

## INCOME SUPPORT CASELOADS IN ALBERTA

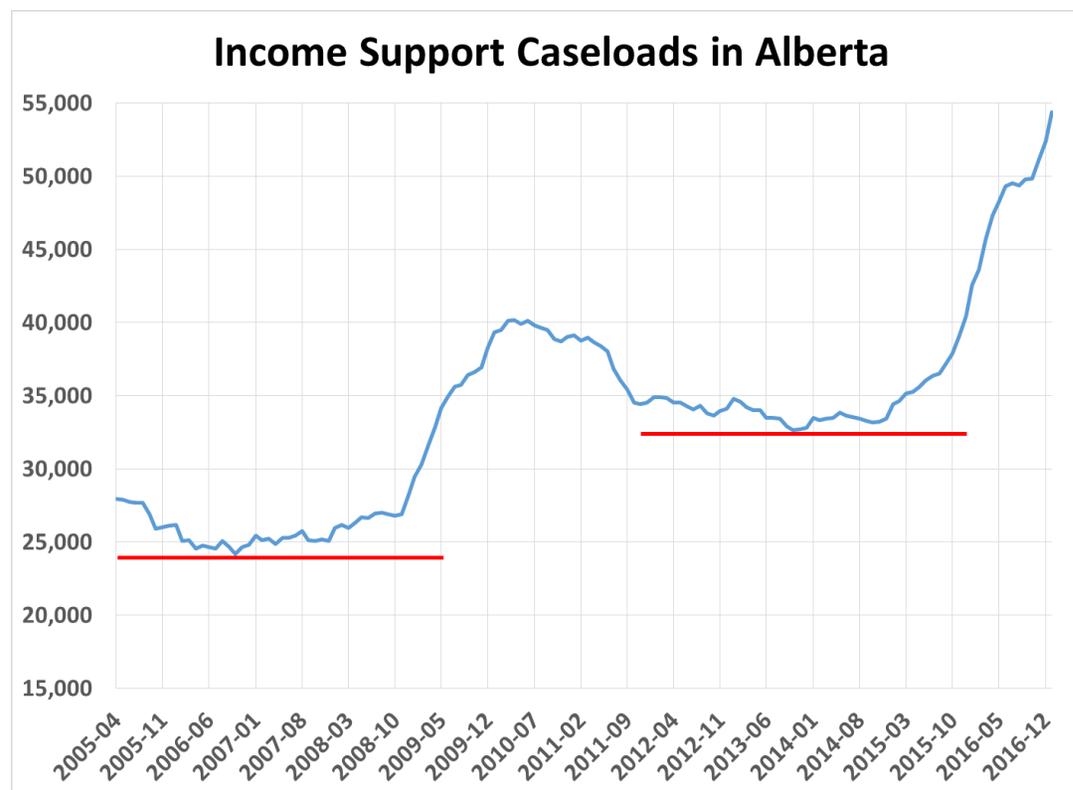
Number of people who collect income support in Alberta, over the period April 2005 to January 2017

The effects of lower oil prices, the difficulty of gaining approval for new pipelines, and the Fort McMurray fires have all contributed to job losses, income drops, and uncertainty about future prospects. Measures of economic health typically focus on the unemployment rate, GDP, and the number of job losses. Another useful indicator is the number of people relying on social assistance. Those receiving social assistance have often exhausted all other options – including Employment Insurance – and are now relying on this last layer of the social safety net.

The number of people in Alberta, collecting social assistance, increased sharply during the 2009 recession, but did not fall back to the pre-downturn level in the following years. Numbers are rising again.

Today's inaugural edition of *Social Policy Trends* describes the number of people collecting income support (excluding AISH recipients) in Alberta, over the period of April 2005 to January 2017.

As the figure shows, the number of income support claimants increased sharply during the period of 2009-2010



Source: Government of Alberta, <http://open.alberta.ca/dataset/income-support-caseload-alberta>

recession, from a low of 24,205 in October of 2006 to a high of 40,177 in April of 2010. It is noteworthy that the number of claimants did not fall back to the pre-recession levels after the Alberta economy stabilized. Five years after the start of the 2009-10 recession, the number of recipients had only fallen to 32,659 (in October of 2013). The recent 2015-2016 downturn has seen the number of claimants soar, reaching a high of 54,374 in January of 2017, with no clear sign of leveling off. For social agencies, these numbers signal what will likely be increased demands for their services in the near future.