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August 16, 2020

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Dear Ms. Kala,

Attached below is a copy of my report, Studying and Increasing Information and Support Surrounding Homelessness In Communities such as The Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre (CDIRCS). It is a study on some of the challenges faced as well as what can be done to be of support in the most effective ways hopefully. During the process of this report, many aspects of how non-profit organizations operate and the ways of providing support to the vulnerable in a community were brought to light. I greatly appreciate the assistance in learning about the Centre during an unprecedented time.

The report was developed with identifying patterns of challenges and strategies of plans in mind in hopes of further creating new ideas and goals along with future proposals to reach a larger audience. The results of the data gathered from articles, interviews and surveys have helped in identifying a few primary ways to be of support which hopefully can also be used as beneficial information for the future.

It has been enjoyable learning about the community and non-profit organizations in finalizing the report. Please let me know if you have any questions or comments, I would be happy to answer them.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia Li', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cynthia Li

**Studying and Increasing Information and Support Surrounding Homelessness In  
Communities such as The Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre (CDIRCS)**

For

The Drop-In Communications - Public Relations & Media

The Calgary Homeless Drop-In & Rehab Centre (CDIRCS)

by

Cynthia Li

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August 4, 2020

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**Abstract**

Many non-profit organizations exist to provide services and support for those more vulnerable in communities. The Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre provides emergency help as well as health services, resources, networking, career building and housing support. There are a multitude of programs to choose from that all aid in alleviating poverty. The pandemic has highlighted many main questions when it comes to community support and social responsibility. COVID-19 requires health protocols to be put into place to ensure public and personal safety. Some include: social distancing, protective wear, sanitization and more. These protocols can be challenging for centre's to implement.

Through research and analysis done by collecting data from online sources such as articles and journals as well as conducting surveys and interviews, a variety of solutions can be proposed to increase support, education and security for homelessness in communities.

1. Increasing Social Media Usage: Having social media to share stories, greatest needs and appreciation is a good start. Increasing usage in effective ways (such as daily tasks, updates) generates more interest, priority and relevancy.
2. Education through programs or social media: Through programs and online sources, the effects of homelessness in communities, social responsibility and other information can be taught. This increases understanding and care, therefore the possibility for more action.
3. Direct action/support within communities: Directly helping the centre through means such as item and cash donations or volunteering and working there are some of the most effective ways in supporting homelessness in communities.

## I. Introduction:

### A. Background Information & Statement of the Problem:

According to The Canadian Encyclopedia, there are approximately 35,000 Canadians every night who experience homelessness. In Calgary alone, the latest statistics from Homelesshub (2018) show there are 2911 people out of approximately 1.2 million people in the city experiencing homelessness with an average rate of 68% of those people experiencing chronic homelessness. This counts toward 51% of homelessness in Alberta. Due to the high percentage, Calgary implemented a 10-year plan to end homelessness back in 2008 which ended in 2018, led by the Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF). There was a drop of more than 15% in homelessness since then even with an increasing population.

The Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre (CDIRCS) was established to alleviate poverty in the city for everyone. The centre focuses on ways to establish social capital, which includes health, support, resources and other programs to increase a person's capacity for independent living. Figure 1 shows how the Drop-In Centre can calculate social capital and an individual's capacity for independent living.

***The likelihood of entering Homelessness increases as an individual's social capital is exhausted...***

$$\lim_{SC \rightarrow 0} IL_{cap} = 0$$

$$SC = \sum_{k=1}^n SC_k$$

Figure 1: Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre Strategic Plan (2017)

Where:

$IL_{cap}$  is an individual's capacity for independent living

$SC$  is an individual's social capital

$SC_k$  is a component of social capital, e.g. family support, employment skills, reserves of cash/credit, friend support, self esteem, mental and physical health, ...

## B. Statement of Problem

People at risk of homelessness or in homeless centres can be some of the most vulnerable and at risk of contracting COVID-19. This is because of limited access to facilities such as bathrooms to wash hands and being less able to stay inside or self-isolate from others. Supplies such as cleaning materials and masks are also restricted. There are medical conditions to consider such as respiratory issues or low immune systems that require monitoring. The Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) states that homeless centres are at high risk of transmission of COVID-19. “Infectious disease epidemics and pandemics have a disproportionate impact on people experiencing poverty, marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination” (Perri et. al). The social distancing rule and other public health directives become difficult to follow. Since COVID-19 also affects business and other centres, if those services close they may also impact those in need of them to maintain a capacity for independent living. There are many funds set up on Canadahelps.org for different parts of the country as well as on the Calgary Homeless Foundation website.

In Calgary, since the beginning of April 2020, more people have been testing positive for COVID-19 at Calgary homeless centres according to GlobalNews (Castillo). Many efforts have been made to prevent the spread such as setting up isolation centres or providing more testing. More support would greatly benefit with protecting those in homeless centres including those at risk of homelessness and front-line workers.

