

Supports for
Independence and
the Cost of Living in
Alberta:

Regional Differences

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Executive Summary

This research was commissioned by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters who, for the past several years, have witnessed thousands of women and children receiving Supports for Independence (SFI) allowances from the Alberta Government who are unable to provide for their basic needs.

Data on food and housing costs in Alberta was collected from Federal and Provincial government sources. This information was then used to estimate the cost of living in all 18 Child and Family Services Regions in Alberta. We have defined "cost of living" according to Statistics Canada's information on family expenditures in Canada and have been careful to include in our estimates only those items that are legitimate needs.

In all regions of Alberta the cost of living is substantially higher than allowances received by SFI recipients. Single women on SFI receive as little as 26% of the cost of living and a maximum of 39% of the cost of living. Lone parent families receive SFI allowances between 43% and 58% of the cost of living, and two-parent families receive allowances between 44% and 56% of their actual living costs.

In many cases, the allowances provided by SFI are not enough to cover the costs of food and shelter alone. In addition, the variations in cost of living among regions means that SFI recipients living in several regions are considerably worse off than others.

This report, therefore, concludes that SFI allowances are inadequate to meet the basic needs of recipients in all regions of Alberta. Further, the program's failure to account for variations in the cost of living between regions results in an even lower standard of living for residents in several regions.

Based on the data in this report, we urge the Government of Alberta to:

- 1. Increase standard allowances and shelter allowances under the Supports for Independence Program to a level equal with the cost of living for all recipients in Alberta;*
- 2. Take into account the differences in the cost of living between regions and provide higher SFI allowances in areas of the province with higher living costs.*

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Introduction

The past 10 years in Alberta have seen a critical increase in the lack of safe and affordable housing. Alberta has typically had a "boom and bust economy" and this has translated into both a shortage of housing and an increase in the cost of procuring housing throughout the province. In addition, with the "Welfare Reforms" of 1993, shelter allowances decreased during a time of rental increases. Shelter allowances within the Alberta government's Supports for Independence Program (SFI, also known as social assistance or welfare) are now so inadequate that they do not allow access to housing. This is a severe situation for all families who, at one time or another, must rely on SFI in order to survive.

In addition, the health and vibrancy of the economy in Alberta varies from region to region and from municipality to municipality. While the average poverty rate in the province is 18.4%, this rate ranges from a low of 13.5% in Grande Prairie to a high of 26.0% in Edmonton (Canadian Council on Social Development [CCSD], 1999). Employment rates, cost of living, and the availability of well-paying jobs also vary. Yet, there is no flexibility in SFI allowances to account for the differing cost of living among regions.

Alberta shelters served almost 13,000 women and children last year. Women are telling the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters that they are forced to return to abusive relationships because they cannot secure safe and affordable housing. Even though the province of Alberta currently has low unemployment rates, a healthy economy and huge surplus budgets, SFI allowances have not been increased. Consequently, for the past decade, many families on SFI have used the food portion of their allowances to subsidize rents to the point where nutritional levels for these families are severely below what is recommended in the Canada Food Guide.

This research was commissioned by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters with the purpose of:

- *determining the average cost of living in each of the seventeen geographic regions of Child and Family Services in the Province of Alberta;*
- *comparing these costs with the benefits received by SFI recipients; and*
- *making recommendations to the Provincial government regarding possible changes to the SFI program allowances to ensure that women and children have access to adequate food, shelter and other basic needs.*

Methodology

For each of the 18 Child and Family Services regions of Alberta,¹ the average cost of living has been calculated for three different households:

- A single adult female living in a one bedroom apartment;*
- A lone female parent with a three-year-old female child and a seven-year-old male child living in a two bedroom apartment;*
- A male-female couple with a three-year-old female child and a seven-year-old male child living in a three bedroom apartment.*

The income of each household, if they were receiving SFI benefits, has also been calculated. SFI rates vary depending on the employability status of the recipient. Also, SFI recipients who are capable of working are required to do so. For these reasons, we have assumed that our sample recipients are able to work and will participate in an employment-training program during the year. We have attempted to include transportation and child care expenses that would make it possible for one adult member of each family to be working or looking for work 5 days per week.

Based on Statistics Canada data on “Spending Patterns in Canada” (1997), cost of living is defined as the actual expenditures that a family would be required to make to provide the following basic necessities:

- Shelter*
- Food*
- Transportation*
- Telephone*
- Household operations, including child care, furniture and equipment*
- Clothing*
- Health and personal care*
- Recreation & reading material*
- Education*
- Miscellaneous expenses*

Data on the cost of shelter in Alberta cities, towns and villages is compiled by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and by Alberta Municipal Affairs. In developing regional averages, we have used 1999 average rental rates for one, two and three bedroom units in 74 Alberta communities.

Data on the cost of food was compiled using Alberta Agriculture’s “Nutritious Food Basket Price Reports” from 1996 to 1999. These reports are “one-day snapshots” that measure “the cost of healthy eating based on current nutrition recommendations” for males and females at various ages (Alberta Agriculture, 1999). Because the nutritious

food basket price information is collected on different days in different communities, comparisons between communities are difficult to make. However, we have adjusted the prices to constant 1999 dollars in an attempt to control for differences that result from the time the data was collected. This data was available for 55 communities in the province.

The SFI rates that each of our sample recipients would receive is then compared with the cost of living in each region. To put the data into context, we have also compared SFI rates and cost of living information with Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs.

A more detailed discussion of methodology and the mathematical process we used to estimate costs where actual amounts were not available is included in Appendix A.

