



**Magnets**

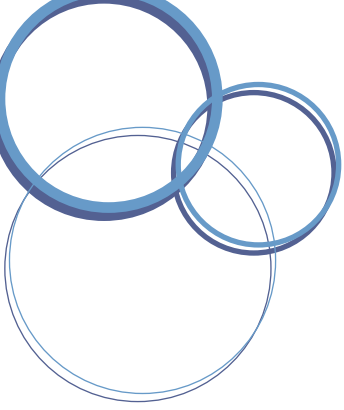
**and**

**Glue:**

## The Voluntary Sector's Role in Building Calgary's Community



**CCVO**  
CALGARY  
CHAMBER of  
VOLUNTARY  
ORGANIZATIONS



## Acknowledgements:

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# Magnets and Glue: The Voluntary Sector's Role in Building Calgary's Community

## INTRODUCTION

The dual trends of urbanization and globalization have contributed to the emergence of large urban regions as the economic, cultural and social engines of modern societies.

The growing concentration of population and economic activity has made cities such as Calgary the foundations for the economic and social health of Canada and its provinces. Indeed, many analysts argue that a nation's survival in the evolving global economy is increasingly dependent on the quality, creativity, talent, resources and innovativeness of people at the local level. (Shearman, 1998)

In a knowledge-based economy, there are three key factors that determine the competitive advantage of an urban area: a strong economy, high quality of life and efficient urban infrastructure. (Berdahl and



Sapergia, 2001) The understanding that economic vitality, urban infrastructure and a high quality of life together are the basis for economic competitiveness has interesting implications for how cities approach economic development. The importance of the quality of life factor particularly challenges traditional approaches, as it demands a more holistic community-based view of what contributes to economic success.

**Magnets and Glue** presents a vision for urban economic development that recognizes the inter-relatedness of social and economic development, and the desirability of partnership between the public

(municipal, provincial and federal), private and voluntary sectors to create the conditions required to maintain a high quality of life and sustained economic competitiveness. The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations' aim is to stimulate discussions among the three sectors about how they can work together collaboratively in pursuit of a common goal for our community. ■

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# Magnets and Glue: Creating the Conditions for Economic Competitiveness

As the “livability” quality of a city has greater impact on its competitive position, economic development must encompass the social, cultural and physical aspects of a city. Communities need to have both “magnets and glue” to compete successfully. “Magnets” are the forces that attract a flow of external resources – new people or new companies. The flow might involve customers, outside investors, foreign companies, students, business travelers, or immigrants. Communities also need social “glue” - the social infrastructure that contributes to social cohesion and promotes the economic and social well-being of all members of the community. Many of the community’s magnets, especially social and cultural infrastructure, are also its glue. (Kanter, 1995:32)

Economic development cannot be separated from social development; the two are interdependent – two sides of the same coin. Social innovation in the community is as necessary as innovation led by business or government. Social investment is a prerequisite to economic development. A vibrant economy requires a healthy and educated workforce. Sense of community, social networks and openness to outside influences are all factors that will contribute to the longer term economic success (or failure) of Calgary.

## CHALLENGES

Establishing the interdependence of economic and social development into practice in Calgary may be challenging for some, as it departs from a more traditional view of economic development as solely (or primarily) “business development”. This new, interdependent model will require the public, pri-

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vate and voluntary sectors alike to recognize and commit to address the interdependence of social and economic conditions.

One large challenge will be shifting pre-existing mindsets. For example, individuals in the public sector – be it the municipal, provincial or federal government – may point to fiscal strain or other demands as a reason for limiting efforts to address quality of life concerns. This is particularly a challenge for Calgary, due to the demand for expanded infrastructure and services to accommodate

Calgary’s rapid growth. However, it is important that all parties recognize that, like infrastructure and service needs, urban social issues often grow with population size. People gravitate to urban communities like Calgary for the opportunities they provide for access to services, education, health care, employment, affiliation with ethnic communities and social interaction – and as populations grow, so too do the concentrations of urban social issues. How governments choose to respond to the full range of community issues will determine whether these issues have a positive or negative impact on the economic attractiveness of the community. The need for all orders of governments to work with each other and with the voluntary and private sectors to address these challenges cannot be overstated.