### C. Purpose of The Report

The purpose of this report is to gather data and research for analysis. The research and analysis in hopes of having a better understanding of the goals and challenges of homeless centres, especially in times such as a global pandemic and to study the effectiveness of current practices. The pandemic has shown ways in which communities can come together to support those more vulnerable and has highlighted how housing can improve in the future whether through government or local involvement. The data as well as information can be used to further study trends in challenges and solutions, for educational purposes and in proposing and creating strategies and ways to support housing.

### D. Methods & Scope

An interview with Kala, part of the Public Relations & Media department of the CDIRCS was conducted in parts. This was to clarify important questions and information. A survey was handed out to those in the department as well in order to gather other data. Secondary research included the website itself, news articles and official statistics. I researched questions ranging from small details to more general inquiries to identify some of the main challenges, the central focuses including but not limited to:

- What are the main changes to the centre since COVID-19?
- What would be most beneficial for the centre as of now, that the general public could support in?
- Is extending information and educating the general public a concern and has social media been helpful/effective in doing so?

### III. Data Section

#### A. Changes Implemented At The Centre In Response to COVID-19

<b>Major Changes</b>	<b>Details</b>
<u>Cleaning and Health Protocols</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wearing of masks at all times</li> <li>• More hand washing stations</li> <li>• Mandatory hand washing or sanitizing before entering</li> <li>• Screening of clients for symptoms before entering</li> <li>• Taking body temperature before entering</li> <li>• Increasing cleaning times in high risk areas</li> <li>• Travelling on floors changed to adhere to social distancing recommendations</li> <li>• Social distancing implemented in different parts such as dining areas</li> <li>• Tested positive or suspected of testing must isolate in a separate centre</li> </ul>
<u>Support In and For The Centre</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two Satellite Shelters opened for more services and spacing</li> <li>• Calgary Telus Convention Centre (CTCC) was one of them</li> <li>• Donations</li> <li>• Social media usage</li> </ul>
<u>Staffing and Volunteering</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in staff members in all departments</li> <li>• Hiring of more licensed practical nurses (LPN)</li> <li>• Closing of non-essential areas and volunteer programs</li> </ul>



### B. Summary of Changes and Effectiveness

The sudden global pandemic has been a challenge to adapt to, especially concerning the unknown around the suddenness and newness of COVID-19. In response, the centre has been successful in adhering to health directives to reduce the spread and continue operations as normally and effectively as possible. The spread of COVID-19 in the centre has been limited due to the hiring of LPN's, leading health physicians, mandatory sanitization and wearing of masks, testing and temperature monitoring. Support from large organizations has aided in the opening of two alternative shelters to provide more space, services and as help to respond to possible scenarios such as emergencies and isolation. Though extra volunteer programs are currently closed, staff has increased out of necessity and importance. All of these changes made have been greatly beneficial in reducing the spread of COVID-19 as very few people have tested positive, ensuring security whilst alleviating poverty.

### C. Consistency of Goals & Strategic Priorities During COVID-19

The goals during the pandemic still include housing, such as helping a set number of people in a set period of time find affordable housing. The centre continues to search for affordable housing for clients. Receiving donations are a consistent objective and the use of social media aids in gathering them.

Many operations in the centre have been and continue to be altered to ensure the safety of clients and staff. However, these changes implemented are in place so the centre may continue operations as much as possible. Therefore, the strategic priorities have not changed and still include providing services and support whether medical, social or otherwise to increase the

capacity for independent living. As done normally, those who can provide affordable housing can contact the centre at landlords@thedi.ca. There is a current program on Tuesdays called #GivingTuesdayNow posted on social media to help reach donation goals. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are utilized to share stories, needs and appreciation @calgarydropin.

### E. Public Support

After speaking with Ms. Kala from Public Relations & Media, there are also three main ways the public can support the CDIRCS highlighted:

#### 1. Volunteering

- Though the volunteer program in the main emergency shelter has closed due to the pandemic, volunteering at the donation centre remains open to the public.

#### 2. Item Donations

- Donating of new or used items to either the emergency shelter or Free Goods Program.
  - Eg. Furniture, cookware, household items to provide for no or low-income Calgarians moving into new housing
  - Eg. During the heat wave, items such as sunglasses, ball caps or water bottles are appreciated.

