

the faction Spring 2008

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Council Settled in and Picking up Steam on New Projects

by SUSAN MORRISSEY, Executive Director, Edmonton Social Planning Council

The Council has been incredibly busy since the last edition of *the fACTivist*.

We co-hosted the Alberta (Dis)Advantage Conference with the MacEwan Institute for Research on Family & Youth (MIRFY). The turnout was great, and we were fortunate to have a great panel of accomplished speakers with a wide range of research and front-line service experience. We look forward to making next year's conference an even greater success! (Flip to p7 to see some pictures.)

We moved our offices from the 107 A Avenue location to the Commonwealth Building. Some of you may feel like this is déjà vu, and I am happy to confirm that you are not dreaming! Yes, in fact we have moved our offices back to the ESPC's former home at 9912 – 106 Street. The Commonwealth is home to many other not-for-profits, all of which have some common issues and goals. So our new home offers some great opportunities for the Council to further develop some synergies. I encourage anyone to drop by and check out our new office and resource library (see the pictures on the right).

We launched our new website in March with an open house. Our website continues to be a rich resource of information on social justice issues and a link to others in the community. The update has made it into an interactive tool! We hope the site will encourage users to engage in the issues by participating in our on-line forum and blog. We also hope to keep website users informed of what is going on in our community through our new community calendar and bulletin board. (See p6 for more info.)

We launched our new logo, which you will have noticed by now from the updated newsletter and website designs. In the Council's tradition of involving community in it's work, we hosted an on-line logo contest which garnered submissions from all over the world. The winning design came from Argentina! Our new logo—which illustrates three people standing together supporting a larger cause—speaks to the mission of the Council to build a healthy, just and inclusive community for all.

We hired a new full-time staff member, Erin Krekoski, to take on the new role of Resource Coordinator.

The Activity Continues...

It didn't take long after we settled in our new space for us to get started on some new and exciting projects:

- We have started work on a child poverty report card for Alberta, in partnership with Public Interest Alberta (see p7);
- We're conducting a survey of renters in Edmonton (see p3), as well as our annual Member survey (see p7);
- We're continuing our work with the Downtown East Re-development project; and
- We anticipate having a great summer getting more projects started with our new Resource Coordinator and our incoming temporary summer (STEP) position.

I would encourage you to have a look at our new website, participate in our on-line discussion forum, and come visit us in our new office.

CAPTIONS: 1 & 2) Staff helped to make our new space feel like "home" by painting the office in our new logo colours—green and blue. Board Pres. Doug stopped by for a visit (2).; 3) From stacks of moving boxes... 4) To

an orderly library, ready for our open house.

























ESPC 2007 Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, May 6, 2008 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Family Centre Media Room 3rd Floor, 9912 - 106 Street Edmonton, AB T5K 1C5

Guest Speaker:City Councillor Don Iveson

All ESPC members are welcome to attend.

Join us to celebrate our accomplishments, and to hear about the upcoming activities of the Council.

Your membership must be current in order to vote.

Memberships may be purchased or renewed at the door.

Light refreshments will be served.

Please RSVP by April 30th, 2008

RSVP to Stephanie: 780-423-2031 or

<u>stephanieh@</u> edmontonsocialplanning.ca

Caledon Urges Bigger & Better Child Tax Benefit

By JOHN KOLKMAN, Research & Policy Analysis Coordinator

Poverty reduction advocates like myself have a veritable shopping mall of ideas and proposals for reducing unacceptably high child poverty rates in this one of the richest countries on earth.

One of the best child poverty reduction ideas to come along in a longtime is contained in the January 2008 report, titled *A Bigger and Better Child Benefit: A \$5,000 Canada Child Tax Benefit*, written by Ken Battle from the Caledon Institute of Social Policy. The research associates at the Caledon Institute – Battle notably among them – are a veritable gold mine when it comes to doing innovative research on improving social programs in Canada.

Unsung Hero of Child Poverty Reduction

The Canada Child Tax Benefit is an unsung hero when it comes to reducing child poverty. It will likely come as a surprise to some that this federal government benefit plays a significantly larger role in reducing child poverty than provincial social assistance payments do.