Another challenge is the need for the public, private and voluntary sectors to rethink pre-existing conceptions of economic development as seen in the area of arts and culture and other “soft” community services – areas in which the voluntary sector is highly engaged. There is a tendency to think of these services as “private goods” that

should be funded exclusively by users and others who value the activities. This position ignores the strong evidence in studies conducted by Richard Florida and others of the contribution of arts and culture to the economic attractiveness of communities, tourism and social cohesion. (Azmier, 2002) Arts and cultural activities and recreational programs not only generate economic activity but also contribute to strong local identities. These act as a valuable counterpoint to the threat of global cultural dominance in the information society. (Shearman, 1998:7)

Thirdly, it is difficult to draw a direct relationship between social investments that address social issues, increase opportunities for participation in community life and improve social cohesion and their impacts on economic activity may contribute to the reluctance to adopting a multi-faceted approach to economic development. While health, education and economic issues are seen as impacting everyone in the community, social issues are often viewed as affecting only selected populations. The challenge facing Calgary is to learn how to take a broader perspective that recognizes both the inter-relatedness of these different elements and the need to take a broader view of how social and economic conditions interact to create vibrant communities. Unfortunately, when the connection between social and economic development is not considered, and social issues fall through the cracks, the consequences are felt by all residents. For example, growing wage gaps are linked with a whole host of consequences for community and ultimately “diminish the quality of life for all residents.” (FCM, 2004)



## AN EXAMPLE OF SUCCESS

The good news is that Calgary can look to a number of other cities for models of how to use a multi-faceted approach to advance economic development goals. One such example is Austin, Texas, whose successful competition in the new economy is attributed to the explicit integration of social, environmental and economic goals. Austin’s strategies for developing sustainable advantage refer to the need to “ensure environmental quality and social opportunity by

explicitly linking social and environmental goals to economic development goals.” (Florida, 2000:27) Chattanooga, Tennessee is reported to be another example of effective integration with an economic strategy based on environmental remediation, community dialogue, restoration of natural amenities and sustainable development. The strategies developed by these two communities have different elements that reflect local circumstances and priorities, but both reflect an integrated perspective of economic, social and environmental conditions.

The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO) encourages all parties of the public, private and voluntary sectors to work together to develop an integrated economic development model, which includes a “triple bottom” line approach, such as the one recently adopted by the City of Calgary, to ensure that economic, social and environmental goals are met in the short and long-term. ■

# Building Calgary's Community Together: Key Requirements

The concept of a partnership between the different sectors, in the interests of the greater community, in fact reflects the expectations of Canadian citizens. Recent work by the Canadian Policy Research Networks found that citizens expect governments to be “catalysts for economic development, in partnership with business, communities and education institutions”. An interesting shift in public attitude is the expectation that “businesses be social partners to help communities meet their social and economic goals and to demonstrate a social conscience as ethical members of civil society at home...” (MacKinnon, 2003:10)

Inherent in a shared governance approach is the idea that the different sectors –public, private and voluntary - need to have an understanding of what each contributes to the ultimate goal of maintaining a high quality of life for all citizens and an economically competitive community. The public sector brings its responsibility for providing the infrastructure and basic services required for the city to function, its tax base and its understanding of the varied needs of different communities within the larger urban context. The private sector brings its knowledge of creating economic opportunities and its capacity for creating change. The voluntary sector plays a critical role in creating the social and community conditions essential for a healthy community. It also contributes its understanding of the real impact of the policies and actions of the other two sectors at the community level.

There are three key requirements to implement an integrated approach to community and economic development:

- shared vision among all three sectors,
- municipal leadership and
- collaborative effort.

