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# STATE OF OUR CITY 2015



This is the fifth State of Our City Report since 1998. In that time, sustainability has become the overarching theme driving the debate over how our city will evolve into a more healthy, caring and vibrant 21st century city.

# A SUSTAINABLE CALGARY: THE TIME IS NOW!

In the past decade two substantial public and deliberate conversations have occurred around the future of our city – imagine Calgary and PLAN IT Calgary. Tens of thousands of Calgarians sent a clear message that we want a city where all Calgarians enjoy the fruits of our labours, where we live in balance with the natural world and where we fulfill our responsibilities as global citizens.



Despite all of the good will, stated desire for progressive change and roadmaps for that change, we have still taken only baby steps towards walking the talk – bike lanes, pedestrian bridges, water conservation, district energy projects, inner city redevelopment like East Village and The Bridges. But we are still a city of sprawling, car dependent greenfield developments. We are still building massive road projects, predictably accompanied by big box shopping mall developments on our periphery.

In every State of Our City Report since 1998, including this fifth report, two critical challenges have been identified. First, we live in a city where inequality persists and deepens. Second, we continue to pursue a lifestyle that consumes far too many of the earth's resources.

There are signs that perhaps our resource consumption has peaked but we will need to accelerate efforts to reduce consumption to sustainable levels.

The economic sector is the most troubling. Our team has concluded that none of these indicators can be considered sustainable. Calgary is the most unequal city in Canada.

There is room for optimism in our stewardship for the natural environment. Most of these indicators show considerable improvement. The biggest question in this sector is are we improving fast enough.

Our Wellness indicators continue to show a generally healthy population but there are signs that our health status may have peaked and subsequent generations may not enjoy the same good health if we don't move quickly to a wellness model of health care.

There is strength in community life with an increasingly diverse population, vibrant arts and culture scene and decreasing crime rates.

Our education indicators are a good news story with most of these indicators in what we consider the sustainability range or moving in that direction.

Governance is a critical area of concern. Calgarians report high levels of satisfaction with the way local services are delivered but we need to strengthen our democracy through campaign finance reform, replacement of the first past the post election model and more autonomy for our cities.



## COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

The bottom line is that we will need every bit of human and social capital represented in our community and education sectors to meet the challenge presented by high resource consumption, growing inequalities and health and wellness challenges.

We are at a crossroads in Calgary. We must take seriously the threat of climate change. The world is changing and our carbon intensive economy is part

of the problem. We need to transition rapidly to a sustainable low carbon economy and we need to do so through a plan that safeguards the well-being of all Calgarians and future generations.

The good news is that our province is blessed with the best solar and wind energy potential in all of Canada and a young, educated, motivated workforce more than capable of meeting the challenge.

**1. Maintain or enhance ecological integrity.** A sustainable community lives in harmony with the natural world. It protects the air, water, soil, flora, fauna and ecosystems that it depends upon for its survival. These are the life support systems for all human communities.

**2. Promote social equity.** In a sustainable community each and every citizen is afforded access to the benefits and opportunities that a community has to offer without social or economic discrimination.

**3. Provide the opportunity for meaningful work and livelihood for all citizens.** A strong, resilient and dynamic local economy is essential for community sustainability. A sustainable economy provides the opportunity for meaningful work and livelihood for each and every citizen.

**4. Encourage democratic participation of all citizens.** We live in a democracy. The bedrock of a democracy is citizen participation in the functioning, planning and decision- making of society. In a sustainable community, participation is both a right and a responsibility and should be available to every citizen.

**5. Maintain Ethical Relations with Our Neighbours.** In our bid to achieve sustainability we need to find ways to work cooperatively with our neighbours in our urban village and the global village. Sustainability cannot be achieved at the expense of our neighbours – wherever they may be.

# COMMUNITY

In 2013, 60.1 per cent of Calgarians were physically active enough during their leisure time to experience health benefits. Albertans work longer hours than any other Canadians, with 23.5 per cent of Albertans working overtime in 2009.