Defining Poverty

Measures of poverty in Canada vary and are often disputed. The most commonly accepted definition, however, is Statistics Canada's "low-income cut-offs" (LICOs), which are often referred to as Canada's "poverty lines" (CCSD, 1999). LICOs tend to fall approximately mid-way between the lowest, most conservative estimates of poverty and the highest estimates of poverty.² LICOs are calculated according to an individual's family size and the population of the community in which they live, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Low Income Cut-Offs

Family Size	1997 LICOs				
	Population of Community of Residence				
	500,000 +	100,000 – 499,999	30,000 - 99,999	Less than 30,000	Rural
1 Person	\$17,571	\$15,070	\$14,965	\$13,924	\$12,142
2 People	\$21,962	\$18,837	\$18,706	\$17,405	\$15,178
3 People	\$27,315	\$23,429	\$23,264	\$21,647	\$18,877
4 People	\$33,063	\$28,359	\$28,162	\$26,205	\$22,849
5 People	\$36,958	\$31,701	\$31,481	\$29,293	\$25,542
6 People	\$40,855	\$35,043	\$34,798	\$32,379	\$28,235
7+ People	\$44,751	\$38,385	\$38,117	\$35,467	\$30,928

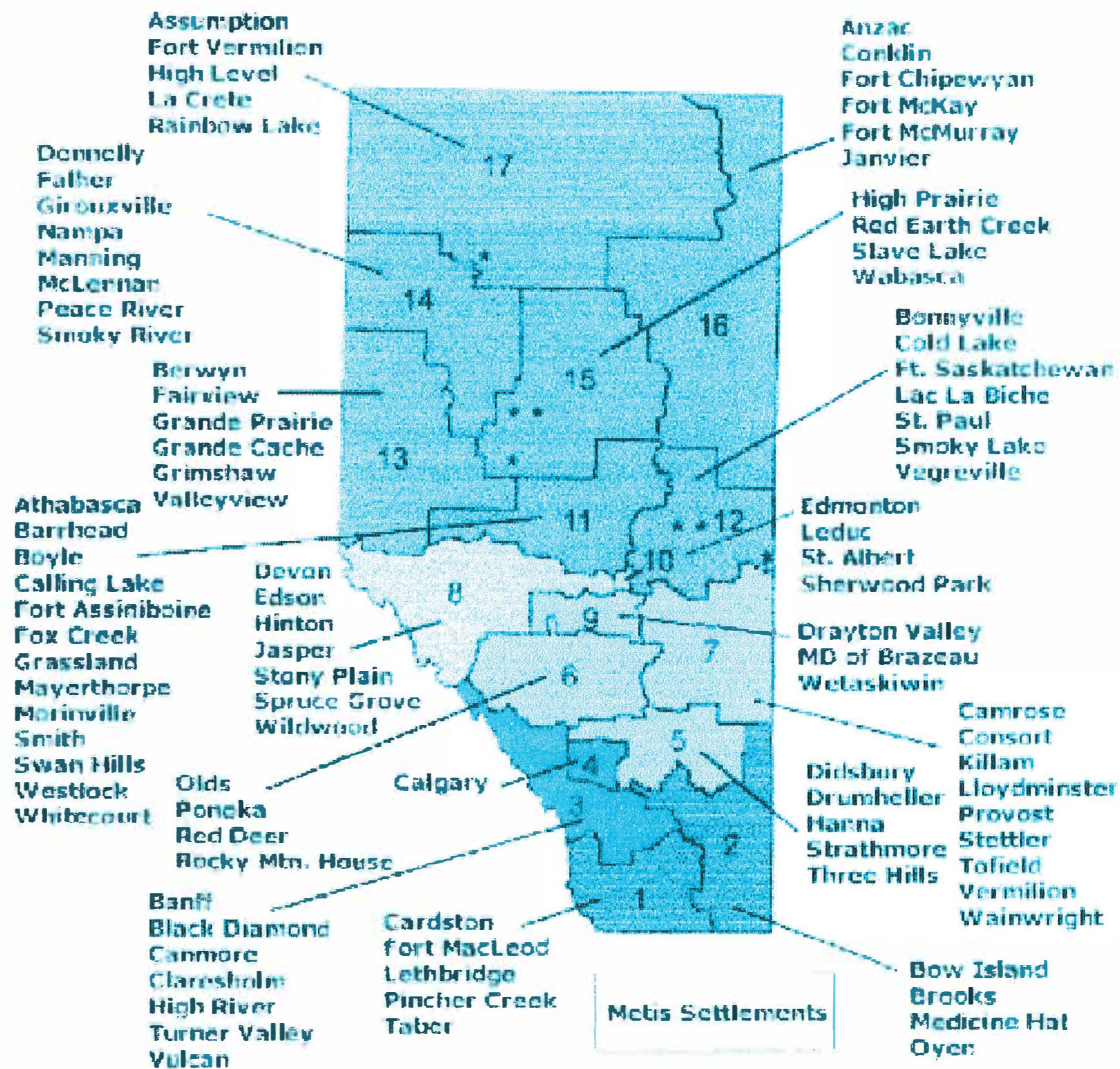
Source: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1999. Prepared using Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs from Income Distribution by Size in Canada, 1997, Cat. No. 13207-XPB, April 1999.

The data that follows suggests that, while LICOs are close to the cost of living for most communities, they may fall short in northern, rural areas where transportation costs are high.

Child and Family Services Regions

The map below shows the boundaries of the seventeen geographic regions for Child and Family Services in Alberta. Services in each region are administered by a Regional Authority; however, SFI rates are consistent throughout the province. Asterisks on the map indicate the 8 Metis Settlements that comprise Region 18.

Figure 1: Alberta Child and Family Services Regions



Source: Child and Family Services Website, www.gov.ab.ca/cs/cfsa/alberta

SFI Definitions and Programs

Alberta Family & Social Services Supports For Independence Policy Manual (AFSS, 1999) defines the basic SFI allowance as comprised of a “standard allowance,” a “shelter allowance,” and “health benefits.”

The “standard allowance” is meant to cover all costs for the following items:

- *Food;*
- *Clothing, including diapers;*
- *Household needs, including furniture, appliances and household supplies;*
- *Personal needs;*
- *Installation and use of a telephone, including the deposit charge;*
- *Laundry;*
- *Transportation (AFSS, 1999).*

The “shelter allowance” is provided for the “actual shelter costs of the applicant or recipient, up to the maximums prescribed” and includes the following expenses for rental units:

- *Damage deposit*
- *Rent*
- *Fuel*
- *Utilities*
- *Lot rental for a mobile home*

If the recipient owns their home, the shelter allowance is meant to cover their costs for mortgage payments, municipal taxes, insurance, fuel and utilities, condominium fees, lot rental for a mobile home, and maintenance costs not exceeding \$19.00 per month (AFSS, 1999).