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## SHARED VISION

Strategic economic development on an international scale “can only occur when those involved share a common vision, when they act in a coherent manner and agree on a plan of action.” (FCM, 2001a:6)

A vision provides the overarching framework that is necessary for organizations and sectors to work together towards a common objective. The importance of a community vision as a critical starting point cannot be over-emphasized. Shared vision is a unifying force across sectors and across the community. It clarifies the broad direction and priorities that provide a unifying focus for the various organizations that are collaborating in some form to achieve those ends. The shared vision effectively becomes the means of coordinating diverse initiatives, linking them so they result in significant impact, without actually having to manage them all. As Kanter puts it, “As long as there is a guiding vision and an infrastructure for collaboration to ensure cooperation and coordination, then change proceeds best when a thousand flowers can bloom, when multiple experiments and grass roots programs translate the vision into local action. From diversity comes innovation; from unity comes the capacity for effective action.” (Kanter, 1995:379)

Given the importance of quality of life considerations for economic competitiveness, a key question that the vision needs to address is what kind of social and cultural milieu is being fostered? Is it one in which policy makers, business leaders and community actors seek to build bridges across communities? Is it one in which business knows how to be responsive to the needs of communities? Is it one in which the voluntary sector is playing an active role in local economic as well as social development? Ideally the vision emerges from a dialogue that occurs within the community. The dialogue around these kinds of questions clarifies the community's values, goals and



desired outcomes against which individual initiatives can be measured. It also helps build bridges and common purpose across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

## MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP

Municipal government has a key leadership role in developing a shared community vision and creating the environment where this vision can become a reality. Local government is the mechanism for articulating local preference.

Providing community leadership does not mean that the municipal government is responsible for all activities or has to bear the financial cost. Municipal government can provide leadership in the role of a “convener”, bringing together key players who can help define the vision and will play a role in implementing that vision. Municipal government can also provide leadership through the difficult process of operationalizing the vision and in establishing accountabilities for who will do what. Through its leadership it can ensure that actions are taken and commitments met. While the voluntary sector has an important role to play in this process, it is the municipal government that has the resources and standing in the community to take the leadership role and to ensure that a vision is developed and enacted.

An example of this convener role in action was the Partners for Jobs Task Force in the former Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton. The Task Force responded to a study that identified high levels of underemployment and unemployment within the Region. The Task Force included representatives of business, labour, anti-poverty groups, the education sector, social sector, and the federal and provincial governments. The mandate of the Task Force was to develop short and long term strategies to promote employment in the Region. Within the first year, eight projects were underway and the impact on job creation was already apparent. (Torjman, 1999) In this case, the municipal government played the key role of bringing together the various players in the community that had an interest in some aspect of the employment issue and the ability to contribute to developing solutions. It did not assume responsibility for solving the problem itself.

Proposing that the municipal government takes the lead in developing and implementing a community vision, does not suggest that the provincial and federal governments do not have important roles to play in the social development of communities. However, it is crucial that a group at the local level is responsible for this process and able to bring together the people and groups with an interest and stake in community. Municipal government is best positioned to undertake this role and has the greatest interest of any level of government in ensuring the social and economic vitality of this community.

## COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Collaboration is fundamental to the concept of an integrated, community-based approach to economic development. Collaboration is not a new idea in Calgary. It occurs often in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The City of Calgary collaborates extensively with the private sector on economic development initiatives. Similarly, it has many collaborative arrangements with its “community partners” – voluntary sector organizations that deliver a wide range of arts, cultural and social services. And it works collaboratively with other organizations to address specific issue areas, such as the United Way of Calgary’s Children’s Initiative and the shared work in poverty reduction.

But integrating social and economic development for a more holistic approach to creating an economically competitive community requires a different approach to collaboration. It requires strategic and deliberate dialogue and collaboration around community building, rather than one-shot conversations on specific topics. The complex issues and environment require consistent, sustained collaborative effort, of a strategic planning nature. The public, private and voluntary sectors all have roles in creating and maintaining social and economic vitality.