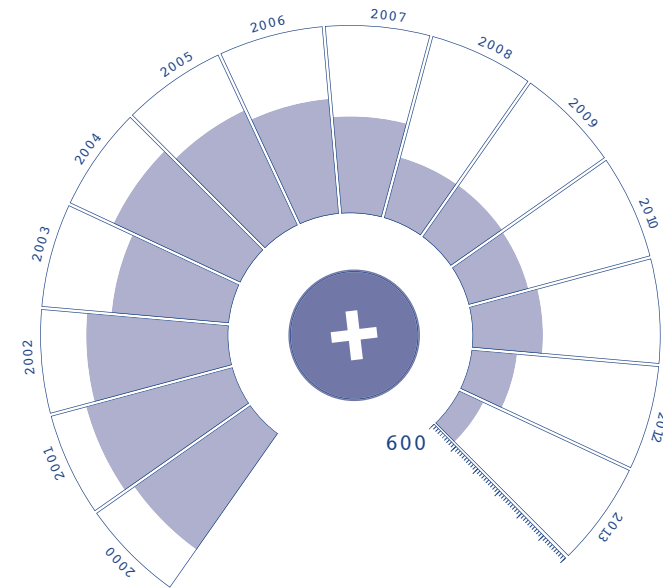
In a 2009 household survey, 30 per cent of Calgarians reported membership in their community associations (CAs). Previous studies indicated lower rates – 16 per cent (1999), 19 per cent (2003) and 14.4 per cent (2008).

In 2012, approximately 425,000 people attended the top 10 festivals tracked by Sustainable Calgary. This is an increase of 3.4 per cent over the 411,000 people who attended those festivals in 2010.

In 2014, 66.5 per cent of Calgarians had a strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging to a local community. In comparison 66.6 per cent of Albertans and 66.4 per cent of Canadians reported a strong sense of belonging to their local community.

In 2013, 50 per cent of Albertans volunteered, better than the national average of 44 per cent but down from the provincial rate of 55% in 2010.

# CRIME + VICTIMIZATION



In 2013 the estimated person crime rate per 100,000 people in Calgary was 664. The estimated property crime rate was 3,553. Both property crime and person crime rates are at their lowest levels since the mid-1980s.

# SENSE OF COMMUNITY



% Calgarians who felt they could ask others for help



Visible minorities and new immigrants satisfied with the social aspects of their lives for feeling safe and protected by others



% Calgarians with a strong sense of belonging to a local community (5-year high)

# ECONOMY

In 2010, 115,345 households in Calgary – or 25 per cent of total households – spent more than 30 per cent of gross income on housing costs. The 2014 Calgary homeless count registered 3,533 individuals, a 1.2 per cent decrease since the Winter 2012 count.

In May 2015, Calgary's unemployment rate was 5.5 per cent, while the national rate charted at 6.8 per cent. Such a rate was one of the lowest rates in the country, as compared with Toronto (7.1 per cent), Montreal (8.6 per cent), Vancouver (6.2 per cent) and Edmonton (6.8 per cent).

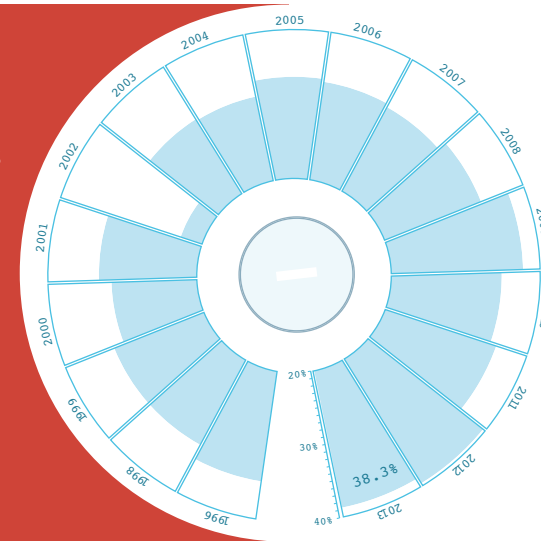
In 2012, in order for a single Calgary minimum-wage earner to meet basic needs, they have to work 46 hours a week. A single parent with two children has to work 70 hours a week.

Between September 2013 and August 2014, the Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank Society (CIFB) provided food for 132,469 Calgarians. That compares with 136,153 people in 2011-12 and 129,948 people in 2012-13.

