



Media Release

Embargoed until Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 5 am PST

Soaring housing costs causing living wage to increase in Greater Victoria

(Greater Victoria) The cost of raising a family in British Columbia increased from 2017 to 2018. And if it hadn't been for reductions in Medical Service Plan premiums and child care costs, the increase would have been higher, says the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, in its 2018 Living Wage report released today.

A \$20.50 hourly wage is needed to cover the costs of raising a family in Greater Victoria, up from \$20.01 per hour in 2017. The Living Wage is the hourly wage that two working parents with two young children must earn to meet their basic expenses (including rent, child care, food, and transportation), once government taxes, credits, deductions and subsidies have been taken into account. The Living Wage for our region is calculated annually by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria (CSPC).

Living wage rates are also increasing across BC with the 2018 rates as follows: Metro Vancouver (\$20.91), Revelstoke (\$19.37), District 69 [Parksville-Qualicum] (\$17.02), Kamloops (\$17.31), Powell River (\$17.15), North Central BC [Prince George and Quesnel] (\$16.51), Comox Valley (\$16.59) and the Fraser Valley (\$17.40). Living wage reports for these areas were also released today.

Child care and housing continue to be the two biggest costs in the living wage calculation.

Over the last year, the median rent for a 3+ bedroom unit in Greater Victoria has gone up by \$65 per month, more than a 4 per cent increase. In some areas of the region, this increase is much more pronounced.

Family costs would have been even higher if it wasn't for two substantial policy interventions by the provincial government: a 50 per cent reduction to MSP premiums and the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative, implemented April 1 and will result in savings of \$900 this year for parents with children between three and five years if their child care provider opts into the program.

"A \$20.50 hourly living wage may seem high to some but it is based on a bare-bones budget for a family of four in our region," says Stefanie Hardman, CSPC Research Manager and author of the report.

"There's a big gap between the wages many of our neighbours earn and the real costs of raising a family. About 27 per cent of Greater Victoria's two-parent families with two children had incomes less than the living wage according to the most-recent Statistics Canada data available."

"Good public policy can positively affect the lives of families," says Deanna Ogle, Living Wage for Families Campaign organizer. "However, it is clear that without immediate action to tie maximum rent increases to the unit, not the tenant, and steps taken to protect existing affordable housing stock that the increasing cost of housing will swamp any other affordability measures that are implemented."

Over 110 companies and organizations across BC, employing more than 18,000 workers and covering many thousands more contracted service workers, have been certified as Living Wage Employers. These include Huu-ay-aht First Nations, Vancity, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, the City of Quesnel, the City of Port Coquitlam, and in Greater Victoria, certified Living Wage Employers include Pacifica Housing, Urban Solar, and Community Plus. In 2017, the District of Central Saanich adopted a Living Wage policy and is on its way to becoming a certified Living Wage employer – the first municipality in the region to make this commitment.

Working poverty is a Canada-wide issue. Over 50 communities across the country, including 20 in BC, have active living wage campaigns and are advocating to improve quality of life for low-wage workers.

-30-

For interviews, contact

- Stefanie Hardman (author of the Greater Victoria Living Wage report), Research Manager, the Community Social Planning Council, 250-383-6166 ext 111, Stefanie@communitycouncil.ca
- Deanna Ogle, Campaign Organizer, Living Wage for Families Campaign, deanna@livingwageforfamilies.ca, 604-975-3347.

www.livingwageforfamilies.ca

www.communitycouncil.ca

Background: Living Wages across BC

Community	Living Wage	Year Calculated
Metro Vancouver	\$20.91	2018
Victoria (Capital Regional District)	\$20.50	2018
Revelstoke	\$19.37	2018
Fraser Valley	\$17.40	2018
Kamloops	\$17.31	2018
Powell River	\$17.15	2018
Parksville/Qualicum (District 69)	\$17.02	2018
Comox Valley	\$16.59	2018
North Central BC (Prince George, Quesnel)	\$16.51	2018
Clayoquot Sound	\$20.11	2017
Cowichan Region	\$19.05	2017
North East BC (Dawson Creek, Chetwyn, Tumbler Ridge)	\$18.29	2017
Columbia Valley	\$18.25	2017
Port Alberni/Huu-ay-aht First Nations	\$17.56	2017
Nelson	\$18.42	2016
Lower Columbia Region	\$18.21	2016
100 Mile House	\$17.45	2016