Health benefits include Alberta Health Care. No extended coverage is provided for SFI recipients who are deemed to be employable. Extended health benefits are only provided for those recipients who are eligible to receive benefits under the “Assured Support” sub-program as a result of a severe disability.

In addition, “Supplementary Allowances” are made, at the discretion of a Department Director, for emergency expenses, special diets, child care, costs for a new infant, moving, employment training, school fees, etc.

The maximum benefits for each SFI recipient depend on their family size and employment status. Recipients are assigned to one of four sub-programs depending on their ability to work:

1. The Supplement to Earnings Sub-Program is for recipients who are employed.
2. The Employment and Training Support Sub-Program is for recipients who are “able to be employed and available for employment” or who are “able to participate in an education or training program.”
3. The Transitional Support Sub-Program is for recipients who are unavailable for employment due to “a temporary health problem” or who are caring for a disabled family-member or a child under 6 months of age.
4. The Assured Support Sub-Program is for recipients who are severely disabled, have “persistent mental or physical health problems” or face “multiple barriers to employment beyond the control of the person.”

The benefits received by recipients under the first two sub-programs are identical. Under the sub-programs for recipients who are not able to work, shelter allowances are somewhat higher than in sub-programs intended for individuals who are deemed to be “employable.”

The table below shows the maximum basic allowance that each of our sample SFI recipients would receive, plus a school fee allowance of \$50.00 (where appropriate) and an employment training allowance of \$300.00 per year. Again, we are assuming that at least one adult member of each of our sample families is employable, looking for work, and participating in an employment training program.

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Table 2: SFI Rates for Sample Recipients

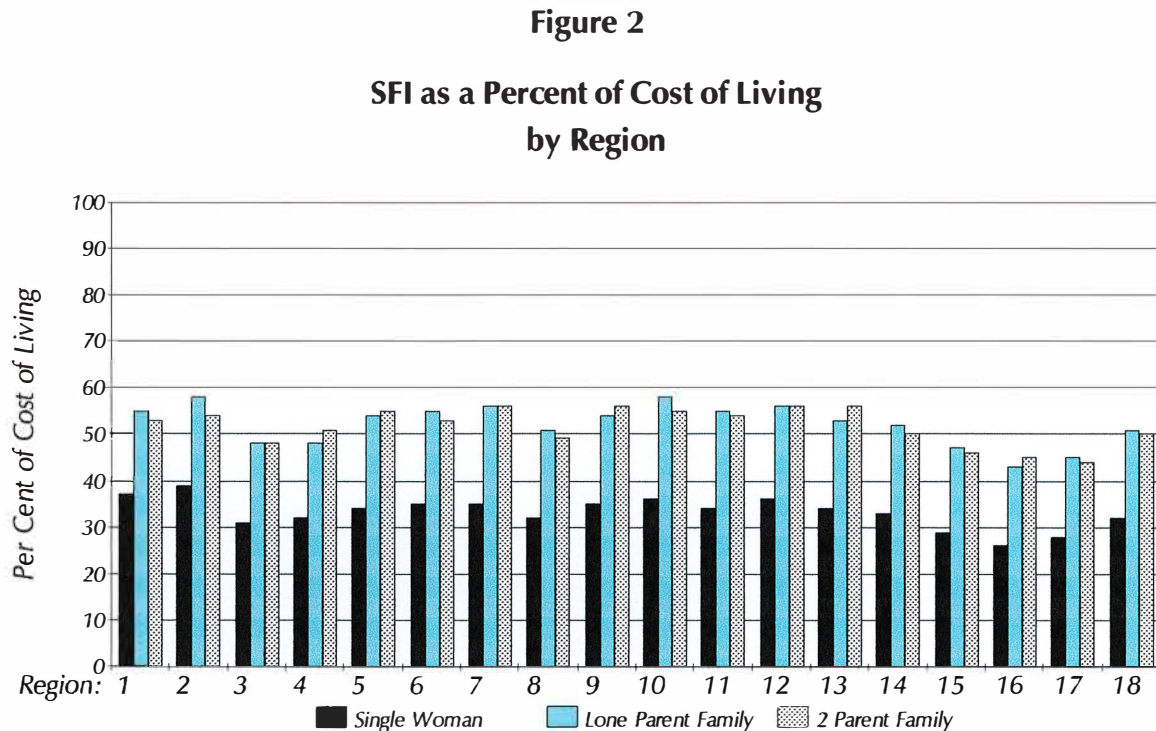
Recipient's Family Size	Single Female		Lone Female Parent Family		2 Parent Family	
Type of Allowance	\$ Per Month	\$ Per Year	\$ Per Month	\$ Per Year	\$ Per Month	\$ Per Year
Standard Allowance	229.00	2,748.00	403.00	4,836.00	579.00	6,948.00
Shelter Rate	168.00	2,016.00	503.00	6,036.00	524.00	6,288.00
Child's School Fees	--	--	--	50.00	--	50.00
Employment Program	--	300.00	--	300.00	--	300.00
Total Allowance	397.00	5,064.00	906.00	11,222.00	1,103.00	13,586.00

As Table 2 indicates, the SFI program provides a total annual income of \$5,064 for single females, \$11,222 for lone-parent families and \$13,586 for two-parent families.

The Cost of Living in Alberta

There are marked differences in the cost of living between regions in Alberta. However, in all regions, the income received by SFI recipients is far below the cost of living. Appendix B provides tables showing a detailed breakdown of the cost of living for the three sample families in each region.

The following graph (Figure 2) shows SFI rates as a percentage of the cost of living for our sample families in each region of the province.



For lone female SFI recipients, the SFI allowance ranges from a low of 26% of the actual cost of living in Region 16 to a high of 39% of the cost of living in Region 2. To put this difference into perspective, a single female SFI recipient living in Region 2 would need approximately \$8,079 more than her annual SFI allowance to cover the cost of her basic living expenses. The same woman living in Region 16 would need approximately \$14,191 more than she receives on SFI.

Families who receive SFI benefits fare somewhat better than individuals. For families headed by a lone female parent, SFI provides between 43% (Region 16) and 58% (Regions 2 and 10) of their actual living expenses. Again, this difference translates to a significant dollar amount. A lone parent family living in Region 2 or 10 would have an

annual income that is about \$8,257 short of their expenses. The same family living in Region 16 would have an annual deficit of around \$14,646.