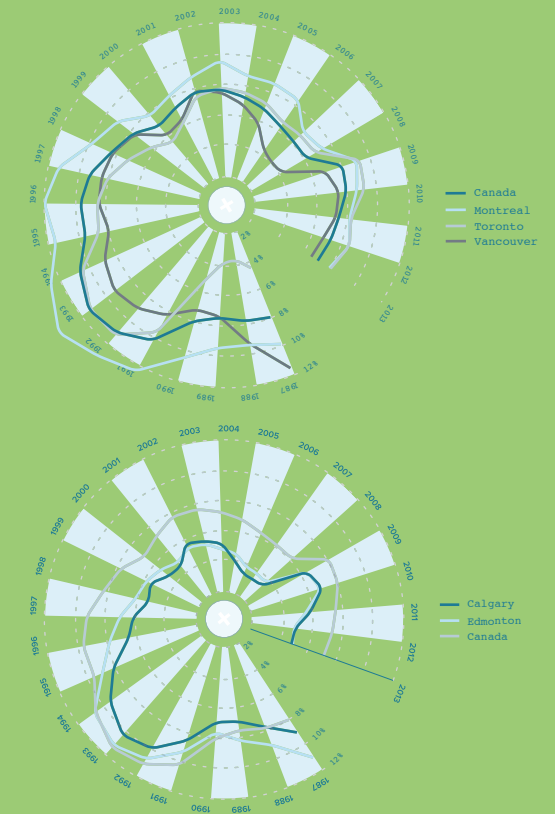
Between 1980 and 2005, Calgary experienced the largest increase in income in-equality of any Canadian city. Inequality in Alberta also rose: in 2011, it was the most unequal province in the country.

# OIL + GAS RELIANCE

In 2013, the oil and gas sector employed about 8.4 per cent of the Calgary's workers, contributed 29.7 per cent of the city's GDP and 76.8 percent of the provinces exports.



# UNEMPLOYMENT



# EDUCATION

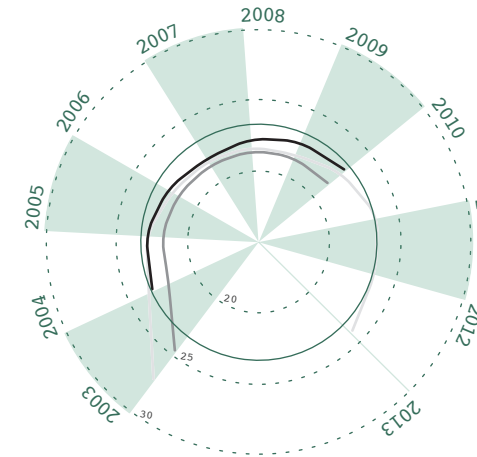
In 2012, 55 per cent of Albertans between the ages of 16 and 65 functioned at literacy level three or higher – second in the country of all provinces and territories after the Yukon.

In June 2014, the three tiers of childcare staff based on certification – child development assistant, child development worker and child development supervisor – earned an average hourly wage of \$12.99, \$14.49 and \$16.17, respectively.

On the 2012-2013 Provincial Achievement Tests for Language Arts, 83.7 per cent of Grade 3 students in Calgary achieved the “acceptable” standard as identified by Alberta Learning, an increase from the previous year’s 83.6 per cent – just below the target of 85%.

In 2012, Calgarians used the 18 branches of the Calgary Public Library (CPL) approximately 36 million times, or 33.6 uses per capita, representing an increase of more than ten uses per capita since 2003.

# AVERAGE CLASS SIZE



In 2014/15, class size across all grades in Calgary averaged 24. The recommended average sizes were exceeded in grades K-3 for both school boards; for grades 7-9 by the CBE and for grades 4-6 and 10-12 for the Catholic board.

