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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REFUGEE CLAIMANTS IN NEED OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT *Community Action Team Leads the Way*

CALGARY December 18, 2009 – The number of refugee claimants to Calgary has increased considerably in the past three years. Forecasts predict 525 claims by the end of this fiscal year, representing a 750% increase in just three years. Refugee claimants are individuals who make a claim to the Government of Canada for refugee protection after arriving in Canada or at a Canadian port-of-entry. Prior to receiving a decision on their claim—which, roughly estimated, can take up to 18 months—claimants have no legal status in Canada and therefore, in many cases, have limited ability to appease their basic human needs. Claimant families often speak no English, and are dealing with a traumatic migration experience, as well as traumatic experiences that initially forced them to migrate. They are experiencing culture shock, discrimination, intense worry about the future, and severe economic privation.

The absence of a coordinated community action plan and a lack of dedicated resources strain the capacity of the supports that are currently available to refugee claimants. On November 4th, 2009 Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary (ISCC) convened a roundtable for representatives from government departments and non-profit service providers to examine the issues, identify the current support system, and develop a coordinated community action plan to increase support for claimants in Calgary. A [summary report](#) of the event and the resultant recommendations was released today.

The primary recommendation from the roundtable is to create an action team that will lead the development of an action plan. To be successful, the action plan must have commitment from across the spectrum, including the Calgary housing and homelessness sector, legal sector, mainstream and immigrant service providers, government services and departments, and ethno-cultural associations. ISCC calls upon stakeholders who were not a part of the roundtable to contact ISCC for more information.

Claimants face a declining likelihood of success under increasingly strict government policies and no mechanism for appeal. Whether or not they become permanent members of our community, they will certainly be residing with us for a matter of time. These potential citizens and indefinite guests have the right to live securely and safely while their claim is being processed.

The ISCC acts as a collective voice to identify and address issues related to the settlement and integration of newcomers in Calgary. The Council consists of senior representatives from settlement service providers, ethno-cultural groups, funding bodies, and public sector organizations. Our mission is to provide leadership and resources to influence public attitudes and knowledge and support capacity of service providers in the immigrant sector.

For more information, please contact:

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