The City of Calgary recently launched the “Imagine Calgary” initiative, which seeks to engage public, private and voluntary sector partners to develop a 100 year vision for Calgary – a vision that will then be implemented by the three sectors. The CCVO encourages the City of Calgary to continue with this important initiative, which recognizes and incorporates the three key requirements discussed here, in looking at community and economic development for the future. ■

# Assessing Calgary's Quality of Life

In 1996, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) began development of a Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS) to measure indicators of social and economic well-being in Canadian cities. In 2004, twenty of the largest urban communities in Canada, including Calgary, participated in this project. The snapshot this study offers of urban communities illustrates the range of social conditions that may affect the perceived quality of life in a city.

## ECONOMIC INDICATORS

- Calgary has grown about four times faster than almost all other municipalities between 1991 and 2001.
- Calgary is also one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse cities in the QOLRS, with almost 20% of the population part of a visible minority.
- The unemployment rate fell in Calgary between 1991 and 2001, and is one of the lowest in the study, hovering around 5%.
- While Calgary has seen an increase in business establishments, the number of bankruptcies also increased.

## SOCIAL INDICATORS

- The wealthiest individuals and families enjoyed an increase in before tax incomes, while low and modest income individuals and families saw their incomes fall by 10% or more. The income gap between the wealthiest and poorest is also on the



rise. Growing gaps between high and low incomes have implications for individual and community health, crime, education, political stability and governance and social cohesion.

- The cost of rental housing is of particular concern, as it disproportionately affects those in the lower income brackets. Calgary has seen a dramatic increase in the cost of rental housing, without a comparable increase in wages. Rental housing costs have gone up 25% more than incomes between 1991 and 2001.

- New immigrants and Aboriginal people continue to face significant barriers to inclusion. This includes difficulty finding employment, or underemployment, lower than average wage levels, and limited access to services and housing. This is important to Calgary, where an increasingly diverse population could turn into a divided population if meaningful interaction and social inclusion are not encouraged.

- Calgarians are turning increasingly to transit and walking/biking as modes of commuting to work. Though 80% still rely on private vehicles, transit use has gone up 5% and walking or riding a bicycle to work has gone up 14%. This has a positive impact on the quality of our environment, and shows the rewards of investment in infrastructure and accessibility of housing near the core of the City, which allows people to walk and bike to work more easily. ■



# The Role of Calgary's Voluntary Sector in Supporting Quality of Life and Economic Competitiveness

The term “voluntary sector” refers to the organizations whose work depends on serving a public benefit, involve volunteers (at least for governance), receive financial support from individuals (as well as other sources) and have limited direct influence from governments. The sector is not limited to charities, but includes the numerous voluntary organizations, incorporated and unincorporated, that enrich the lives of communities. It is also often referred to as the “nonprofit sector” or the “third sector”. Sherri Torjman writes, “The groups and organizations that comprise the voluntary sector are highly diverse and play many important roles. But together, they make an invaluable contribution to social well-being. The voluntary sector is the life blood of the community.... It threads together the individual pieces of communities into a coherent social infrastructure.”(Torjman, 1997)

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The organizations that comprise this sector serve diverse purposes, including service delivery, advocacy, minority and ethnic communities, arts and culture, international development, sports and recreation, faith and the environment. The work of the voluntary sector has a direct impact on the quality of life within the community. The role of the sector has expanded over the past decade in response to the devolution of many government programs and services. Community-based voluntary organizations have assumed greater responsibility for deliver-



ing a host of social services, often as the service delivery agents for governments. They also respond to the growing needs of vulnerable populations – such as the homeless, victims of violence, children and the elderly and new immigrants.

The activities and services provided by the voluntary sector increase social cohesion by reducing barriers to community participation through employment, education and social support. They build capacity in individuals and within the community and through the wide variety of recreational, cultural and social organizations, provide opportunities for people to come together, creating relationships and trust. While it is hard to quantify the value of social capital, it nevertheless is understood to contribute to civil society and to the mitigation of social exclusion.

The Quality of Life Reporting System (QOLRS), (FCM, 2004) identified trends toward the increasing concentration of poverty and vulnerable populations, particularly lone-parent families, in large urban areas. The growing income disparity has an impact on social cohesion. Calgary's population increased by 24% between 1991 and 2001, reflecting the impact of a strong economy, but the rapid growth has resulted in pressures on housing, increased homelessness, and the need for more ESL training and other services to help integrate immigrants into the community. In this environment, the voluntary sector's contribution to social cohesion, integration, employability, arts and culture and community life is increasingly

important in addressing social and community conditions that have an overall impact on the economic and social attractiveness of a city.