# LIBRARY USE

**5.7 Million**

In-Person visits to the Calgary Public Library (CPL) (2013)

**36 Million**

Times the Calgary Public Library was Accessed (2012)

**85% Growth**

Per Capita use of the Calgary Public Library (1994 - 2012)

**337,000**

People attended programs and events hosted at the CPL

**16,600**

Kids improved reading skills through Library Summer Reading Adventure (2012)

# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Alberta's goal is to maintain good air quality at least 97 per cent of the time in urban areas with no poor air quality events. In 2008, the Air Quality Index at Calgary's three monitoring stations – Central (downtown), Northwest (residential), and East (industrial) – were good (99.5, 97.7 and 98.4 per cent of the time, respectively). However, Calgary fell short of its goal in 2009 at two testing stations: Downtown (96 per cent) and the Northwest (95 per cent).

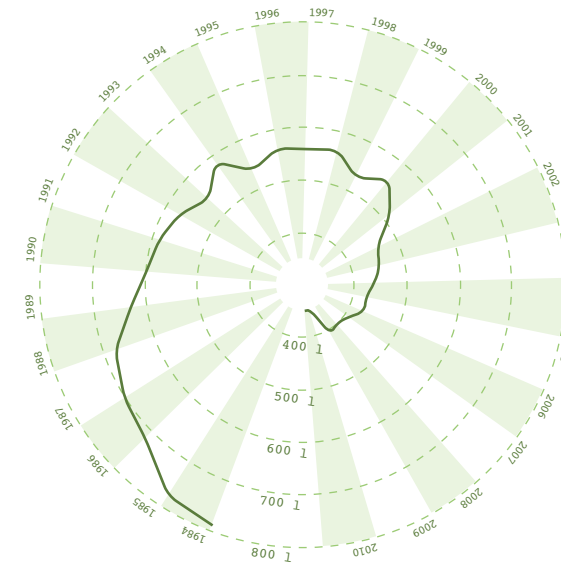
In 2004, there were nine community gardens and four farmers' markets in Calgary. In 2015, there were over 200 community gardens, and 19 farmers' or public markets.

Calgary is the largest municipality in Canada without a cosmetic pesticide bylaw. In 2012, 172,131 kilograms of active ingredients in pesticides were sold in Calgary as domestic pesticide.

The quality of surface water – the water in lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands – has historically been deemed "excellent" upstream of Calgary and between "fair" and "good" downstream.

The year 2013 marked a sharp decline in total number of birds counted from 2012 – dropping from 57,149 (the fifth highest count ever) birds to 41,994. In total, 63 species were spotted, down from 65 in 2012.

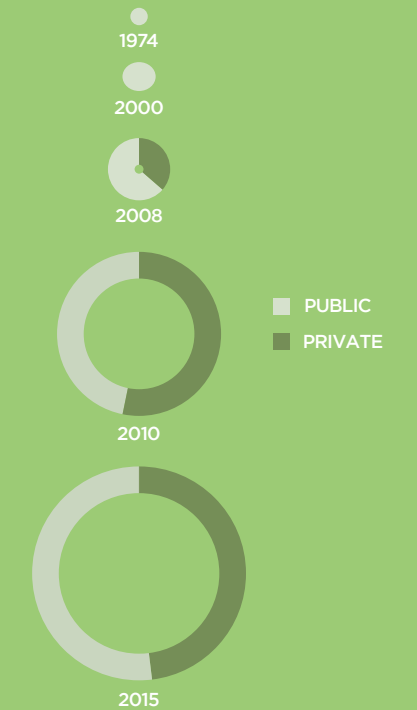
# H<sub>2</sub>O CONSUMPTION



In 2014, Calgary's average per capita water consumption of approximately 400 litres per capita per day was less than half of the per capita consumption in 1984. Total usage in 2014 was 176,000 million litres, 83% of the 2003 volume.

# FOOD PRODUCED LOCALLY

## GROWTH IN COMMUNITY GARDENS





# RESOURCE USE

In 2013, Calgary's ecological footprint was estimated at approximately 8.0 global hectares/ person. The global fair share ecological footprint is 1.7 global hectares/ person .

In 2014, Calgarians generated 674 kilograms/person, a significant increase from 583 in 2013 and 556 in 2012.