Finally, 2 parent families on SFI receive between 44% (Region 17) and 56% (Regions 7, 9, 12, and 13) of their actual cost of living. This means that a 2-parent family living in Regions 7, 9, 12 or 13 would have an income of about \$10,661 less than their actual annual living expenses. The same family living in Region 17 would have an annual deficit of approximately \$17,298.

The cost of living and resulting shortfall in SFI allowances has a geographic pattern. While SFI recipients in all regions are surviving on approximately one third to a little over one half of the cost of living, the greatest discrepancy exists in the most northerly regions (14, 15, 16 and 17) and in the Calgary, Banff and Jasper regions (3, 4 and 8). Figures 3, 4 and 5 below show the difference between the SFI rate and the cost of living in each region for single female SFI recipients, lone parent family recipients, and 2 parent family recipients.

Figure 3

SFI Shortfall: Single Female Recipient
Cost of Living by Region

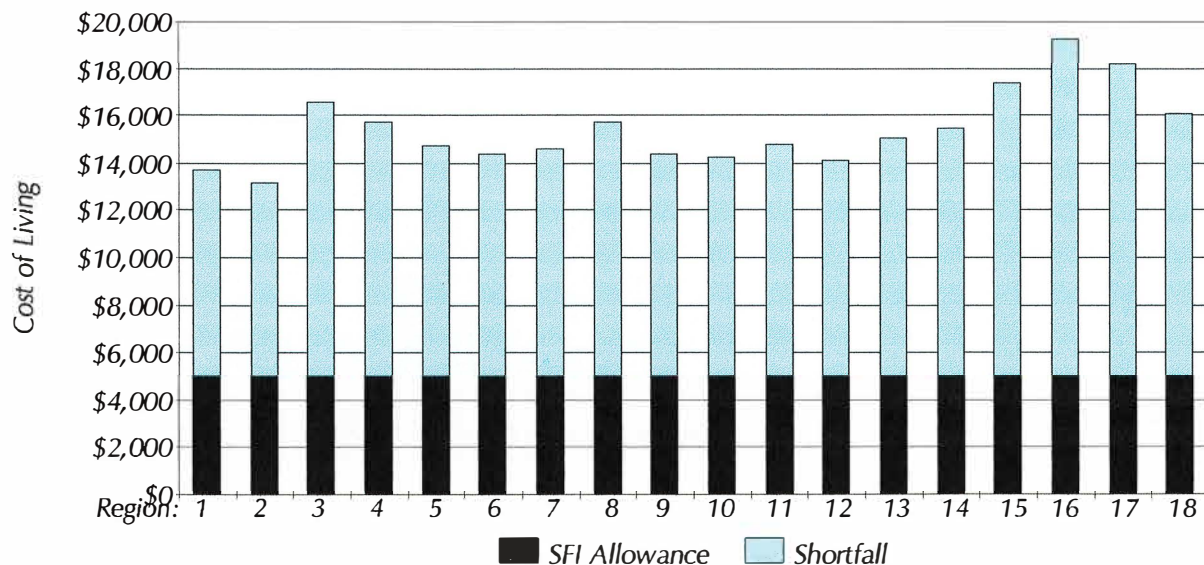


Figure 4

SFI Shortfall: Lone Parent Family

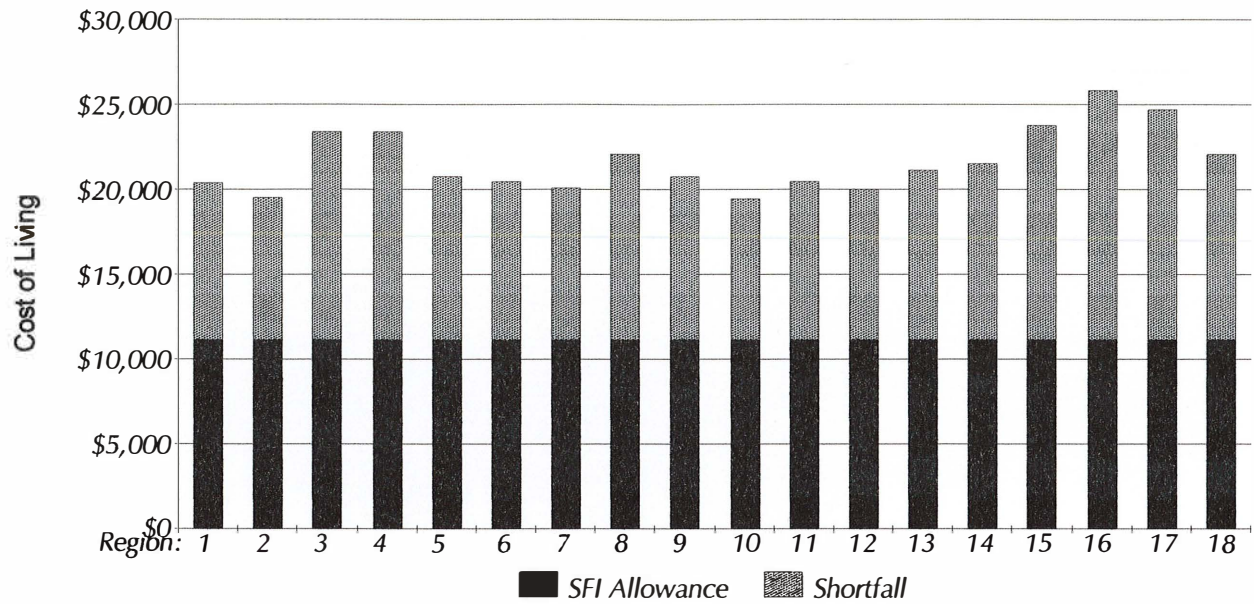
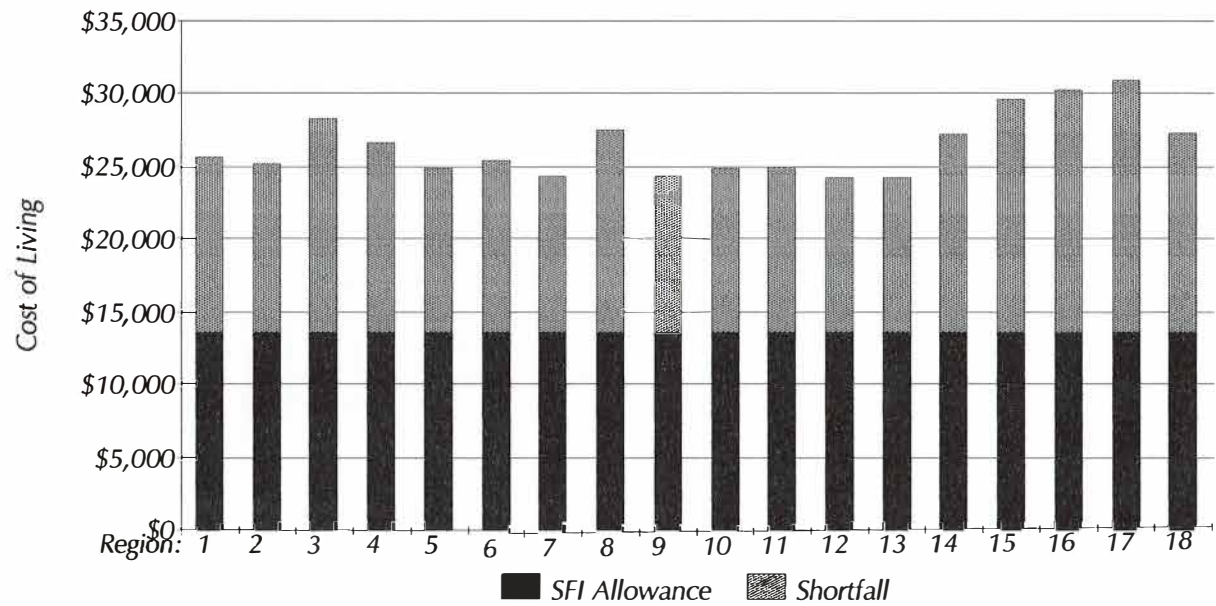


