

New report shows economic downturn still affecting students and new Canadians

November 23, 2010

CALGARY—The recession continues to impact Calgarians much more deeply than is generally portrayed, according to a new report released today by a group of Calgary organizations.

Wasted Potential: Students and New Canadians Talk Frankly About the Impact of the Economic Downturn draws on ten focus groups organized by the [Alberta Global Forum](#), [Calgary Counselling Centre](#), [Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership](#) and the [University of Calgary Students' Union](#).

Over a hundred people – post-secondary students and recent immigrants – contributed observations on how the recession continues to impact them.

Five key themes are discussed in the report:

1. Frustration with the job market

Reduced employment has created frustration with the job market, especially among students and recent immigrants.

- The downturn has created a triple bind for students. Students require more work so they can pay higher tuition costs and living expenses. They have to stay in school longer because they can't carry a full course load, which means they end up paying more for their education, much of it with private debt.
- Recent immigrants' expectations to find well-paying, meaningful employment were dashed, forcing them to consider moving elsewhere in Canada or back to their home country.

2. Anxiety about entrenched inequality

The downturn has created anxiety about entrenched inequality between upper and lower income earners, leaving new-comers to the job market not hopeful for future prospects and stuck on the first rungs of society.

3. Rejection of recovery talk

Job growth was strong in Canada during the first six months of 2010 and GDP increased slowly. However, many Calgarians are not experiencing any signs of recovery in their day-to-day lives.

4. Crushing personal and household debt

Students anticipate considerable amounts of debt upon graduation with little idea of how to pay it off, and many recent immigrants said they had exhausted all the savings they brought with them while they looked for work.

5. Necessity for government action

A significant majority of participants called for the government to take action to help ease the recession, emphasizing the need for long term planning and better thought out immigration policies.

Wasted Potential is a follow-up to a 2009 report, *Dashed Dreams: Calgarians Talk Frankly about the Impact of the Economic Downturn*.

To download a copy of *Wasted Potential*, click [here](#) or cut and paste the following link in your browser: http://www.chumirethicsfoundation.ca/files/pdf/WastedPotential_Final20101123-low-res.pdf

Report release:

WHEN: November 23, 2010, 1:00 - 2:00 pm
WHERE: Cassio Room, MacEwan Conference Centre, University of Calgary
2500 University Dr. NW

Representatives from the sponsor organizations and commentators on poverty, immigration and post-secondary student life will speak at the report release:

- David Taras, Director, Alberta Global Forum
- Charlotte Kingston, Intern, Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership
- Hardave Birk, Chair, Council of Alberta University Students
- Robbie Babins-Wagner, Chief Executive Officer, Calgary Counselling Centre
- Lloyd Wong, Domain Leader, Prairie Metropolis Centre

Background:

- [Alberta's Wasted Potential](#), by Gillian Steward
- [Dashed Dreams, New Realities: Calgarians Talk Frankly about the Impact of the Economic Downturn](#) (pdf)

For more information:

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