That's because the Canada Child Tax Benefit is available to all families regardless of the source of income – working poor as well those on social assistance. Parents don't have to go through a complicated and often demeaning application process like they do to receive social assistance or disability benefits. A family doesn't have to pay taxes in order to receive the refundable child tax benefit. The only requirement is to file a tax return every year. Families automatically qualify for benefits depending on their net family income and the number of children under 18. The benefit is then direct deposited into their bank account. No fuss, no bother.

Low income families receive the maximum benefit, and benefit levels are gradually reduced as net family income rises. Because child tax benefits reach well into middle income groups, there is not the same negative stigma attached to receiving them as there is to social assistance. In fact, as Battle points out, poverty reduction is not even the sole objective of the federal child tax benefit. It is also a parental recognition program designed to compensate parents for the extra expenses involved with raising children. During a time when Canadian birth rates have fallen significantly below replacement levels, assisting parents with the cost of childrearing is a worthy social policy goal.

Details & Impact of the Enhanced Benefit

The Caledon report has crunched the numbers on the following proposed enhancement to the child tax benefit from every conceivable angle. Under the Caledon proposal, the maximum yearly benefit would rise by just over 50 per cent from \$3,271 to \$5,000 per child.

To help pay for the increased benefit, the Universal Child Tax Benefit and the non-refundable tax credit, introduced in the last two federal budgets, would be abolished and rolled into an enhanced child tax benefit. With these offsetting savings, the enhancement would increase federal government spending by \$4 Billion to \$17 Billion per year. At first blush, this seems like a lot of money. But it does have to be placed in context. \$4 Billion represents less than 2 per cent of overall federal government spending.

The additional investment in Canada's children has to be measured against the benefits that would be achieved. These benefits include:

- An immediate 11 per cent reduction in child poverty rates compared to the status quo. Over 40,000 Canadian families would be lifted out of poverty. This is a very significant reduction from a single policy measure:
- A reduction of over 5 per cent in the depth of poverty of all remaining families;
- Higher benefits to the vast majority of families with children, with the phase-out of benefits ending at a relatively high net family income of \$193,000, making the child tax benefit a nearly universal program. Currently, child tax benefits are fully phased out at about the \$100,000 family income level; and
- A modest reduction in marginal tax rates for low and middle income families. This is important because it is important to not create disincentives for parents by ensuring that they do not lose benefits too rapidly as their employment income rises.

The chart on the next page from the Caledon report shows the impact of the \$5,000 child tax benefit compared to the current system:

Since all of the proposed changes are to federal programs, the impact on Alberta

(Continued on page 3)









Edmonton Renters Survey

Starting April 17, the ESPC will be conducting a survey of renters in the Edmonton area.

The survey is a follow up to the Renter's Listening Forums we held in May 2007 in partnership with City Councillors Phair and Thiele.

Over 200 people came to tell us about extreme rent increases and apartment shortages, and to share their ideas on how to help solve the problem.

There has been a lot of talk about affordable housing since then, but has the situation really changed for renters?

THAT is the question we want to answer.

Please encourage any renters you know to fill out our survey.

Visit
<u>edmontonsocialplanning.ca</u>
to fill out or download the
survey.

Response Deadline: May 31, 2008

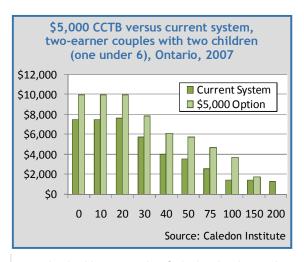
Child Tax Benefit, cont'd from page 2

families would be the same as the impact on Canadian families in general.

The Caledon report concludes:

"Our proposal for a single, stronger Canada Child Tax Benefit is a win-win proposition. It would boost federal child benefit payments to \$5,000 per child for low-income families, covering much of the basic cost of raising a child in a poor family and reducing the extent of poverty. It also would improve benefits for the large majority of non-poor families, which have modest, middle or upper-middle incomes. Finally, after close to a century of development, Canada would have a strong and mature child benefits system that better serves both its poverty reduction and parental recognition core objectives" (p. 52).

No single policy measure will result in the complete elimination of the scourge of child poverty in Canada. A range of measures are



required. However, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy proposal for a bigger and better child tax benefit is definitely one that all poverty reduction advocates and concerned citizens should consider backing.

The full *A Bigger and Better Child Benefit* report is available online at caledoninst.org.

Should We Really Be Using the Concept "Child Poverty"?

