Media Advisory

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Living Wage in Greater Victoria Jumps to $26.78 per Hour

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GREATER VICTORIA: A sharp spike in the region's cost of living—primarily due to soaring housing costs—has led Greater Victoria's living wage to rise to **$26.78** per hour, a **5.4% increase** from last year. The increase highlights the region's growing affordability crisis and the challenges faced by local workers.

Although inflation has decreased from historic highs, cost increases for essentials continue to push up the living wage, which is calculated by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria (CSPC), the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), BC Office, and Living Wage BC. The living wage is the hourly rate that each of two parents working full-time must earn to support a family of four based on the actual costs of living in a particular community.

The financial relief provided by government measures, such as affordable childcare programs and increases in income-tested benefits, was intended to help offset rising costs. However, these measures are being outpaced by the rising cost of rent.

"Rent has been the most expensive item in the living wage family budget since the calculation was first produced, and this year is no exception," says Iglika Ivanova, Senior Economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, BC Office, and the report's lead author.

Living expenses for the Metro Vancouver living wage family increased 5.3% this year—an additional $214 per month. Other major urban centres across BC have also seen substantial increases in living expenses: Nanaimo by $145, Penticton by $165, and Cowichan Valley by $295 per month. However, Greater Victoria saw one of the highest increases in all of BC, with living **expenses soaring by $330 per month**.

Furthermore, there remains a strikingly large gap between the 2024 Greater Victoria living wage and BC's current minimum wage of $17.40 per hour.

"Hundreds of thousands of BC workers earn less than the living wage and face impossible choices—like whether to buy groceries or heat the house, keep up with bills or pay the rent on time," says Anastasia French, Provincial Manager of Living Wage BC. "Racialized workers and

women are disproportionately affected by low wages in a region where the cost of living continues to climb."

Over **450 certified living wage employers** across the province, including Low Key Dog Walks in Greater Victoria, have stepped up to pay both direct and contract employees wages sufficient to support families. "Being a Living Wage Employer is important for a number of reasons. Our team knows they are highly valued. Moral is high and turnover is non-existent. Our clients appreciate knowing the team is paid well and being a part of making that happen. It also has a ripple effect in the community. Everyone wins!" says Rachelle Briscoe, Owner and Founder of Low Key Dog Walks.

The Greater Victoria living wage calculation is based on the needs of two-parent families with young children. However, it is also meant to support all workers, so young adults are not discouraged from having children due to low wages, and older workers have additional income as they age, explains Shelley Cook, Executive Director of CSPC.

"Some preliminary estimates we have produced suggest that the living wage may not be sufficient to support single parents and single individuals in Greater Victoria. In other communities, this is not the case, and we want to explore this in more detail in the future," Cook says.

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