Figure 5

SFI Shortfall: 2 Parent Family



The SFI allowances provided to single people are much lower than those provided to families. In every region, the allowance for single SFI recipients is not even enough to cover the costs of shelter and food alone.

Table 3 shows the amount of SFI each family receives compared with their costs just for food and shelter. For many recipients, the SFI allowance does not even provide enough to meet these most basic expenses.

Table 3: SFI Rates Compared to Food and Shelter Costs Alone

	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
Total Annual Allowance	5,064	11,222	13,586
Cost of Housing & Food			
Region 1	6,813	10,589	13,608
Region 2	6,645	10,294	13,530
Region 3	7,671	11,746	14,689
Region 4	8,835	13,174	14,764
Region 5	6,579	10,190	12,620
Region 6	6,982	10,510	13,372
Region 7	6,491	9,781	12,287
Region 8	7,206	10,957	14,193
Region 9	6,372	9,863	12,293
Region 10	8,132	11,038	13,982
Region 11	6,613	10,028	12,725
Region 12	6,213	9,734	12,209
Region 13	7,742	11,251	13,838
Region 14	7,033	10,625	14,006
Region 15	8,168	11,975	15,481
Region 16	9,286	13,224	15,859
Region 17	8,639	12,475	16,211
Average Cost of Housing and Food in All Regions	7,378	11,027	13,831
Average SFI Remaining or (Average Shortfall) Per Year	(2,314)	195	(245)

As Table 3 indicates, SFI recipients have little or no money left after they pay just their food and shelter costs. Many are unable to provide food and shelter for themselves and their families.

Conclusion

The allowances provided by SFI are inadequate to meet the basic needs of recipients in all regions of Alberta. Further, the program's failure to account for variations in the cost of living between regions of the province results in an even lower standard of living for residents in several regions.

In almost all regions, SFI recipients often do not receive enough income to meet their costs of food and shelter alone. There is little doubt that the SFI program allows recipients to do little more than survive.

Recommendations

Based on the data in this report, we urge the Government of Alberta to:

- 1. Increase standard allowances and shelter allowances under the Supports for Independence Program to a level equal with the cost of living for all recipients in Alberta;*
- 2. Take into account the differences in the cost of living between regions and provide higher SFI allowances in areas of the province with higher living costs.*

SFI allowances should, therefore, be increased to the following levels:

Region	Lone Females	Lone-Parent Families	Two-Parent Families
1	13,758	20,339	25,648
2	13,143	19,490	25,215
3	16,542	23,385	28,328
4	15,751	23,427	26,665
5	14,710	20,772	24,854
6	14,367	20,464	25,475
7	14,561	20,086	24,295
8	15,761	22,061	27,496
9	14,361	20,798	24,305
10	14,241	19,467	24,917
11	14,776	20,501	25,030
12	14,094	20,008	24,162
13	15,097	21,157	24,225
14	15,471	21,504	27,182
15	17,376	23,771	29,659
16	19,255	25,868	30,293
17	18,168	24,170	30,884
18	16,050	22,120	27,251

Appendix A

Detailed Methodology

Data on the cost of shelter in Alberta cities, towns and villages is compiled by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and by Alberta Municipal Affairs. In developing regional averages, we have used 1999 average rental rates for one, two and three bedroom units in 74 Alberta communities.

Data on the cost of food was compiled using Alberta Agriculture's "Nutritious Food Basket Price Reports" from 1996 to 1999. These reports are "one-day snapshots" that measure "the cost of healthy eating based on current nutrition recommendations" for males and females at various ages (Alberta Agriculture, 1999). Because the nutritious food basket price information is collected on different days in different communities, comparisons between communities are difficult to make. However, we have adjusted the prices to constant 1999 dollars in an attempt to control for differences that result from the time the data was collected. This data was available for 55 communities in the province.

Unfortunately, none of the Metis Settlements that comprise Region 18 were included in the data sets for shelter rates or food prices. The cost of living in Region 18 has therefore been estimated as an average of the 4 geographic regions in which the Metis Settlements are located – Regions 7, 12, 15, and 17. A map indicating the boundaries of regions 1 through 17, as well as the location of the 8 Metis Settlements can be found on page 4 of this report.