By ERIN KREKOSKI, Resource Coordinator

It has been almost two decades since the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion to seek to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. While children's experience of poverty is certainly not new, it is really only since the late 1980s that the concept of child poverty has come to the forefront. What has sparked this interest in child poverty? Does the concept help us work towards a more just and inclusive society?

The history of the term, 'child poverty'?

In Canada, measures to address the wellbeing of children are not new. In fact, they predate the emergence of the term 'child poverty' by decades. We've always been concerned, as a society, about the welfare of children.

The history of social policy in Canada is well documented in Alvin Finkel's book, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada*. Orphanages for destitute children run by charitable organizations were perhaps the first form of poverty relief for children. As early as 1858, charities also ran day-care centres for children as women started to enter the workforce. Government policies prohibiting child labour and making education mandatory for children came into force in the 1870s and 1880s. A

decade later, the formation of children's aid societies signified growing concern for the welfare of children. Children's aid societies were given the authority to remove children from the care of parents who were deemed incapable of 'properly' caring for them. Later, government policies to relieve poverty focused on supplementing family incomes through pensions and unemployment insurance.

Towards the middle of the century, concern over children's rights was growing internationally. In 1959, the UN passed the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Thirty years later, the binding Convention on the Rights of the Child, passed in 1989, asserted the right of children to live free from poverty, and the obligation of government to ensure this.

But a new awareness of children's rights wasn't the only factor that led to the development of the term 'child poverty' at about this time. The women's movement also played a role, as it brought into question the traditional assertion that womanhood and motherhood were one and the same. The separation of motherhood from womanhood cultivated the ground from which a distinct, child-centred discourse emerged. With new,

(Continued on page 4)









Looking for Information on Social Issues?

Visit the ESPC Resource Library today!

Open to the public: M- F 8:30am- 4:30pm

Online Catalogue: Available 24/7 @ socialresearchlibrary.ca

Our resource library is a rich source of current and historical publications on social issues.

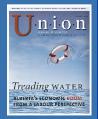
Featured Book:



Calculated Kindness: Global Restructuring, Immigration and Settlement in Canada (Folson, R.B.)

Featured Subscription:

Union (Alberta Federation of Labour)



Child Poverty, cont'd from page 3

empirical methods being established to define poverty and count the number of people experiencing poverty, and a government less and less inclined to interfere with the market, the concept of child poverty became ever more appealing.

All of these factors ushered in a 'new' era of social policy advocacy focused on child poverty in the late 1980s.

The concept of child poverty emerged at a time when cuts to social programs were placing many Canadians in ever more tenuous financial situations. Wendy McKeen writes that while the child poverty movement started off in the late 1980s with a broad social democratic outlook based on principles of universality, equity, and social responsibility, this gave way in the 1990s to a 'human-capital' orientation. The human capital orientation operates on the logic that citizens—especially children—are important as resources in our economy, and that investing in their future will 'pay off' in the long run.

So, instead of using the language of mutual responsibility, solidarity, or the right to live in dignity, anti-poverty campaigns used the language of "investing" in the future. In order for social justice and progressive social policy advocates to be listened to, they needed to change the tone of their demands.

Why have some people argued that it's not useful?

Wendy McKeen also explains how these shifts have in turn changed the ideals of justice and equality that the sector promotes. Today, as a result of the way that child poverty campaigns have been mobilized, we're trapped into the human capital framework of thinking about how to address poverty.

Wanda Wiegers writes that the focus on easing children's experience of poverty diverts efforts away from addressing the systemic issues that cause poverty in the first place. She explains that the focus on child poverty feeds into stereotypes that poverty is the fault of people who are poor—not an unfair system. It does this by asserting that children are essentially dependent, and need to be provided for by the state, but adults are essentially independent, and ought to be able to provide for themselves. This is dangerous ground from which to work for a more socially just and inclusive society.

There's no arguing that the term, 'child poverty' has been effective to a certain extent. And it's true—there shouldn't be children living in poverty in a country as affluent as Canada. But regardless of who we are, young or old, the fact of the matter is that we all deserve to live in dignity and free from poverty.

The following sources were used in this article:

Wanda Wiegers. The Framing of Poverty as "Child Poverty" and Its Implications for Women. *Status of Women Canada*, June 2002.

