

## Impact of Social Environment

### Purpose

The Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance (CAPRA) has prepared this backgrounder on the impact of the social environment for discussion during the 2017 municipal campaign.

### Description

The social environment are the groups to which we belong or identify with; the neighborhoods in which we live; the organizations of our workplaces and the policies or rules we create to order and conduct our lives. There are numerous factors that impact the well-being of citizens, resulting in individuals or families being isolated. Conditions that create barriers for citizens include accessibility of services, lack of collective response to social issues; citizens' safety and security; exclusionary practices; community empowerment and having a strong social network.

### Current Situation

The City of Red Deer, through its Social Policy Framework, has committed to the following:

Red Deer is a strong, engaged community that embraces its diversity. Through leadership, support and partnerships, everyone can meet their needs and maintain a good quality of life. Equality, social well-being and a sense of belonging are supported and decisions are just.

Studies have shown that collective action is required to build and maintain a healthy inclusive social environment.<sup>1</sup> Many people and organizations working together in an integrated manner will affect change. Those feeling disconnected may have physical and mental challenges, lack of transportation, language or cultural barriers, or loss of family and friends – the most important relationships for feeling connected. Isolation can affect any citizen, but can be especially challenging for seniors. Many aspects of making a community senior friendly also makes the community accessible for all citizens, as demonstrated in New York's Age Friendly project.

Social isolation is a threat to the mental and financial health of our communities.<sup>2</sup> The City of Red Deer has done a number of things to support diversity – it has signed on to the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination, hired a specialist in Diversity and Inclusion, is a member of the Welcome and Inclusive Communities Network and has initiated the Great Neighbours Project through Family and Community Support Services. Most recently City Council have signed the Protocol Agreement with Red Deer Urban Aboriginal Voices.

### Resources

[Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination](#)

City of Red Deer - [Social Policy Framework](#)

- [Protocol Agreement](#) with Urban Aboriginal Voices, [Truth and Reconciliation recommendations](#)



## [Age Friendly New York](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada, National Seniors Council (2014). *Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors 2013-2014*. Retrieved on July 27, 2017 from [https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/nsc-cna/documents/pdf/policy-and-program-development/publications-reports/2014/Report\\_on\\_the\\_Social\\_Isolation\\_of\\_Seniors.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/nsc-cna/documents/pdf/policy-and-program-development/publications-reports/2014/Report_on_the_Social_Isolation_of_Seniors.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Psychology Today (2003). *The Dangers of Loneliness*. Retrieved on July 27, 2017 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200307/the-dangers-loneliness>