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LOCAL NEWS

Coalition protests lack of care funding

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Lack of adequate funding is robbing some of Alberta's most vulnerable residents of proper care.

That's according to Who Cares Alberta, a coalition of community organizations throughout the province.

Members of the coalition held a community awareness event at Lethbridge Public Library Wednesday, in an attempt to spread the word about their cause. They said inadequate funding results in low wages for many employees of establishments like women's shelters, children's and seniors' services, crisis centres and counselling services. The wages are so low employee turnover has become a serious problem and Who Cares Alberta is lobbying the provincial government to boost funding to the affected organizations.

"What we're trying to do is attract people to this field and make it a profession or a career. When people can make more money selling coffee, it's an issue," said Alex Hann, regional director of Rehoboth Christian Ministries.

"These are things that need to be corrected. They ought not be problems in this province," added Hann.

Speakers at the event stressed something as seemingly insignificant as staffing changes can be life-altering for many who use the community organizations.

"Money is part of it, but there has to be a long-range plan," said Ed Hinger, executive director of the Rehabilitation Society of Southwestern Alberta.

"We need to get responsible planning in this process and figure out where we're going with this whole thing."

Who Cares encouraged local residents to ask candidates in the upcoming provincial election what their stance on community group funding is. The organization also plans to present its case to city council in the hopes the City of Lethbridge will endorse its cause.

Ald. Jeff Carlson attended the event and he said the issue needs to be a higher priority for the Alberta government.

"It seems to be something that the current and previous provincial governments ignored. Without funding for these not-for-profits, our quality of life really goes downhill," explained Carlson.

"Our province is so wealthy right now, they really need to step up to the plate."

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