Wendy McKeen. The Shifting Discourses of the Progressive Social Policy/Child Poverty Advocacy Community: Wither Social Justice? In Canadian Review of Social Policy, No. 53, 2004.

Alvin Finkel. Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A history. WLU Press, 2006.

meet the ESPC BOARD OF DIRECTORS Strategic Planner & Health Policy Expert: Kluthe



Janet Kluthe was elected onto the ESPC Board at the Annual General Meeting in May 2007.

Janet is a consultant with IntegraOne which provides health management consulting services. She has over 22 years experience in numerous

areas of the health system including at the national, provincial, regional, and site levels. Her experience includes public health, home care, acute care, continuing care, health promotion, research and evaluation, planning and project management.

Janet graduated with distinction with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 1985 and completed a Master of Public Health, specialization in health policy and management degree at the University of Alberta in 2001.

Janet is a graduate of the two year SEARCH program through the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research and is a candidate for Certified Health Executive with the Canadian College of Health Service Executives. Her interests include humanity, public policy, and strategic planning.









Child Poverty Across Canada

Approximately 12% of children in Canada were living in poverty in 2005.

British Columbia had the highest child poverty rate, while PEI had the lowest.

Alberta's rate was below the Canadian average. However, despite the booming economy, 64,000 children were living in poverty.

Child Poverty by Province:

+ (Canada	11.7%
+ 1	Nfld & Labrador *	11.7%
•	PEI *	3.3%
+ 1	New Brunswick *	10.3%
+ 1	Vova Scotia *	10.4%
• (Quebec	9.6%
• (Ontario	12.6%
+ 1	Manitoba	14.1%
. 8	Saskatchewan	12.9%
• /	Alberta *	8.6%
• E	BC Sc	15.2%

* Statistics Canada listed the data as 'use with caution' due to small sample sizes.

Source: Campaign 2000, 2007 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada

Child Poverty Stuck: No Change in 18 Years

By ANN DECTER and LIYU GUO, Campaign 2000

In November last year Campaign 2000 released its 2007 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty, revealing that 18 years after the 1989 all-party resolution of the House of Commons, the child poverty rate is *exactly the same*.

Despite a growing economy, a soaring dollar and low unemployment, our findings show:

- 788,000 children, or 11.7% (in after-tax terms) live in poverty;
- A job alone is not enough. 41% of lowincome children live in families where at least one parent works full-time all year, and the family still lives in poverty;
- The risk of living in poverty is not the same for all children. Poverty hits children in ethnic, First Nations and recent immigrant communities much more often.

The federal government could change this picture, and Canadians want the government to act. 85% of Canadians believe that concrete government action can drastically reduce poverty.

Campaign 2000 advocates for the federal government to step up to the plate with a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy

committing to a minimum 50% reduction in the child poverty rate over 10 years.

In Canada and internationally, governments are using the Poverty Reduction Strategy approach to try and move children and families out of poverty. That means setting targets and timetables and looking for measurable results.

Support for this approach is growing across the country. Provincial governments in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador are implementing poverty reduction strategies. Nova Scotia is consulting on the development of a provincial strategy and Ontario is expecting consultations to begin this spring. The federal Liberal Party announced bold targets for poverty reduction last fall in 2007. The NDP has an anti-poverty plan in development.

Local communities are also developing municipal strategies, asking city governments for measures like a living wage by-law.

Visit <u>campaign2000.ca</u> to view full copies of the *It Takes a Nation to Raise a Generation* report card, and the *Summoned to Stewardship: Make Poverty Reduction a Collective Legacy* policy paper.

Project Puts Edmonton Families First

By FFE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM, Families First Edmonton

Since 2006, 1,160 families with low incomes have volunteered to take part in the Families First Edmonton research project.

The project is intended to improve the quality of life of families with low incomes by determining what service delivery models help build a family's capacity to access programs and services in a more preventative, proactive way.

The study follows a collaborative approach and brings together government, university and non -profit service delivery partners. Together we are learning more about the needs of low-income families and the processes, practices,

benefits and barriers to systems collaboration and co-operation amongst service providers.

Families First Edmonton will use this information to help guide policy development and improve the integration, efficiency and accessibility of existing services that assist families with low incomes.

To learn more about the study, visit the Families First Edmonton website at familiesfirstedmonton.ualberta.ca or contact Perdita Baier, Project Manager at perdita.baier@gov.ab.ca or 780-427-5747.

