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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New report: Calgarians ready for a mature conversation about taxes

CALGARY – A new report released this morning by the University of Alberta’s Parkland Institute says that Calgarians’ vision of their city requires excellent public services and infrastructure, and that City Council will need to find fair and sustainable revenue streams to pay for them.

The report entitled *No Free Lunch: Financing the Priorities of Calgarians*, looks at the desires articulated by Calgarians through the imagineCalgary process and public opinion polling, and points out that these, along with continued economic and population growth, will require increased public spending.

Report author, Parkland Research Associate David Thompson, notes that Calgarians understand that excellent services and facilities carry a cost, and they are willing to pay. He points to public opinion surveys which show that Calgarians are far more concerned with a wide range of social and environmental issues than they are about taxes.

One of the main recommendations of the report, however, is that City Council not resort to unfair and expensive strategies of the past to raise revenues. “Property taxes are a regressive form of taxation that is not favoured by a majority of Calgarians,” says Thompson, and advises Council to explore alternatives.

The report also highlights the increased costs and reduced accountability that accompany privatization and public private partnerships (P3s), the problems with the regressive and unsustainable user fees of the past, and the uncertainty and loss of control implicit in relying on provincial and federal grants.

“Calgarians favour the development of local revenue streams. . These can be designed in such a way as to improve the environment, replace regressive taxes, and reduce costs to the City” says Thompson. “What is needed is a City Council that is committed to taking action on these options.

The Parkland Institute provided a briefing to interested Aldermen and municipal candidates this morning, and encouraged them to consider the report’s recommendations as they prepare their electoral platforms.

The Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. *No Free Lunch: Financing the Priorities of Calgarians* is available on the Parkland Institute web site: www.parklandinstitute.ca, or in hard-copy from the Parkland Institute at 403-270-9669.

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