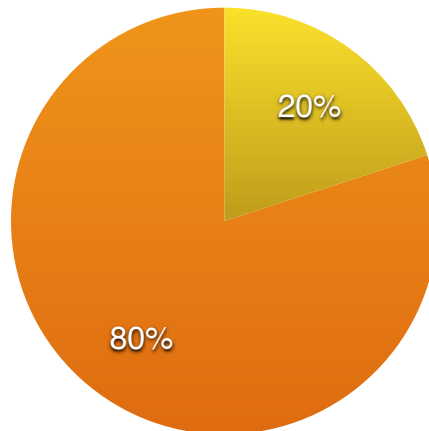
#### 3. Cash Donations

- These donations help keep programs and services running for thousands

#### D. Survey Results & Figures

*Figure 2: Increase or Decrease in Clients Since COVID-19*

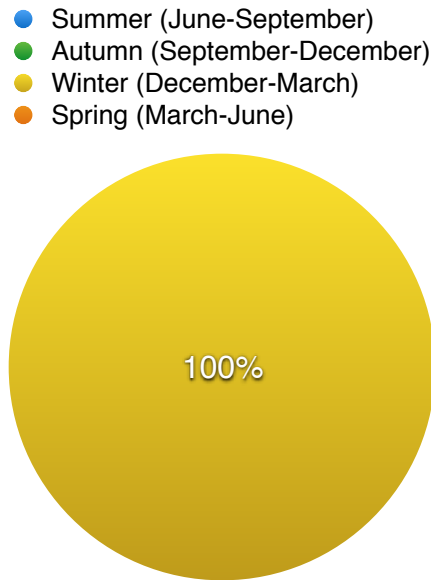
● Increase                      ● Decrease  
● Approximately Same      ● Other (see below)



Other: Due to physical distancing, additional shelter sites have been opened to ensure people have a place to sleep.

Since the pandemic, gauging the difference in number of clients is unclear. However, it is estimated there has been neither a huge increase or decrease. Instead, what has been clarified is the increase in number of shelter sites to adhere to social distancing. Staffing has also increased in areas of need such as health (nursing).

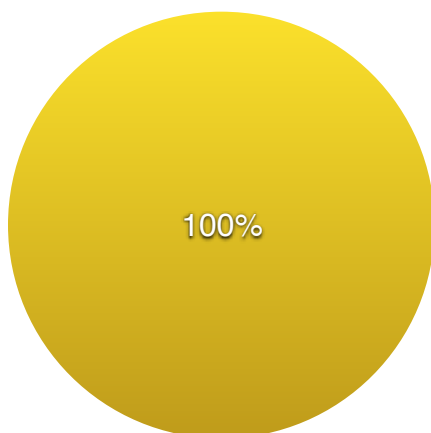
Figure 3: Busiest Time's of the Year



Winter time (December-March) is the busiest time of the year. This is partly due to Calgary's weather consistently dropping below 30° celsius. Therefore, data collected on the busiest times is important for knowing when to begin preparing whether through partnerships, donations, social media usage or other.

Figure 4: General Changes in Statistics Within the Centre Since the Pandemic (such as busiest days or times)

- Yes
- No
- Other (see below)

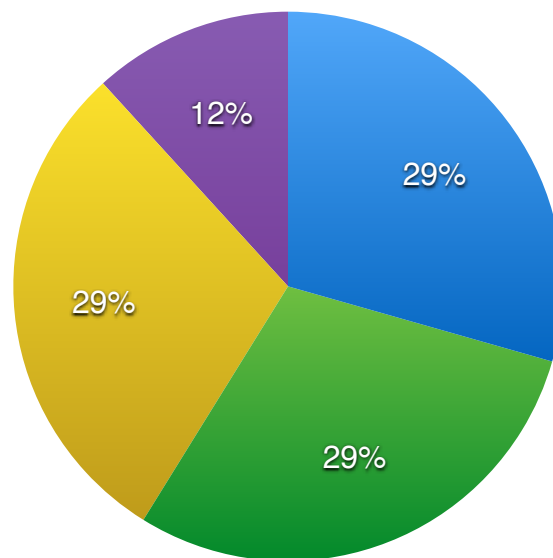


Other: Will find out more this winter (too soon to see).

To identify possible patterns for future reference, the question of whether or not there have been changes concerning general statistics within the centre since the pandemic was posed. However, because the situation is unprecedented, data is currently being waited on to determine possible strategies concerning numeric areas of study such as changes in busiest times, number of donations etc.