CAPTIONS: 1) Our new table top displays debuted at our March 13th launch party and open house; 2) Our new, welcoming office "lobby" and our new feature banner.

Our new display items are from The Portables (theportables.com)

The displays were made possible by funding from the Edmonton Community Foundation.













Alberta Youth: Growing Up in the Boom Years

The annual conference of the Alberta Teachers'
Association's Committee on the Well-being of Children and Youth is being held:

Thursday, May 1, 2008

8:00 am

Chateau Louis Conference Centre, Edmonton

Conference is FREE (Registration Required)

The conference will feature presentations by more than 10 agencies

—including a review of child poverty trends by the ESPC's John Kolkman—

that reflect their work relative to the needs, challenges and opportunities of many of Alberta's youth.

For more information, see the ESPC online Community Calendar, visit the ATA website, or contact Brenda Courchene @

> 780-447-9400 or

brenda.courchene@ata.ab.ca

Complimentary breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Advocating for High Quality, Affordable Child Care

By BILL MOORE-KILGANNON, Executive Director, Public Interest Alberta

The provincial government has recently announced they are funding the creation of close to 3500 new childcare spaces and have plans to add an additional 14,000 spaces by 2011. While the issue of access to childcare is of great concern to most young families, the problems are more complex than just creating more spaces.

The Alberta government has neglected childcare and early childhood education for the past 20 years. Alberta currently spends one third the national average for childcare (both on a per capita and per licensed space). A recent national study from the Child Care Resource Unit show that even with the additional childcare spaces we will have just the same number of spaces we had back in 1992, even though Alberta's population has drastically increased. Over two thirds of Alberta mothers with children under six years of age are in the workforce but only 9.3% of Alberta's children under the age of 6 are in licensed care.

For low-income families in particular, access to quality childcare is very difficult even with the low-income subsidies. The reason for this is that many families are not in a position to pay the additional fees that can range from \$250 – 450 per child above the subsidy.

Furthermore, there is no strategy to help not for profit organizations establish new



childcare centres in targeted communities, so new childcare centres will be located not on community need, but on business plans that cater to families who can afford to pay.

The provincial government has made some important steps in the last couple of years with its five-point plan for childcare and the accreditation system, but to address the real-world situation of Alberta's families, they need to come up with a comprehensive and fully-supported plan to provide quality, affordable childcare and early childhood education for all families that need it.

Public Interest Alberta is working with many organizations and individuals to mobilize concerned Albertans to speak to their MLAs about the need for the provincial government to greatly increase support for early childhood education and childcare.

For more information, visit <u>www.pialberta.org</u> or call (780) 420-0471.

What you'll find on our NEW Website!

We've worked long and hard over the last six months to make our dreams for a new and improved website a reality.

We hope that you will take some time to check out the many new, interactive features our new site offers:

- Web Update Subscription (RSS feed): Sign up to get notified when our site is updated.
- Social Exchange forum and Issue Brief blog: Read about the latest social issues, share your ideas and post your own topics.
- User profile: Register to connect with other people with similar interests.
- Community Bulletin Board & Event Calendar: Keep up-to-date on the latest news and community events.

- Online payment: Order select ESPC publications, pay for your membership or make a donation by credit card.
- Search Function: You can now search our entire site with key words!

And what would our site be without the wealth of information that has always been there—now NEW and IMPROVED:

- Research Links: Browse our extensive collection of links to info on a variety of topics.
- **Library Catalogue:** Search our Resource Library collection online.
- Publications: Download our most recent publications, fact sheets and newsletters.
- News: View our media releases, articles featuring the ESPC, and the latest updates on our projects and activities.







ESPC & PIA Begin Work on Alberta Child Poverty Report Card

The ESPC is pleased to announce that it has begun work on an updated child poverty report card, in partnership with Public Interest Alberta, and with support from Campaign 2000. The last report card for Alberta was published by the ESPC in 2004.

Funding for the report has been provided by the Muttart Foundation.

We expect to release the report in early summer, with the possibility of hosting public events or forums across the province in the Fall.





REMINDER TO MEMBERS

Don't forget to fill out and return the Member Survey by May 31, 2008!

Want to fill it out on-line? Log in to

(you must register first) and go to the "2008" Members Survey" page under "Support Us."

