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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 27, 2014

## **COWICHAN VALLEY LIVING WAGE IS PEGGED AT \$17.04 PER HOUR**

Volunteer Cowichan and Social Planning Cowichan have joined forces to calculate the 2014 Living Wage for the Cowichan Region. After factoring in the monthly costs for a model family, the Living Wage has been determined to be \$17.04 per hour.

The Living Wage is calculated using a four person family comprised of two adults and two children, a seven year old in afterschool care and a four year old in child care as a model. The family rents a three bedroom apartment and has two cars. Calculating the living wage takes into account all the expenses faced by this family including the cost of housing, food, clothing, transportation, childcare, and health care. The largest components of the Living Wage are housing and childcare which together make up 42% of the model family's expenses. The Living Wage expresses the cost of living as the minimum hourly pay the parents in the model family would have to earn so that their wages adequately cover their monthly expenses without taking on debt, working multiple jobs or relying on assistance.

The 2014 Living Wage of \$17.04 is slightly lower than the 2013 Living Wage of \$17.53, however, Volunteer Cowichan and Social Planning Cowichan are cautious about the results. "The Living Wage is based on average costs," explained Georg Stratemeyer, Executive Director with Volunteer Cowichan, "Many families do not fit the two parent, two children model. Lone parent families, especially, may need a higher hourly wage to make ends meet."

"The Living Wage is intended to give an example of the wages that a family needs to cover their regular expenses," adds Kathleen Sheppard, Executive Director of Social Planning Cowichan. "We know that there are many people in the Cowichan community who are not making a living wage and who continue to struggle."

The Living Wage for the Cowichan Valley is lower than that of Victoria at \$18.93 and Vancouver at \$20.10 but is consistent with other BC communities such as Kelowna at \$16.98, Parksville at \$17.30 and the Fraser Valley at \$17.02.

Both Volunteer Cowichan and Social Planning Cowichan encourage local employers to adopt a living wage policy. A living wage not only benefits employees, it helps to sustain a healthy and capable workforce reducing employee turnover, saving training and replacement costs for employers.

A full copy of the 2014 Living Wage Report is available for download from the Social Planning Cowichan website at [www.socialplanningcowichan.org](http://www.socialplanningcowichan.org).

Social Planning Cowichan researches, forms partnerships, creates strategies and informs the Cowichan public about community health and well-being. Social Planning Cowichan is always looking to involve the community in the work it does. Community members are encouraged to contact Social Planning Cowichan at (250) 746-1004 or [www.socialplanningcowichan.org](http://www.socialplanningcowichan.org).

Volunteer Cowichan is a community development organization and volunteer centre. Volunteer Cowichan support community initiatives and recruits and refers volunteers, promotes volunteerism and works with agencies to develop stronger volunteer programs. Volunteer Cowichan can be reached at 250-748-2133 or [www.volunteercowichan.bc.ca](http://www.volunteercowichan.bc.ca).

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