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Municipal Opportunities for Accelerating COVID-19 Recovery

Increasing inclusion and supporting local business

This policy brief aims to inspire and engage Calgary City Council by sharing data and solutions for accelerating our economic and social recovery from the pandemic.

Issue

Approximately 189,000 (12.3%) [Calgarians live in poverty](#), including 39,000 children. People [most at risk](#) of poverty include single parents, Indigenous peoples, seniors, recent immigrants, and people with disabilities. Calgarians who were experiencing poverty and inequality before COVID-19 began were [hardest hit](#) by the pandemic. For a more detailed analysis of poverty in Calgary visit Vibrant Communities Calgary's interactive map of [Calgary Ward Poverty Profiles](#).

Eighty percent [of Calgarians](#) believe poverty is a problem we need to address and 82% believe that racism towards Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour exists. Thousands marched in Calgary streets in support of Black Lives Matter last year. Confirmation of unmarked graves of Indigenous children at sites of former Residential Schools has awakened more Canadians to the necessity and opportunities of [Truth and Reconciliation](#). There is a shared concern about growing [income disparity and inequality](#) in general.

Many local [businesses struggled to stay](#) afloat during the pandemic. More than 70% of Calgary businesses saw a decline in revenues throughout the pandemic, with the average business seeing 48.9% less revenue, and 70% of the businesses in the city accessing at least one relief program. The [economic recession](#) caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is among the worst in Alberta in three decades.

Opportunity

Inclusion is [fuel for economic growth](#). Economies grow faster, more strongly, and for longer periods, when there is [greater equality](#). The [Calgary Chamber of Commerce](#) aptly notes that “without tapping into the skills and expertise of those who have historically been made marginalized, we are leaving great talent, productivity, and capital on the sidelines. In other words, reducing poverty, inequality, and improving health and education outcomes contributes directly to economic growth.”

The [benefits of buying and supporting local](#) are well documented: more dollars circulate in the local economy, increased job creation, higher wages, and cultivating a community's unique character, among other benefits. By supporting local business owners, social enterprises, and social service organizations, our money stays here reaping the [local multiplier effect](#). One great example of this phenomenon is Calgary's [Be Local Network](#), a collection of more than 350 community minded businesses advancing our social, environmental, and economic wellbeing.

Moral and ethical arguments aside, data tells us that inclusion and support for local businesses is an [economic imperative](#). The following policy ideas blend social and economic returns for our city and maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of government dollars.

Recommendations

1. Seek community benefits through procurement
 - Build on the City of Calgary's Benefit Driven Procurement pilot projects and implement a Community Benefit Agreement for the Green Line
2. Support social enterprise growth
 - Support innovation in local social finance through financial support and policy change
3. Integrate financial empowerment into City services
 - Collaborate with Aspire and Prosper Canada to identify additional prosperity gateways for Calgarians and integrate Financial Empowerment into City services and programs.
4. Invest in workforce development for the most marginalized
 - Create Local Workforce Partnership Councils for specific sectors to create pathways to employment focused on poverty reduction, equity, and inclusion
5. Advance the Enough for All poverty reduction strategy
 - Maintain funding and support for the E4A strategy, including continued participation on the E4A Evaluation Committee
6. Create an Indigenous Gathering Place
 - Work with the IGP Board to confirm a location at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers this year
7. Boost low incomes
 - Implement a Living Wage Policy, in collaboration with the Alberta Living Wage Network, and advocate for a universal or basic income in Canada
8. Maintain funding for vital low-income programs and services
 - Maintain or increase the City's 25% contribution to the FCSS Program

View these policy recommendations in greater here: <https://files.momentum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/20123346/Municipal-Policy-Paper.pdf>

About Momentum

Momentum has worked with over 50,000 Calgarians since 1991 to get a good job, start a business and build their assets. Last year, Momentum supported over 1500 participants, including 70 active micro business loans which created 111 jobs in the community. In longer-term Momentum programs 82% of participants increased their income or savings. Momentum works collaboratively with community partners, academics, civil servants, and elected officials to create public policies that address the root causes of poverty and build strong and inclusive local economies.

To learn more or to connect, reach out to the Public Policy team at Momentum