To get a paper copy of the survey, contact Stephanie Haar at (780) 423-2031

Families Facing the Alberta (Dis)Advantage

The conference we co-hosted with MIRFY on January 25 brought to light a range of evidence that the "Alberta Advantage" does not apply to everyone.

Erin Krekoski's article, published by The Dominion before she joined the ESPC, offers a great summary of the issues discussed:

"... for some the Alberta Advantage may mean better investments and bigger profits, for many others is has had devastating consequences."

To read the full article, visit the ESPC in the News section of edmontonsocialplanning.ca.



Council's Newest Edition & Amateur Boxer: Erin



Haar at the registration table; 2) Susan Morrissey

presenting welcome address;

3) Attendees in the main conference hall; 4) Panelists Hope Hunter, Deanna Williamson and Heather Day with Don McMann facilitating; 5) Panelists Jan Reimer, Marilyn Fleger and Jim Gurnett.







Welcome!

The ESPC is proud to welcome Erin Krekoski to our team. In her first month, she has already made a great contribution to the Council.

Having Erin in the role of Resource Coordinator will give the ESPC much greater capacity to do more to inform and engage the community, and support our community partners..

meet the ESPC STAFF

Erin Krekoski joined the ESPC at the beginning of March in the newly created position of Resource Coordinator. She is working on expanding and developing our Resource

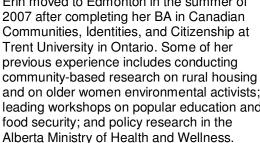
Library, and promoting it to the

community.

Another task for Erin will be hosting consultations with our community partners, to help ensure that the Council's work reflects the research needs of partnering organizations and front-line agencies in Edmonton.

Erin moved to Edmonton in the summer of 2007 after completing her BA in Canadian Communities, Identities, and Citizenship at Trent University in Ontario. Some of her previous experience includes conducting community-based research on rural housing and on older women environmental activists: leading workshops on popular education and food security; and policy research in the

When she's not at work, you'll find Erin out for a run on one of the river valley trails, or at the boxing gym, training for her next match. Yes, you read it correctly, that's boxing: in a ring, with gloves and headgear, on the bell.







our VISION

A healthy, just and inclusive community.





our MISSION

The Edmonton Social Planning Council provides leadership to the community and its organizations in addressing social issues and effecting changes to social policy.

CONTACT US

Suite 37, 9912 - 106 Street Edmonton, AB T5H 4H8 Tel: (780) 423-2031 Fax: (780) 425-6244

info@edmontonsocialplanning.ca

STAFF

Susan Morrissey Executive Director

John Kolkman Research & Policy Analysis Coordinator

Erin Krekoski Resource Coordinator

Anette Kinley Research & Communications Assistant

Stephanie Haar Administrative Assistant

Jill Bulmer Bookkeeper

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Douglas Meggison Larry Brockman Michael Cohen Greg Farrants Alvin Finkel Father Edward Kennedy Janet Kluthe Joscelyn Proby Ann Semotiuk Ken Stickland

by BECOMING A MEMBER, you will...

- ... support our efforts to remain on the forefront in dealing with social issues
- ... make it possible for us to distribute our materials freely and widely to all
- ... receive our newsletters, fact sheets and other publications
- ... be eligible to vote at ESPC AGMs and have a say in the direction of the organization
- be eligible to serve on the board of directors.

MBERSHIP FORM	
<u> </u>	
nization	
ion	
ess	
Town	Postal Code
e	Fax
I	
mbership Type	NEW Fees (after May 1, 2008)
Small Organization	\$50
Large Organization	\$75
Family	\$40
Individual	\$25
Associate (no vote)	\$15
Limited Income/ Student/ Senior	\$5
tions Welcome - Can be included	with cheque or money order for membership.
ONLINE or mail the completed for	m with a cheque or money order payable to
onton Social Planning Council 37, 9912 - 106 Street onton, Alberta T5K 1C5	
e payment and membership details a	available @ edmontonsocialplanning.ca.
	MBERSHIP FORM inization ion ess fown e I mbership Type Small Organization Large Organization Family Individual Associate (no vote) Limited Income/ Student/ Senior ations Welcome - Can be included ONLINE or mail the completed for onton Social Planning Council 37, 9912 - 106 Street onton, Alberta T5K 1C5