

--For immediate release--

## THE COST OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN IN CANADA

*New research finds family breakdown costs almost \$7 billion annually*

**June 3, 2009 (Ottawa)** - The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada released new research today on the cost of family breakdown in Canada at a briefing on Parliament Hill. "Private choices, public costs: How failing families cost us all" examines the relationship between poverty, families and government. The authors, Rebecca Walberg and Andrea Mrozek, quantify government spending directed at poverty alleviation for broken families through welfare, child care costs and housing. They find that cost to be close to \$7 billion annually. They estimate the savings through decreased family breakdown to be close to \$2 billion annually.

The report can be read in full, [here](#)

This in-depth quantitative assessment examines the links between broken homes and poverty alleviation measures. Consistently, not only in Canada but in all OECD nations—lone parent households are more likely to live in poverty. "Certainly the main concern around family breakdown is the emotional toll," say the authors. "But the fiscal costs are evident, and those can be more readily measured."

The report highlights the costs province by province, discussing why and how stable marriages contribute to a stronger economy. "If we are serious about reducing poverty," say the authors, "especially children and women in poverty, we must address the effects of family breakdown." They go on: "This calls all of us to reconsider the value currently placed on family today, without pointing fingers. We may believe that family structure doesn't matter; but the data show the best thing you can do for your kids is raise them in a stable, married-parent home."

Some of the data in the report highlight the higher proportion of lone-parent families living below the Low Income Cut-off (LICO); also the higher proportion of lone-parent families with children on welfare. This is troubling, given that Canadian statistics show the percentage of married parents is falling, while the per cent of lone parents and those living common law rises. In 1961, 92 per cent of families were married; 2006 census data indicates that has fallen to 69 per cent.

Long term solutions to limit the consequences of poverty must involve encouraging stable, two-parent homes for children, primarily because this benefits the children but also because marriage acts as a public good. Providing Canadians with the facts about single parenthood, divorce, growing up without two parents, and the emotional and financial hardships that accompany family breakdown in general will help them understand the likely consequences of the different choices available to them in their own lives.

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*The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada conducts, compiles and presents family research to ensure that marriage and family-friendly policies are foremost in the minds of Canada's decision makers.*

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