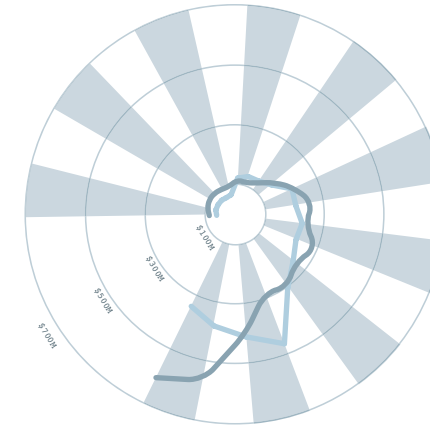
In 2014, Calgary had a population density of 1,409 persons per square kilometre based on a population of 1,195,194 people and an area of 848 square kilometres: Statistics Canada reports that between 2006 and 2011, Calgary's population experienced a 10.9 per cent increase.

In 2011, public transit accounted for 15.9 per cent of all commuter activity in Calgary, up slightly from 15.6 per cent in 2006. In 2008, transit accounted for 46.3 per cent of all work trips into downtown Calgary, a significant increase from 36 per cent in 1998.

## TRANSPORTATION SPENDING

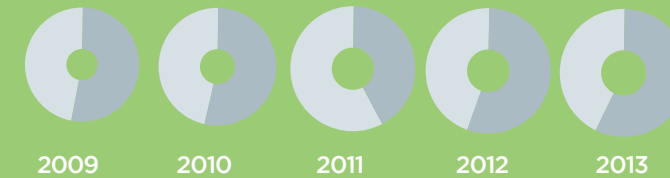
Based on replacement value, roads in 2007 accounted for 82% of Calgary's transportation infrastructure and transit the remaining 18%. AND in 2009, the City of Calgary spent \$954 million on transportation, the largest item in the City's budget. Almost two-thirds of the money was for public transit, a dramatic change from previous years.

# ENERGY CONSUMPTION

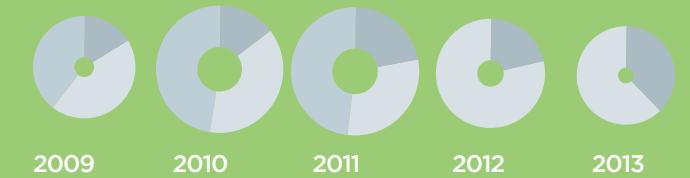


In 2013, Calgarians total energy consumption (electricity, natural gas, gasoline) averaged the equivalent of 75 barrels of oil per capita, a 10% increase over 2000. Alberta's GHG emissions have increased 53% since 1990 and account for almost 25% of Canada's emissions

## TRANSIT OPERATING COST



## TRANSIT CAPITAL COST



■ TRANSIT ■ WEST LRT ■ ROADS | OTHER

# WELLNESS

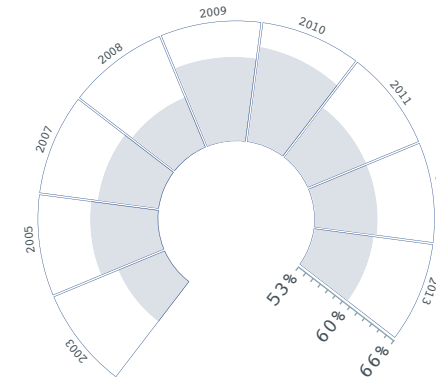
In 2012, Alberta Health Services (AHS) estimated that 26 per cent of Albertan children between the ages of two and 17 are considered overweight or obese: A number which equates to approximately 218,000 children.

In 2008, 92.4 percent of babies born in Calgary had a healthy birth weight. Calgary as the highest incidence of low birth weight in Alberta, Alberta has the highest rates in Canada and Canada has the highest rate of low birth weights among the G7 countries.

In 2012, the welfare income for a Albertan living with a disability was 82 per cent of the Low Income Cutoff (LICO), an increase from 64.1 per cent percent in 2009.

Between 2005 and 2012, asthma-related emergency visits and hospital admissions have decreased by 54 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively. In 2012, there were 1,350 emergency visits and 169 hospital admissions to the Alberta Children's Hospital for an asthma-related concern.