Alberta Agriculture's Nutritious Food Basket Price Reports were available for 55 Alberta communities, but none of the communities in regions 3, 7, 9, 15 or 16 were included. In those regions, the food prices have been estimated as the average of the food prices for bordering regions. Where Nutritious Food Basket Price Reports were available, the communities included between 36 and 92 per cent of the population of those regions.

*For those expenses where actual price data was not available we have estimated costs based on Statistics Canada's "Summary of Average Household Expenditure by Household Income Quintile." Compared with middle and high-income households, families in the lowest income quintile,³ (the lowest 20% of income earners) spend disproportionately large percentages of their income on food, shelter, health and personal care, and education. They spend smaller portions of their income on discretionary items such as clothing, recreation, and transportation. Our purpose is to estimate the minimum amounts a family would be required to spend on each item to provide for their needs. For this reason, **we have estimated the cost for each item based on average spending of households in the two lowest quintiles (the lowest 40% of income earners).** For most items, this method results in slightly lower*

(more conservative) spending estimates than if we had used estimates based on the lowest income quintile's spending patterns alone.

The shelter and food cost data forms the basis of our estimates for most of the other household expenditures, with the exception of transportation. Shelter and food are the two largest expenses for low-income Canadians (Statistics Canada, 1997). Households in the two lowest income quintiles spend approximately 27.7% of their income on shelter and 16.9% of their income on food, for a total of 44.6%.

The following process was used to estimate expenditures for telephone, household operations, clothing, health and personal care, recreation and reading material, and education:

- 1. The average cost for food and shelter was calculated for each region based on the available data. In calculating averages, the costs for each community were weighted according to the population (Statistics Canada, Community Profiles, 1997).*
- 2. Using 44.6% as the proportion of household income required to purchase food and shelter, an average total cost of household operation (100%) was calculated for each region.*
- 3. The average amount a family would need to spend on each item was calculated using the following percentages of total household spending:*
 - Communication – 3.0%*
 - Household operation (child care, furniture, equipment, etc.) – 6.0%*
 - Clothing – 4.5%*
 - Health and personal care – 5.2%*
 - Recreation and reading material – 5.6%*
 - Education – 1.4%*
 - Miscellaneous expenses – 4.6%*
- 4. The sum of all of these expenses plus an estimate for transportation in each region is our estimate of the cost of living for each sample family in each region.*

We did not allow for any spending on items such as tobacco products, alcohol, games of chance, or personal taxes, insurance, and pension contributions.

This method of calculating expenditures is dependent on the averages for food and shelter in each region and is not a perfect representation of actual costs. However, the rationale is accepted and is basically the same as that used by Alberta Municipal Affairs in determining Core Need Income Thresholds (CNIT). CNITs are calculated based on

the premise that 30% is the maximum proportion of income that a family can spend on rent and still provide for their other basic needs. They are used in determining eligibility for rent supplement programs (Grande Spirit Foundation, verbal communication).

Estimating the cost of transportation is problematic. There are vast differences in travel expenditures, depending on where a family lives. Individuals often require a vehicle in order to maintain employment, and geographic differences create disparities in the distances traveled by Albertans who live in different regions.

The cost of transportation has, therefore, been calculated using two different methods. First, in municipalities where public transit systems exist, we have used the actual cost of monthly bus passes for each adult member of the family and for school aged children. In areas where public transportation is not available, we have calculated the cost of private transportation according to Statistics Canada's 1997 summary of average expenditures of Canadian households.

The average household expenditure for transportation in Alberta in 1997 was \$7,315. Because this average includes families with very high incomes who travel much more than the families we are interested in, it is not likely to be representative of actual costs for families who are spending on necessities only. We were able to access household expenditure data broken down by income level for all of Canada (10 provinces) and not for Alberta alone. We therefore used an estimate of transportation expenses based on the national spending patterns – averages that are slightly lower than those of Alberta.

Again, we have used the average amount spent on transportation by the two lowest income groups as an estimate of a minimal transportation cost. We have therefore, used a flat estimate of \$305.00 per month (\$3,660.00 per year) for transportation costs in communities without public transit. It should be noted that this is approximately half of the Alberta average household expenditure for transportation. This would allow fortunate individuals to own a vehicle and pay for fuel, maintenance, and insurance, but not to travel long distances.

While estimating transportation costs in this way does account for some of the differences between urban and rural areas; it does not account for geographic and demographic differences between regions. Further research that would allow for transportation cost comparisons between small, densely populated regions and large, sparsely populated regions would be beneficial.

Appendix B Cost of Living Tables

Each table that follows includes a list of communities that are included in the data sets for that region, a breakdown of the cost of living, and a comparison of the cost of living with each SFI recipient's income and with the Low Income Cut-Off for each family.

We are attempting to compare costs by region rather than by community size and have therefore included the LICO rate that is closest to the community size for most residents in each region. For example Region 1 includes one community between 30,000 and 99,999 (Lethbridge) while the remainder live in communities under 30,000 and in rural areas. The mid-range LICO is therefore that of communities under 30,000.

Table 4: The Cost of Living in Region 1

Region 1 Communities: Blairmore, Cardston, Coaldale, For Macleod, Lethbridge, Milk River, Pincher Creek, Raymond, Taber and Warner.

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
Shelter	5,148	6,216	7,188
Food	1,665	4,373	6,420
Communication	458	712	915
Household operation	917	1,425	1,831
Clothing	687	1,068	1,373
Health and personal care	794	1,235	1,587
Recreation and reading material	855	1,330	1,709
Education	214	332	427
Miscellaneous expenses	703	1,092	1,404
Transportation	2,317	2,556	2,794
Total Region 1 Cost of Living	13,758	20,339	25,648
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(8,694)	(9,117)	(12,062)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living	37%	55%	53%

Table 5: The Cost of Living in Region 2

Region 2 Communities: *Bassano, Brooks, Medicine Hat, Oyen.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	4,884	5,748	6,888
<i>Food</i>	1,761	4,546	6,642
<i>Communication</i>	447	692	910
<i>Household operation</i>	894	1,385	1,820
<i>Clothing</i>	670	1,039	1,365
<i>Health and personal care</i>	775	1,200	1,577
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	843	1,293	1,699
<i>Education</i>	209	323	425
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	685	1,062	1,395
<i>Transportation</i>	1,975	2,202	2,494
Total Region 2 Cost of Living	13,143	19,490	25,215
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(8,079)	(8,268)	(11,629)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	39%	58%	54%

