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New research shows Albertans pay the highest out-of-pocket costs for services

Edmonton – A new fact sheet released this morning by the U of A’s Parkland Institute shows that Albertans are paying more than other Canadians for critical public services.

The fact sheet, entitled “More than Nickles and Dimes,” uses data from Statistics Canada to compare how much Albertans are spending out of pocket for services like health care, utilities, education and child care compared to other jurisdictions in Canada, and compared to the national average.

The results are clear. Albertans pay the highest out-of-pocket expenses in the country for health care services, and are in the top for fees for utilities, education, and child care as well.

The Institute attributes this fact to seventeen years of the provincial government trying to save money by way of deregulation, privatization and de-listing of everything in sight.

“The reality,” says Parkland Institute research director Diana Gibson, “is that this has not really saved any money – it has just transferred the costs from collective payment through taxes to individual payment out of our own pockets.”

As the Alberta Government prepares to release their 2010 budget, the fact sheet emphasizes that any further cuts, deregulation and privatization will continue to have a direct and significant impact on Alberta families and their disposable income.

“The government needs to understand how their policies have already taken a significant bite out of the take-home pay of Albertans,” says Gibson. “That bite will only get bigger with the new round of budget cuts to be announced next week.”

The Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. The fact sheet forms part of an ongoing research project into the impacts of, and alternatives to, the cuts to public services currently being implemented by the provincial government.

- 30 -

More than Nickles and Dimes, as well as other materials forming part of this project, are available on the Parkland web site: www.ualberta.ca/parkland or by calling the office at 780-492-8558.

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