



For Immediate Release

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Inn from the Cold Launches Awareness and Fundraising Campaign Unique Challenges Face Homeless Families

Calgary, AB - For only the second time in its almost 15-year history, Inn from the Cold is launching an awareness and fundraising campaign, called The Littlest Things, to help Calgarians understand the complexities of family homelessness and the urgent need to support this vulnerable population.

“There are many unique factors and challenges facing homeless families. Every family member has specific needs and requires critical support. Overall, families require longer term resources to successfully secure and maintain appropriate housing, and break the cycle of homelessness,” says Yvette Rasmussen, Executive Director, Inn from the Cold.

Families come from a variety of circumstances and currently the Inn's guest population is a combination of Aboriginal, immigrant and Calgary's most vulnerable families. Many of the families are first-time guests to the Inn. Many at-risk families who are in danger of losing their housing are finding success through the Inn's partnered Prevention program.

Homelessness takes a huge toll on families as they struggle to maintain some degree of normalcy and balance in their lives. In the campaign, Inn from the Cold highlights how even the littlest things – such as homework, bath time or reading a bedtime story – can become overwhelming challenges for a family without a safe place to live.

“In the creative, we show seemingly mundane daily tasks we all take for granted as absurd and sad situations. Our invitation to Calgarians is to get involved through donating, hosting fundraising events, volunteering or helping us raise awareness,” explains Todd Sloane, Creative Director of Tag Advertising who generously developed the campaign that includes online advertising, sponsored outdoor advertising, public service announcements and social media communication.

One of the other key campaign messages is that many of these families could be families next door to everyday Calgarians. They could be the child that sits next to your son or daughter at school, a work colleague or neighbour. Campaign models are former or current Inn guests who have selflessly stepped up to increase awareness regarding family homelessness.

The timing of the campaign is particularly critical as the Inn has recently experienced an unusually high increase in families seeking emergency shelter. The Inn's Emergency Family Shelter has been at or over capacity since spring with the community shelter program at, or over, capacity on several occasions in the past two months. The Emergency Family Shelter can host up to 100 family members daily and the community program — where local churches and community groups offer shelter in their respective facilities—can typically accommodate between 15 and 30 individuals.

“Since March, we have realized a consistent upward trend in the number of homeless families seeking emergency shelter and help at the Inn,” says Rasmussen “What is particularly alarming





is the dramatic spikes in the unprecedented shelter use in July (up by 26% over 2010) and August (up by 19% over 2010), which put a drastic strain on our programs and supports, as well as financial and human resources. Our shelter use numbers are at their highest peak since we opened the Emergency Family Shelter in 2008.

With the Inn's main family shelter overcapacity many nights, the community-based temporary emergency shelter program, offered by local churches and the faith community, has stepped up to ensure no family is without support or secure shelter.

Adds Rasmussen, "Since founding Inn from the Cold almost 15 years ago, Calgary's faith community has been caring for the homeless in our city. Their extraordinary commitment to helping families with no where to go is truly remarkable and enables us to stay true to our mission of providing compassionate care to homeless families and those in need, every day of the year."

The money raised through the Littlest Things campaign will go towards Inn from the Cold's programs and supports dedicated to helping families successfully find and maintain housing, while offering the resources they require to rebuild their lives.

When a family arrives at the Inn, they are assigned a Family Support Worker (case manager) who works closely with every family member to determine their required supports and programs to begin rebuilding their lives. It can be everything from helping to enroll kids in a school, to providing diapers and formula for an infant, to helping families search for jobs and housing, to providing critical counselling and eviction interventions. The assigned Family Support Worker will work with the family in the shelter, when they transition into housing and for up to two years in the community. Currently every full-time family support staff member works with approximately 25 families.

Rasmussen says, "Our campaign goal is to raise \$1 million. If every Calgarian gave just one loonie, we would exceed our goal. The smallest donation will make a big impact on our community. With Inn from the Cold experiencing a decrease in donations this year and seeing an increase in families seeking help, it is essential that we have the human and financial resources to meet the need."

For information on how you can get involved in helping to end family homelessness, contact Inn from the Cold at 403-263-8384 or via email at info@innfromthecold.org. Campaign information can be found at <http://innfromthecold.org>.

ADDITIONAL FACTS

- An average of 50 guests are admitted each day to Inn from the Cold
- Between two to three of our guests daily are pregnant women
- On average over half of our guests are children under 17 years of age
- Approximately two immigrant families arrive each day
- In 2010, 45% of families seeking shelter at the Inn were Aboriginal and 28% were immigrants





- The average length of stay for 51% of Inn guests is 14 nights due to the recent addition of four Family Support Workers dedicated to helping families access housing and resources
- Immigrant families average 28+ days at the shelter due to the complexity of their situations

Factors Contributing to Family Homelessness

- Lack of safe, suitable affordable housing
- Addictions
- Illness
- Mental health issues
- Change in family circumstance (i.e. divorce)
- Job loss
- Vulnerable populations
- Generational
- Domestic violence
- Cultural / political persecution (immigrants)