Table 6: The Cost of Living in Region 3

Region 3 Communities: *Banff, Canmore, Claresholm, High River, Nanton, Okotoks, and Vulcan.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	6,036	7,440	8,376
<i>Food</i>	1,635	4,306	6,316
<i>Communication</i>	516	790	988
<i>Household operation</i>	1,032	1,580	1,976
<i>Clothing</i>	774	1,185	1,482
<i>Health and personal care</i>	894	1,369	1,713
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	963	1,475	1,844
<i>Education</i>	241	369	461
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	791	1,211	1,515
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 3 Cost of Living	16,542	23,385	28,328
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(11,478)	(12,163)	(14,742)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	31%	48%	48%

Table 7: The Cost of Living in Region 4

Region 4 Communities: *Calgary and area.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	7,200	8,868	8,448
<i>Food</i>	1,635	4,306	6,316
<i>Communication</i>	594	886	993
<i>Household operation</i>	1,189	1,772	1,986
<i>Clothing</i>	891	1,329	1,490
<i>Health and personal care</i>	1,030	1,536	1,721
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	1,109	1,654	1,854
<i>Education</i>	277	414	463
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	911	1,359	1,553
<i>Transportation</i>	915	1,303	1,841
Total Region 4 Cost of Living	15,751	23,427	26,665
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(10,687)	(12,205)	(13,079)
LICO (Communities of 500,000 or more)	17,571	27,315	33,063
SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living	32%	49%	51%

Table 8: The Cost of Living in Region 5

Region 5 Communities: Carstairs, Didsbury, Drumheller, Hanna, Strathmore, Three Hills.

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	4,860	5,660	5,976
<i>Food</i>	1,719	4,530	6,644
<i>Communication</i>	443	685	849
<i>Household operation</i>	885	1,371	1,698
<i>Clothing</i>	664	1,028	1,273
<i>Health and personal care</i>	767	1,188	1,471
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	826	1,279	1,585
<i>Education</i>	207	320	396
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	679	1,051	1,302
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 5 Cost of Living	14,710	20,772	24,854
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(9,646)	(9,550)	(11,268)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	34%	54%	55%

Table 9: The Cost of Living in Region 6

Region 6 Communities: *Blackfalds, Bowden, Innisfail, Lacombe, Olds, Penhold, Ponoka, Red Deer, Rimbey, Rocky Mountain House, Sylvan Lake, Sundre.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	5,412	6,384	7,320
<i>Food</i>	1,570	4,126	6,052
<i>Communication</i>	470	707	899
<i>Household operation</i>	939	1,414	1,799
<i>Clothing</i>	704	1,060	1,349
<i>Health and personal care</i>	814	1,225	1,559
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	877	1,320	1,679
<i>Education</i>	219	330	420
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	720	1,084	1,379
<i>Transportation</i>	2,642	2,814	3,019
Total Region 6 Cost of Living	14,367	20,464	25,475
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(9,303)	(9,242)	(11,889)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	35%	55%	53%

Table 10: The Cost of Living in Region 7

Region 7 Communities: *Camrose, Provost, Stettler, Vermilion, and Wainwright.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	4,836	5,460	5,964
<i>Food</i>	1,655	4,321	6,323
<i>Communication</i>	437	658	826
<i>Household operation</i>	873	1,316	1,653
<i>Clothing</i>	655	987	1,240
<i>Health and personal care</i>	757	1,140	1,433
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	815	1,228	1,543
<i>Education</i>	204	307	386
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	669	1,009	1,267
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 7 Cost of Living	14,561	20,086	24,295
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(9,497)	(8,864)	(10,709)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	35%	56%	56%

Table 11: The Cost of Living in Region 8

Region 8 Communities: *Edson, Evansburg, Hinton, and Jasper.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	5,496	6,432	7,548
<i>Food</i>	1,710	4,525	6,645
<i>Communication</i>	485	737	955
<i>Household operation</i>	969	1,474	1,909
<i>Clothing</i>	727	1,106	1,432
<i>Health and personal care</i>	840	1,277	1,655
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	905	1,376	1,782
<i>Education</i>	226	344	446
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	743	1,130	1,464
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 8 Cost of Living	15,761	22,061	27,496
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(10,697)	(10,839)	(13,910)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	32%	51%	49%

Table 12: The Cost of Living in Region 9

Region 9 Communities: *Drayton Valley, Wetaskiwin.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	4,740	5,604	6,024
<i>Food</i>	1,632	4,259	6,269
<i>Communication</i>	429	663	827
<i>Household operation</i>	857	1,327	1,654
<i>Clothing</i>	643	995	1,240
<i>Health and personal care</i>	743	1,150	1,433
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	800	1,238	1,544
<i>Education</i>	200	885	386
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	657	1,017	1,268
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 9 Cost of Living	14,361	20,798	24,305
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(9,297)	(9,576)	(10,719)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	35%	54%	56%

Table 13: The Cost of Living in Region 10

Region 10 Communities: *Edmonton and area.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	5,616	6,912	7,872
<i>Food</i>	1,616	4,126	6,110
<i>Communication</i>	547	742	941
<i>Household operation</i>	1,094	1,485	1,881
<i>Clothing</i>	820	1,114	1,411
<i>Health and personal care</i>	948	1,287	1,630
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	1,021	1,386	1,756
<i>Education</i>	255	346	439
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	839	1,138	1,442
<i>Transportation</i>	585	931	1,435
Total Region 10 Cost of Living	14,241	19,467	24,917
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(9,177)	(8,245)	(11,331)
LICO (Communities of 500,000 or more)	17,571	27,315	33,063
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	36%	58%	55%

Table 14: The Cost of Living in Region 11

Region 11 Communities: Athabasca, Barrhead, Calling Lake, Morinville, Smith, Swan Hills, Westlock, and Whitecourt.