In addition to the contributions of the voluntary sector outlined above, there are several other ways that it could contribute to creating the community conditions that support economic competitiveness.

These include:

- participation in developing an overarching community vision,
- more extensive involvement in all stages of the local public policy process,
- participation in collaborative problem-solving,
- support for the advancement of urban policy issues.

## COMMUNITY VISION

A community vision that articulates a desired future for the community, shared values and priorities can be a very effective mechanism for generating support for strategic initiatives and providing a consistent framework for various organizations across the community. For the vision to be effective within the broad community, it needs to reflect community values, concerns and aspirations. Voluntary organizations by their very nature must play a role in the development of this vision because they exist to reflect and respond to the community that they serve and as such, have a valuable base of knowledge.



## PUBLIC POLICY ROLE

The voluntary sector meets many community needs that are the result of economic activity, such as increased pressure on health and social services, and the desire to expand cultural and recreational opportunities, and thereby plays a huge role in alleviating social conditions that could negatively affect quality of life in the city and contributing positively to the cultural and social vitality of the community. It is ironic that despite this, the voluntary sector has generally

had limited input to policy development. Although the sector addresses the consequences of economic development, it is rarely involved in economic policy or strategy development. This is unfortunate, because voluntary sector organizations have a direct link to the experience, interests and concerns of the groups and individuals they work with so they have an excellent understanding of the impact of public policy at the local level and have valuable perspectives to contribute to the policy process.

The voluntary sector can improve the public policy process in several ways. Feedback from voluntary organizations can help identify the ripple effects of various policies and initiatives, providing opportunities to ameliorate negative impacts that undermine broader community goals. The sector can provide a voice for many in the community who are traditionally “voiceless”. Broadening the knowledge base and perspectives at the policy table, and including the voice of those accessing community based services, can result in better decisions and greater cooperation.

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(Torjman, 1997)

In some areas, this alignment is beginning to emerge in quite a visible way. For example, the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) is a joint venture between the federal government and the voluntary sector that is aimed at strengthening relationships between the sector and government, building capacity within the sector and improving the regulations and legislation that govern the sector. One of the products of this initiative is *A Code on Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*. The purpose of the Code is to define practices that facilitate increased opportunity for dialogue between the federal government and voluntary sector during the public policy process, as well as for a review of major policy and program proposals from a voluntary sector "lens".

This Code recognizes the various points throughout the public policy process where the federal government will engage in a dialogue with the voluntary sector. The voluntary sector will have a role in:

- Issue identification,
- Agenda-setting,
- Policy design,
- Policy implementation,
- Monitoring and
- Impact assessment.

These roles recognize the expertise that the voluntary sector can bring to the policy table based on its direct experience, relationships and involvement at the community level.

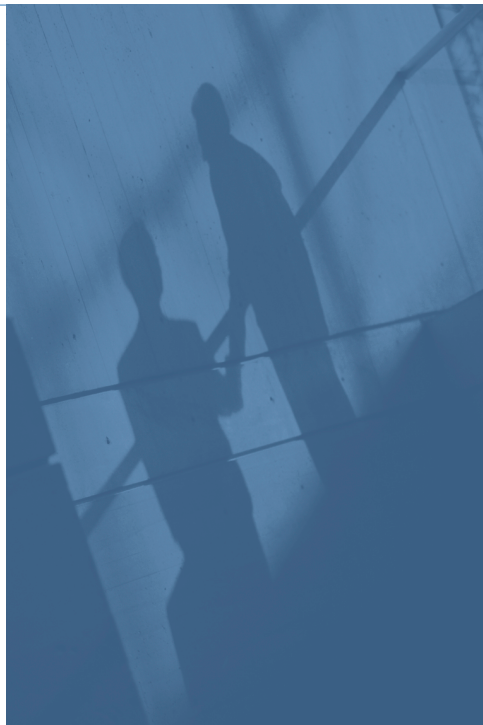
The VSI model would be an excellent way to involve the voluntary sector in the municipal and provincial policy processes. Based on the need to develop a more integrated approach to economic development, urban infrastructure and quality of life issues, the VSI model would provide opportunities for the voluntary sector to provide its perspective and expertise at points in the policy process when that input would be most useful.

