

NEWS RELEASE

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COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL
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2014 living wage calculation: you need to work almost two full-time minimum wage jobs just to make ends meet in Greater Victoria

Victoria – \$18.93 is the new Greater Victoria Living Wage rate, according to a report released today that calculates the hourly wage that two working parents with young children must earn to cover the real costs of raising a family. Living wage rates have also risen for Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley, to \$20.10 and \$17.02 respectively.

[Working for a Living Wage – Greater Victoria 2014 Update](#) is published by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, in partnership with First Call BC and the Metro Vancouver Living Wage for Families Campaign.

The living wage is calculated as the hourly rate at which a family with two full-time earners and two young children can meet its basic expenses (including rent, childcare, food and transportation), once government taxes, credits, deductions and subsidies have been taken into account.

The Living Wage rate has increased by 1% in Greater Victoria since it was last calculated in 2013 at \$18.73/hour. The new rate of \$18.93 is close to double the current minimum wage in BC, meaning that a couple who each earned minimum wage would have to work 63 hours per week, just to cover basic living expenses for their family.

Childcare and MSP are the two most significant cost increases. Child care costs rose by \$39/month (3.5% increase), while MSP premiums went up by 4.1%. Other items in the family budget that saw increases were clothing and footwear (1.67%), education (3.4%) and non-MSP healthcare expenditures (2.3%). MSP premiums rose in 2014 for the fifth consecutive year, and have added \$30.50 to the family's monthly expenses since the Greater Victoria living wage was first calculated in 2008.

The story of the Living Wage is a story about children in our community: 6540 children in Greater Victoria live in two-parent, two-child families with incomes less than the Living Wage. 4280 of these children are in households where the reported income reflects the parents are working full-time above the minimum wage rate but below a Living Wage rate. That is more than the number of children attending Greater Victoria School District's ten largest elementary schools.

British Columbia now has the highest child poverty rate in Canada, and has ranked worst in Canada for nine out of the last ten years (we were second-worst in 2010). In 2011 (the last year for which we have data), one out of every three poor children (32%) lived in families where at least one adult had a full-time, full-year job and a majority lived in families with some paid work (part-year or part-time).

Though an \$18.93 an hour living wage rate may be a surprise to some, it is important to remember that this high wage rate reflects, in part, a failure of public policy to provide inputs such as universal affordable childcare, affordable rental and social housing, affordable enrollment in healthcare and affordable transportation. If there were adequate universal supports for low income families in these areas, their struggles to make ends meet would be significantly reduced. For example, the \$10/Day Child Care community plan proposed by the Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC, would reduce the Victoria living wage to \$15.75.

“The living wage is an important tool to illustrate the problem of child poverty and working poverty in Greater Victoria,” says Rupert Downing, Executive Director of the Community Social Planning Council. “It calls on employers to pay wages that reflect the actual costs of living in our community, and policymakers to step up to the plate to protect affordability for everyone.”

The Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria and Vancity Credit Union are leading the way, having pledged to maintain a living wage rate for all of their employees and expect contractors and service providers to pledge the same. The Living Wage Employer Program seeks other employers in Greater Victoria who wish to make a similar commitment, recognizing and building the number of jobs that can help a family sustain a basic livelihood.

Thirty-six organizations in Metro Vancouver, employing over 6,000 workers and covering many thousand more contracted service workers, have been certified as Living Wage Employers. These include SAP-Vancouver, Vancity, Canadian Cancer Society (BC and Yukon Division), the City of New Westminster and Eclipse Awards.

The issue of **low wage poverty** is a Canada-wide issue: 26 communities throughout Canada, including 13 in BC, are calculating Living Wage rates and working with employers and policymakers to address both wages and costs of living.

Resources:

2014 Living Wage Supplement for BC’s Capital Region:
<http://communitycouncil.ca/initiatives/livingwage>

Living Wage for Families Campaign: <http://livingwageforfamilies.ca/>

2014 Living Wage for Vancouver: \$20.10

2014 Living Wage for the Fraser Valley: \$17.02

Contact Info:

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The Community Social Planning Council (CPSC) is the leading independent, non-partisan, and knowledgeable voice on socio-economic issues in BC’s Capital region; it fosters social innovation and action on improving social and economic conditions. <http://communitycouncil.ca/>