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Living Wage
for Families BC

Living wage leaps 20% in one year in Greater Victoria, rising to \$24.29 per hour

GREATER VICTORIA: Today, the Community Social Planning Council announces the new living wage for the region in its Living Wage report 2022.

Spikes in housing and food costs have made Victoria's living wage jump to the second highest in the province (following Golden), and island food prices put us ahead of Vancouver for the first time.

A \$24.29 hourly wage is needed to cover the costs of raising a family in Greater Victoria, up from \$20.46 per hour in 2021. The Living Wage is the hourly wage that two working parents with two young children, aged 4 and 7, must each earn to meet their basic expenses (including rent, child care, food, and transportation), once government taxes, credits, deductions and benefits have been taken into account. The family Living Wage for our region is calculated annually by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria (CSPC) as part of the Happiness and Wellbeing Community Lab, a collaboration with United Way Southern Vancouver Island.

"With many of the region's businesses reporting labour shortages, and food banks reporting increased numbers, the Living Wage is a critical number this year," says Diana Gibson, Executive Director of the Community Social Planning Council, "It is clear that both businesses and workers in the region are feeling the squeeze as they try to recover from the pandemic and both are looking to the province for more action on cost drivers."

"Many low wage workers put in long hours at multiple jobs, and yet are still forced to choose between paying rent or purchasing groceries," says Pamela Charron, Interim Executive Director, Worker Solidarity Network, "A wage should not only allow workers to survive, a wage should allow workers to live – this means having time to spend with one's friends and family, enjoy cultural activities, and taking care of one's health."

According to Danella Parks, the Director of Community Investment at the United Way South Vancouver Island, "The pandemic and its long-lasting effects have been especially hard on the mental and financial health of low-income families and the high cost of living is making that even more challenging – with many reporting that they're living pay cheque to pay cheque and often sacrificing basic needs pay for rent and utilities." Parks adds: "Stable, healthy, and supported families are integral to a thriving community – The Happiness and Wellbeing Community Lab and its Living Wage project are part of our ongoing work to make sure that no family is left behind."

Living wage reports for several locations in BC also were released today as part of VanCity's provincial Living Wage for Families Campaign. "Although Victoria has some of the highest



costs, we are seeing a jump everywhere in BC.," reports Anastasia French, Living Wage for Families BC Organiser.

The Living Wage went down between 2018 and 2019 thanks to government policy - most notably BC's Affordable Child Care Benefit, but it tipped back up starting in 2021. "The drop in 2019 shows that good government policy can be an effective tool for reducing poverty," says Chelsea Power, Research Coordinator with the Community Social Planning Council "and it shows the need for making change in key areas - like housing - that are driving that cost of living."

Annual household expenses for the family of four rose by \$10,229 compared to 2021, a 12.65% increase. With the exception of childcare—which decreased slightly by 0.16%—costs are up across the board. Housing, transportation, and childcare continue to make up a substantial portion of annual expenses, and the cost of food and other household items has spiked—up 25.7% and 22% respectively. These major increases in costs can be attributed to high provincial inflation, which peaked in May at 8.1%. According to the BC Consumer Price Index report, the cost of groceries is up 10.5% since 2021.

With the median monthly rent up \$278 from 2021 to \$2,121 for a 3-bedroom apartment or townhouse, housing continues to be the greatest household expense in the region. The Living Wage family continues to live in "core housing need," paying a higher proportion of their income for rent and utilities than is considered by CMHC to be affordable—as do nearly half of renter households in the Greater Victoria region.

Calen McNeil, Owner of Big Wheel Burger reports: "We have been working towards being a living wage employer and already exceed that wage with tips. We were getting close to that target wage but this moves the finish line a lot farther away for us and any employer in a similar position."

Over 30 employers across Greater Victoria, have been certified as Living Wage Employers. These include

Spinnakers Brew Pub, District of Central Saanich, the City of Victoria, Pacifica Housing, Urban Solar, and Community Plus to name a few.

For information on becoming a living wage employer reach out to diana@communitycouncil.ca.

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