The experience of the Manitoba Voluntary Sector Initiative (MVSII) illustrates how this model has been applied at the provincial level. The MVSII was created to help the voluntary sector in Manitoba address a variety of challenges to its leadership, organizations and groups, and most importantly, its limitations in securing volunteers, staff and managerial talent and financial resources to meet long-term community needs. The MVSII brings together communities, volunteer organizations, groups and leadership to facilitate the exchange of information and is creating a Made-in-Manitoba data-base to build closer co-operation between the voluntary sector, government, business and labour. (Voluntary Sector of Manitoba website)

## COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

There is great potential for governments to adopt a collaborative problem-solving approach to address community issues. Voluntary sector organizations are often already engaged in these issues and are eager to contribute as part of a larger group to work collaboratively on innovative solutions to broad social issues.

HomeFront is a Calgary initiative that demonstrates the strength of this approach. The Mayor's Task Force Against Violence in 1990 stimulated a decade of community development activity that culminated in the HomeFront demonstration project that began in May of 2000 with the opening of a specialized domestic violence docket



court. The project collaboratively works with 60 partner agencies forming a coordinated approach to interrupting the cycle of domestic violence with a combination of law enforcement, criminal justice and community agency interventions. The project receives funding from all three orders of government and significant contributions from community and private donors. This varied financial support has allowed HomeFront and the Calgary community to develop a number of unique responses to domestic violence. There are many more situations that would benefit from such a col-

laborative approach.

## SUPPORT FOR URBAN POLICY ISSUES

Urban communities face specific issues that do not tend to be recognized by provincial and federal governments. Whether it relates to municipal financing or the impact of a wide variety of policies on local communities, voluntary sector organizations can offer support and community validation to municipal governments in bringing the issues faced at the urban level to the attention of provincial and federal governments. The voluntary sector and the City of Calgary share a common concern about the impact on the quality of life and economic vitality of our communities and there is a huge opportunity to work together to raise awareness and seek solutions. ■

# Moving Forward

*The “livability” of Calgary is dependent on having both “magnets,” the forces that attract new people and companies to our community, and “glue,” the social cohesion and infrastructure that allows for the well being of all members of our community.*

The “livability” of Calgary is dependent on having both “magnets,” the forces that attract new people and companies to our community, and “glue,” the social cohesion and infrastructure that allows for the well being of all members of our community. This means that economic development and social development are interconnected and both essential for Calgary to thrive.

While this idea is counterintuitive for those who have thought of development strictly in terms of “business development,” and presents additional challenges for Calgary given the rapid growth that has occurred in recent years, it is important to understand that social and economic conditions together work to create a vibrant community for all Calgarians. The connection between making social investment to address social issues, and a subsequent increase in economic activity, is not a straightforward one. However, improved social conditions and increased participation in community life contribute to greater social cohesion. The results of this approach are significant and will contribute to the long term health and vitality of Calgary, both as a haven for economic investment and as a socially desirable community.

To take advantage of the opportunity to create both magnets and glue for Calgary, all three sectors - the public, private and the voluntary sectors - must collaborate to create a shared vision for the community and then work together to bring the vision to fruition. The voluntary sector is a valuable asset to this process, as voluntary organizations work directly in many of the areas that impact social development. The sector is the direct link to people who know the issues, have the experience and share the concerns that are integral to improving the quality of life for Calgarians.