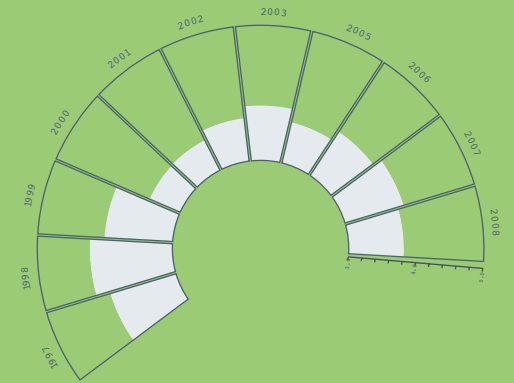
# SELF-RATED HEALTH



(Percent GOOD and VERY GOOD)

Calgary ranked fourth highest in Canada in self-rated health in 2013, with 65.3 per cent of Calgarians over the age of 12 rating their health as “very good” or “excellent.” Only 8.9 per cent rated their health as “fair” or “poor.”

# PREVENTATIVE HEALTH CARE



A 2013 study published by the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy concluded that investing in preventative health care could reduce hospital visits by 25 per cent and result in a net savings of \$500-million dollars. The province invests less than 4 per cent of its public health budget into preventative care.

# GOVERNANCE

Citizen satisfaction with city land use planning has been increasing since 2009, currently sitting at 84% of survey respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied.

In 2010, two-thirds of funding for all municipal candidates came from corporations, and 2% from groups such as trade associations and unions. Of these corporations and organizations, approximately two-thirds of campaign funding came from the building industry, including developers and home builders (47%) and architects, planners, and contractors (19%).

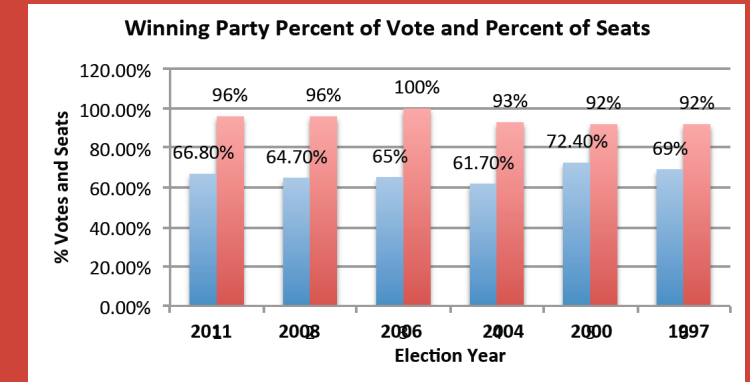
Calgary contributes substantially more revenue to federal and provincial coffers than it gets back in expenditures—and this discrepancy has grown significantly over the past two and a half decades. In 1988 Calgary contributed \$700 million more in revenue than it got back in expenditure. By 2007, that figure had ballooned to \$12.2 billion.

In 2010, of the 245 positions within a selection of Calgary's most influential boards, councils, elected bodies, and media, 31 per cent were held by women, 9.8 per cent by visible minorities, and zero per cent by Aboriginal people. These groups represent 50, 25, and 2.5 percent of the population respectively.

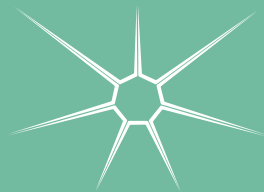
# POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

## EARNED SEATS AVERAGE

In Alberta the winning parties routinely win 90 - 100% of the seats in the federal election with support from 62-72% of voters. Only 52-62% of Albertans voted in the previous six elections. So in fact, winning parties are awarded 90-100% of seats on the basis of between 35-45% of eligible voters casting a vote for them. In other words, in the six elections between 1997 and 2011 between 25-35% of seats for the winning party were unearned.



## OUR PROCESS



While producing this report was an important goal, the process of developing this tool is equally valuable. Experiences with sustainability reporting suggest that the way to attain a set of indicators that is truly meaningful, useful, and representative of our city is to involve a broad cross-section of citizens in the indicator selection process. Since 1998 over 2000 Calgarians have participated in choosing this set of sustainability indicators, researching the trends, debating the implications of the data and generating solutions (policies) that will improve the well-being and sustainability of our city for all Calgarians. Join Us in making Calgary a better place. || [sustainablecalgary.org](http://sustainablecalgary.org)

