
|--|-----------|--|-----------|
| 1981 | 1984 | 1981 | 1984 |
| \$ 11,416 | \$ 10,136 | \$ 68,497 | \$ 68,889 |

MUST THIS CONTINUE ???

- * Alberta has the highest average family income after provincial taxes. (1985 Budget Speech)
- * Of all the provinces, Alberta spends the lowest percentage of its budget on social services. (based on 1983 estimates)
- * Providing more jobs at a living wage will reduce the poverty caused by unemployment and lowwages in the long-term.
- * The positive results of past small improvements in social allowance show that we can also reduce the number of people who run out of food in the short-term.

REDUCING POVERTY IS A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES, NOT OUR ABILITY TO DO SO!

Key Recommendations and Government Response



These recommendations were submitted to the Minister of Social Services a year ago. They were re-submitted with an update report in January, 1986.

I. That the government undertake a cost of living study to determine an objective level of adequate support to meet basic needs.

NO ACTION

The previous Minister said this was not necessary, in spite of the following evidence: Assistance rates are about 40% below the government's poverty line and far below the cost of living index. A Cost of Living Study by the Boyle Street Co-op showed that assistance rates are not adequate to meet actual living costs in Edmonton. Actual costs vary from place to place, but the assistance rates are uniform.

II. That the social services department monitor service delivery to ensure that its social allowance policies are implemented consistently.

NO RESPONSE

Evidence continues to show that many people receive only 75 to 80% of what they are eligible to receive. Often clients are not informed of help available only by special request. Damage deposits and other extra but necessary expenses are recovered from the basic monthly allowance.

III. That the government establish an effective mechanism for consultation on policies and practices with community groups who have experience with income security clients.

NO PROGRESS

Changes in the income security program are being considered without community input. Agencies who know the needs firsthand and are struggling to respond to them deserve to be heard.

"Somehow, I feel they really don't take a good look at your basic needs... (what) I mean is, you pay rent, then you have nothing left to eat."

"The money just doesn't cover all areas needed; therefore we are without proper food. We get sick. This makes our life very hard at times..."

FOOD FOR YOUR MLA

Political leaders respond to matters that voters bring to their attention. If you think that the problems of the poor deserve attention, please take a few minutes to let your representative know. If every MLA receives a number of letters or phone calls from people in his or her constituency, he or she will not be able to ignore this matter.

A personal letter is most effective; the following sample may serve as a model.

Dear _____:

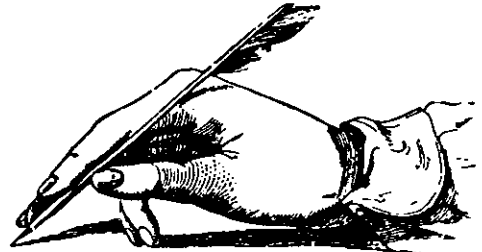
The growing demand at the Edmonton Food Bank shows the increasing number of people who cannot meet their basic need for food. (You may wish to add a personal experience with someone or a particular need, e.g. child malnutrition.)

A year ago several reasonable recommendations to improve social assistance rates and policies were presented in the Hunger in Our City report, but most of these have not been addressed.

As my representative I would like to know what is your response to the recommendations and the needs which they reflect? What action will you take to make sure that they receive serious consideration, in consultation with the agencies and churches who are responding to the need? (Mention if you have donated food or time).

Thank you for caring.

Sincerely,



Other Suggestions for Action:

Ask others to write their MLA. Visit your MLA's office.
Learn more about the issue. Write a letter to the editor.
Hold a meeting for your group, neighborhood, or constituency.

For more information you may contact:

Edmonton Social Planning Council 423-2031
Citizens for Public Justice 429-3540
Catholic Social Justice Commission 420-1306

All quotations are taken from a study entitled Surviving on Welfare - A No-Frills Flight, done by the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

This brochure was prepared by the Catholic Social Justice Commission, Citizens for Public Justice, and the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