The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations’ vision of working together with business and government to build a strong, vibrant community is based on the understanding that economic and social development are interdependent and equally important. As part of our mission, the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations is committed to strengthening the sector and the city as a whole, through the involvement of voluntary organizations in the process of building Calgary’s community. ■

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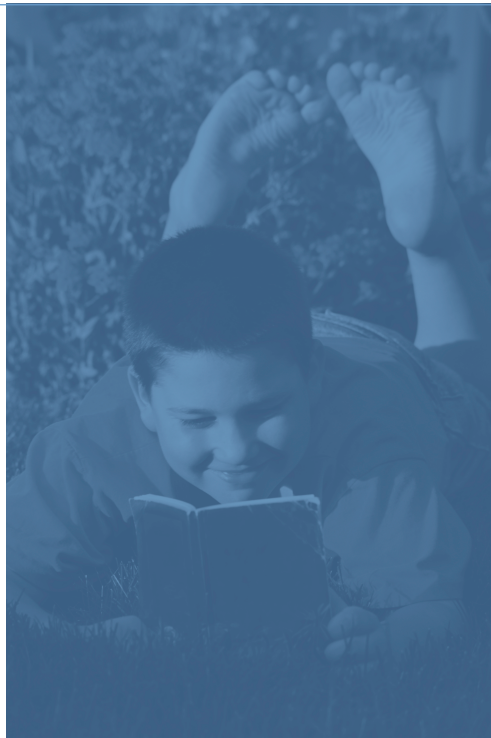
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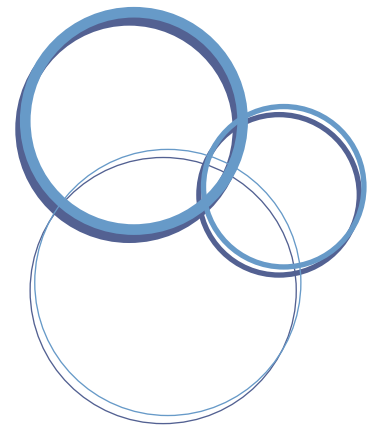
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# Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations

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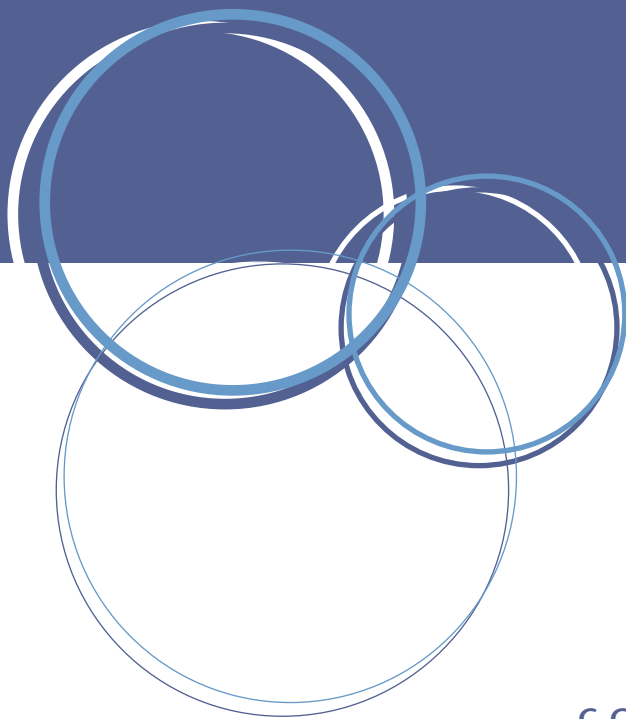
## OUR VISION:

Calgary's voluntary sector working together with business and government to build a strong, vibrant community.

## THE CCVO:

- champions the value of the voluntary sector and raises public awareness,
- articulates the views of the voluntary sector and provides leadership on public policy issues,
- facilitates networking and the sharing of information and resources,
- engages the voluntary sector around issues of common concern,
- works with business and government, and
- strengthens the capacity of the sector through research, education, dialogue and professional development.

For more information, including how to join the CCVO, please email us at [admin@calgarycvo.org](mailto:admin@calgarycvo.org), call us at (403) 261 6655, or visit our website at [www.calgarycvo.org](http://www.calgarycvo.org)



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