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	5,004	5,748	6,444
<i>Food</i>	1,609	4,280	6,281
<i>Communication</i>	445	675	856
<i>Household operation</i>	890	1,349	1,712
<i>Clothing</i>	667	1,012	1,284
<i>Health and personal care</i>	771	1,169	1,484
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	830	1,259	1,598
<i>Education</i>	208	315	399
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	682	1,034	1,312
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 11 Cost of Living	14,776	20,501	25,030
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(9,712)	(9,279)	(11,444)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	34%	55%	54%

Table 15: The Cost of Living in Region 12

Region 12 Communities: Bonnyville, Cold Lake, Elk Point, Fort Saskatchewan, Lac La Biche, Lamont, Mundare, Redwater, Smoky Lake, St. Paul, Two Hills, Vegreville.

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	4,500	5,232	5,724
<i>Food</i>	1,713	4,502	6,485
<i>Communication</i>	418	655	821
<i>Household operation</i>	836	1,310	1,642
<i>Clothing</i>	627	982	1,232
<i>Health and personal care</i>	724	1,135	1,423
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	780	1,222	1,533
<i>Education</i>	195	306	383
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	641	1,004	1,259
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 12 Cost of Living	14,094	20,008	24,162
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(9,030)	(8,786)	(10,576)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	36%	56%	56%

Table 16: The Cost of Living in Region 13

Region 13 Communities: *Beaverlodge, Fairview, Grande Cache, Grande Prairie, Grimshaw, Sexsmith, Spirit River, and Valleyview.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	6,120	6,972	7,548
<i>Food</i>	1,622	4,279	6,290
<i>Communication</i>	521	757	931
<i>Household operation</i>	1,042	1,514	1,862
<i>Clothing</i>	781	1,135	1,396
<i>Health and personal care</i>	903	1,312	1,613
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	972	1,413	1,738
<i>Education</i>	243	353	434
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	799	1,160	1,427
<i>Transportation</i>	2,094	2,262	2,599
Total Region 13 Cost of Living	15,097	21,157	24,225
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(10,033)	(9,935)	(10,639)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living	34%	53%	56%

Table 17: The Cost of Living in Region 14

Region 14 Communities: *Falher, Manning, McLennan, and Peace River.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	5,256	5,916	7,056
<i>Food</i>	1,777	4,709	6,950
<i>Communication</i>	473	715	942
<i>Household operation</i>	946	1,429	1,884
<i>Clothing</i>	710	1,072	1,413
<i>Health and personal care</i>	820	1,239	1,633
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	883	1,334	1,759
<i>Education</i>	221	334	440
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	725	1,096	1,445
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 14 Cost of Living	15,471	21,504	27,182
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(10,407)	(10,282)	(13,596)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	33%	52%	50%

Table 18: The Cost of Living in Region 15

Region 15 Communities: *High Prairie, Slave Lake.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	6,504	7,524	8,940
<i>Food</i>	1,664	4,454	6,541
<i>Communication</i>	549	806	1,041
<i>Household operation</i>	1,099	1,611	2,083
<i>Clothing</i>	824	1,208	1,562
<i>Health and personal care</i>	952	1,396	1,805
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	1,026	1,504	1,944
<i>Education</i>	256	376	486
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	842	1,235	1,597
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 15 Cost of Living	17,376	23,771	29,659
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(12,312)	(12,549)	(16,073)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	29%	47%	46%

Table 19: The Cost of Living in Region 16

Region 16 Communities: *Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	7,584	8,724	9,276
<i>Food</i>	1,702	4,500	6,583
<i>Communication</i>	625	890	1,067
<i>Household operation</i>	1,249	1,779	2,133
<i>Clothing</i>	937	1,334	1,600
<i>Health and personal care</i>	1,083	1,542	1,849
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	1,166	1,660	1,991
<i>Education</i>	291	415	498
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	958	1,364	1,636
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 16 Cost of Living	19,255	25,868	30,293
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(14,191)	(14,646)	(16,707)
LICO (Communities of 30,000 to 99,999)	14,965	23,264	28,162
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	26%	43%	45%

Table 20: The Cost of Living in Region 17

Region 17 Communities: *Assumption, Fort Vermillion, High Level, La Crete, and Rainbow lake*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	6,816	7,668	9,144
<i>Food</i>	1,823	4,807	7,067
<i>Communication</i>	581	839	1,090
<i>Household operation</i>	1,162	1,678	2,181
<i>Clothing</i>	872	1,259	1,636
<i>Health and personal care</i>	1,007	1,554	1,890
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	1,085	1,566	2,035
<i>Education</i>	271	392	509
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	891	1,287	1,672
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 17 Cost of Living	18,168	24,710	30,884
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(13,104)	(13,488)	(17,298)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	28%	45%	44%

Table 21: The Cost of Living in Region 18

Region 18 Communities: *Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie, Peavine.*

Item	\$ Per Year		
	Single Female	Lone Female Parent Family	2 Parent Family
<i>Shelter</i>	5,664	6,471	7,443
<i>Food</i>	1,714	4,521	6,604
<i>Communication</i>	496	739	945
<i>Household operation</i>	993	1,479	1,890
<i>Clothing</i>	744	1,109	1,417
<i>Health and personal care</i>	860	1,282	1,639
<i>Recreation and reading material</i>	926	1,380	1,764
<i>Education</i>	232	345	441
<i>Miscellaneous expenses</i>	761	1,134	1,449
<i>Transportation</i>	3,660	3,660	3,660
Total Region 18 Cost of Living	16,050	22,120	27,251
SFI Rate	5,064	11,222	13,586
Annual Shortfall for SFI Recipients	(10,986)	(10,898)	(13,665)
LICO (Communities of less than 30,000)	13,924	21,647	26,205
<i>SFI Rate as a % of Cost of Living</i>	32%	51%	50%

Endnotes

¹ Region 18 is not a geographic area. It is comprised of 8 Metis Settlements, which are located in Regions 7, 12, 15, and 17. The cost of living in Region 18 has therefore been estimated as an average of these four regions. For more information regarding how the cost of living has been calculated, please see Appendix A – Detailed Methodology.

² For a more detailed discussion of various measures of poverty, see the National Council on Welfare's "Poverty in Canada" in *Poverty Profile 1995, A Report by the National Council of Welfare*, Spring, 1997. Minister of Supply and Services, Canada Cat. No. H67-1/4-1995E.

³ The two lowest income quintiles include households with incomes of less than \$20,165 and between \$20,165 and \$34,447.

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