

November 16, 2022

Cowichan Living Wage 2022 = \$23.53

Each year since 2014, working with the BC Living Wage for Families campaign, Social Planning Cowichan has calculated an annual Living Wage for the Cowichan Region. While an increase from the previous calculation was expected, new methodologies in the calculation, as well as newly released data related to the cost of living in our region have led to a rather startling figure for this year's Living Wage in the Cowichan Region.

This year's calculation determined the living wage to be **\$23.53**, an increase of 21%, more than **four dollars** above 2019's figure that was calculated to be \$19.19. This is the highest single-year increase since Living Wage was first calculated, and higher than the rate of inflation.

Cowichan is not alone in seeing a dramatic increase to the Living Wage for 2022. Significant increases in Living Wage have been observed in nearly every region across the province that has undertaken the calculation. Campaign organizers have cited the costs of such necessities as shelter and food as

Cowichan is 6th highest in the province!

Next year's reporting will return to the normal timeframe which is good as we know in just food costs alone there will be significant increases to daily expenses from the December 9th release of the 11th annual edition of *Canada's Food Price Report* is forecasting an overall food price increase of 3 to 5% for 2021, and new housing numbers and other household expense reports from 2021 are still forthcoming.

The living wage model is based on the hourly wage earnings required by two parents, working full time with two children. The Living Wage calculation is based on a standard formula across British Columbia for the minimum amount of earnings required to cover the costs of shelter, transportation, food, clothing, and other basic needs.

In analyzing some of the parameters of the calculation, it is apparent that changes to the BC Living Wage calculation do not take into account significant transportation differences between large, dense urban centers like Metro Vancouver, and smaller, spread-out or rural regions like Cowichan. While residents in larger urban centres are more often able to rely on integrated

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public transit systems to travel to and from work, to activities and to access services relying on only one vehicle, while most families in regions without robust transportation systems require two vehicles to meet their transportation needs. As such, based on lengthy discussions, it was decided that in order to reflect the more common reality of families within our region, we replaced the cost of 1 monthly bus pass and one vehicle with the cost of 2 vehicles. We will continue to work with Living Wage BC and other communities facing the same transportation challenges as ours to address this ongoing calculation deficiency.

In the New Year, businesses in the Cowichan Valley Regional District can become a certified Cowichan Living Wage Employer by adopting a Living Wage policy for all employees and sub-contractors. Email us at livingwagecowichan@gmail.com or visit www.socialplanningcowichan.org for more information.

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