

Check Against Delivery

CUPS / Calgary Stampeders Kickoff Breakfast May 13, 2014, Calgary Honourable Manmeet S. Bhullar, Minister, Human Services

Good morning everyone.

I am honoured to be here to bring greetings on behalf of the Alberta government.

I wish to acknowledge my Legislature colleagues in attendance – MLA for Calgary-Glenmore Linda Johnson; MLA for Calgary-Fort Wayne Cao; and MLA for Calgary-Buffalo Kent Hehr.

Thanks to Apache Canada and the Calgary Stampeders for helping host this 22nd annual fundraiser for the Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS).

I want to congratulate CUPS on its 25th anniversary!

This is a truly unique, three-way partnership between sports and entertainment, oil and gas and not-for-profit organizations.

It is tremendous to see so many people here, together, backing the same great cause.

Your support of CUPS demonstrates care and compassion for your fellow community members.

Your generosity is the reason this event has raised over \$1 million, to date, for CUPS programming.

CUPS programs make an incredibly positive and lasting difference in the lives of vulnerable Calgarians.

Through health, education and housing, CUPS is helping individuals and families climb out of poverty every day.

For so many people, CUPS represents hope, opportunity, inclusion and connection with community.

We recognize your outstanding work and I am pleased to support the important work that you do.

Through the Calgary Homeless Foundation, we provided \$1.8 million for CUPS' Housing First wraparound supports in 2013-2014.

Our government is committed to working with all of our community partners to end homelessness, break the cycle of poverty and address root causes by giving people opportunities to succeed.

Alberta launched the 10-year plan to end homelessness in 2009.

Nearly 9,500 homeless Albertans have accessed housing and supports since then.

That includes 3,900 people in Calgary.

Our plan is succeeding because of our Housing First approach.

Housing First is about providing supports for addictions, mental health, employment and training.

We can't simply rely on short-term emergency responses like shelters – Housing First lets us focus on providing permanent housing and wraparound services so that people can maintain their housing and regain their independence.

The vital assistance that CUPS provides is a perfect example of Housing First.

The province has committed \$19 million, an increase of 17 per cent, to homeless supports for this year.

This will increase wraparound supports for those who were formerly homeless, address the needs of youth who are homeless or at risk, and provide additional support for staff working in shelters.

Another important priority for Alberta and our communities is tackling poverty.

Poverty is about more than just a lack of money.

It's about a lack of opportunity.

Even though we live in such a vibrant province full of promise with a robust economy, poverty is unfortunately a reality and does affect countless Alberta families.

So we need to work together to help those that don't have all the opportunities the rest of us enjoy, help them break that continuous cycle, and put them on firm ground again to succeed.

Great work is already happening in communities and at the provincial level to give people opportunities to move out of poverty.

But we want to further support and tie this work together under a unified provincial strategy.

Recently, we consulted with Albertans, getting their ideas about ways to reduce poverty.

We are using your input and our research findings to create a poverty reduction strategy for Alberta.

What is, and will continue to be absolutely key to ending homelessness and reducing poverty, is for us to focus on addressing their root causes such as family violence, unemployment, and mental health.

We will only succeed with your continued support and action.

Government and communities, alone, cannot solve complex challenges.

But, by working together, we can and we will.

As events like this show, we're all on the same team.

We all win when every Albertan has the opportunity to succeed.

Families are stronger, communities are safer and more vibrant, businesses thrive and our economy grows.

Together, we will build an even more prosperous Alberta for all.

Thanks to all of you for supporting CUPS and its great work on the frontlines, empowering Calgary's most vulnerable.

Please join me in wishing the Calgary Stampeders the best of luck in getting a 'CUP' of their own this year.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak with you.

Enjoy the rest of today's event.

GO STAMPS!