



January 29, 2014

Dear Calgarians:

Louise Casey has worked on homelessness in the United Kingdom for over 20 years and spoke at a conference this fall in Ottawa. Three things she said seem apt as we go into the seventh year of Calgary's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness (10 Year Plan).

**Homelessness is the most visible symbol of an uncaring society.**

In 2008, a group of Calgarians developed Canada's first 10 Year Plan. They committed to ending homelessness, not just managing it. Six years later, this attitude has led to Calgary being considered a leader in addressing homelessness. More than 5,000 people have been housed with support. A homeless IT system, the most comprehensive in Canada, tracks outcomes and drives decisions. Furthermore, the RESOLVE capital campaign is seeing nine agencies fundraise \$120 million for affordable housing – another first that speaks to the collaborative spirit of Calgarians.

**Target resources to the most vulnerable.**

In Calgary, we agree. We're focusing on those stuck in homelessness. It's not realistic to help everyone. As a matter of fact, most shelter stayers are there for a short period and then find their own way back to housing. We're taking a braver route – which isn't cheap and isn't easy. It's not a temporary solution or a 'feel good' bandaid. It's identifying the long-term homeless. Many have multiple mental health issues, physical illness born by homelessness, active addictions and worst of all, no more hope that things can be better. For them, we will individually assess their needs and match them with housing and support. Realistically, we might not get the match right the first time, but we won't give up.

**Don't listen to the devil that will tempt you to give up.**

The best thing about having a 10 Year Plan is there is indeed a coordinated plan. The hardest thing is keeping up the momentum. At the beginning, there is excitement but then the challenge becomes real. Ask the front-line workers helping Calgary's hardest-to-house. Ask the leaders how popular they were forcing change on entrenched systems. Every three years, the Plan is updated. But make no mistake, we will not give up. In 2018, there will be a well-coordinated and efficient homeless system. We will help the most vulnerable. Why? Because Calgary is a caring community – and if we can't do it here, it can't be done anywhere.

Sincerely

Gerrad Oishi  
Interim President and CEO

P.S. You can listen to all of Louise's remarks at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLmbLn5R7pE>