

## Number of Homeless Families in Calgary Reaching Unprecedented High

**Calgary** – Calgary’s homeless families are quickly running out of options for temporary emergency shelter. Inn from the Cold, the only place where homeless families can go and stay together, has seen a record number of families looking for help over the past three weeks.

“We are rapidly approaching a crisis situation,” says Diana Segboer, Inn from the Cold’s Executive Director. “Summer is typically a busy time for us but we are seeing an unprecedented number of families coming to the Inn, looking for shelter. The demand is greater than the number of beds we have available and for the first time in our history, we may have to turn families away. A lack of affordable housing and very few rental vacancies are the primary reasons we are seeing more and more families.”

Segboer explains that the Inn relies on almost 4000 volunteers, representing over 70 churches, synagogues and organizations, to provide between 45 and 60 beds on any given night of the year. Summer is a challenging time because there are typically fewer beds for families due to a decrease in available volunteers who often take holidays during July and August. As well, many facility renovation projects are slated for the summer months, when regular programming is typically lighter at the various churches and buildings.

“For several weeks, the Inn has been operating at capacity. In the past three days alone, five new families have arrived at the Inn and we have been forced to access shelter through Emergency Social Services, meaning several of our families have gone to hotels instead of one of our regular shelters,” explains Segboer.

She adds that on Wednesday, July 5, 2006 the Inn staff took another 10 calls from new families looking for shelter and that the office is receiving a number of calls from out-of-province families who are moving to Calgary for work. “We’ve told them not to come because we may not be able to provide them with shelter.”

Inn from the Cold is looking at temporary solutions to deal with the looming crisis but is asking the Calgary community for help. Providing emergency shelter in hotels is an option but families then do not receive a food allowance. With the Calgary Stampede starting on July 7th, reasonably priced hotels will have few, if any vacancies.

Another option is to host emergency inns at one of three local churches who have offered space but do not have the volunteers to do the work. However funds are needed to help pay for food and new volunteers are required to help with set-up, cooking, hosting and taking down the cots the next day.

Segboer says that without new volunteers and additional financial support, the Inn may have to turn families away. “This is obviously our very last resort and something that we hope we never have to do. We do not want to see children on the street.” Calgarians wanting to help can contact Inn from the Cold at 263-8384 or e-mail [inn@innfromthecold.org](mailto:inn@innfromthecold.org).