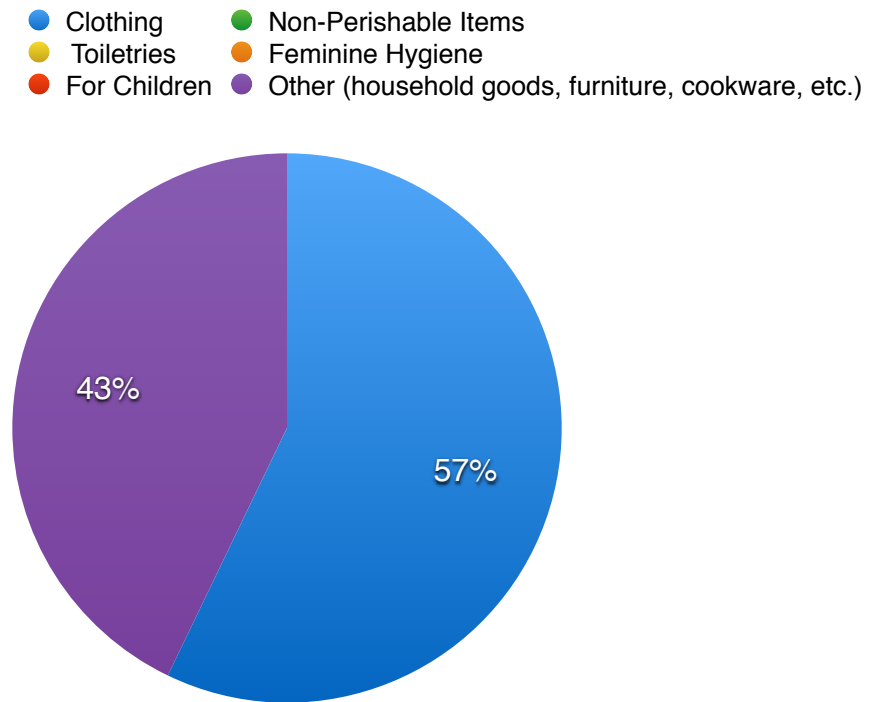
*Figure 5: Most Common Donations Prior to COVID-19*

- Clothing
- Non-Perishable Items
- Toiletries
- Feminine Hygiene
- For Children
- Other household goods, furniture, cookware, etc.)



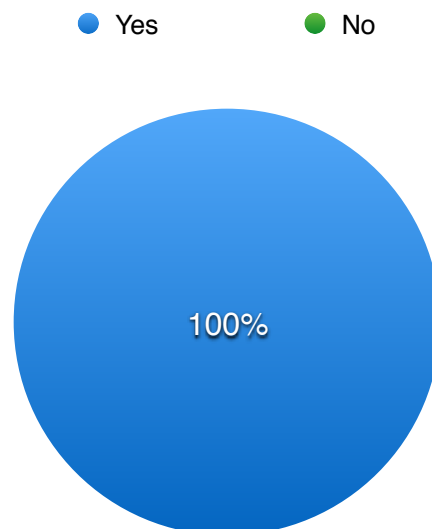
Clothing for all, toiletries such as toothbrushes, shampoo, soap etc. as well non-perishable items like canned good are the most common donations (prior to COVID-19). Other results included household items such as furniture and cookware.

Figure 6: Most Wanted/Needed Donations



In general, the most wanted and needed donations for the centre include clothing and household items. Clothing for all types of weather and situations such as Summer vs. Winter, job interviews, casual, etc. are always appreciated. Since many are able to find housing, items such as cookware or tables, etc. can be expensive and are beneficial.

Figure 7: Changes To Donations Wanted/Needed Since COVID-19:



There is a change in wanted and needed donations since the pandemic. In particular, answers focused around Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). These include disposable gloves, medical masks or cloth masks including N95 masks and sanitization items.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

##### A. Summary of Findings

Non-profit organizations such as the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre (CDIRCS) face a variety of challenges year-round. The main goals are: finding affordable housing, providing health and social services and other programs to increase an individual's capacity for independent living and finally, gathering donations to assist in alternative, affordable, effective ways to keep things running. What is found is that these goals have not changed since COVID-19, only the operations to continue the vision. These changes in running the centre are consistent with environmental changes.

##### B. Analysis of Findings

Through researching and interpretation of the gathered data, unexpected changes such as COVID-19 have shown the importance of communities and involvement. When centre's such as the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre are supported locally and on all levels of the government, thousands of people receive the things they need to live independently again. This is a domino effect and has a positive change on the community for the long-term.

##### C. Recommendations

Some of the recommendations provided through interviews and surveys as well as from the interpretations of the findings include:

### 1. Increase in social media presence

- This includes constant usage of popular platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

These platforms offer a variety of ways to deliver information which can then reach a larger audience. Sharing pictures, videos is included as visual stimuli. Short blurbs that capture a reader's attention can be used on Twitter. Links are easy and convenient to add on to any post for users on these sites.

- The purpose of a stronger social media presence is to gather more support such as donations, partnerships, volunteers etc. through sharing online and making connections. Events and programs can become especially popular.

### 2. Education

- Bringing awareness to homelessness in communities is vital in providing support.

Misinformation around homelessness can be possible. Providing means of education on the reasons behind homelessness, effects and consequences of homelessness, ways in which it can be solved to a mass audience, especially specific to a location or city, creates understanding within communities and willingness to help.

### 3. Direct Action/Support

- Directly helping the centre through means such as item and cash donations or volunteering and working there are some of the most effective ways in supporting homelessness in communities.



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