



LIVING WAGE COWICHAN 2022



SPC
Social Planning Cowichan

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As the world progresses toward a greater sense of normalcy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, ordinary Canadians, like much of the world, are feeling the pinch of accelerated rates of inflation, evident in soaring costs across nearly all basic goods and services required for participation in society. Geopolitical instability in certain parts of the world have been identified as having driven up costs for oil and gas and other raw materials,⁶ which are being passed on to consumers, and, more recently in the news, greed is increasingly being looked at as a major factor in rising prices, as corporate profits, perhaps counterintuitively, reached all-time highs during the COVID-19 pandemic for many major retail and telecom conglomerates both domestically and internationally. In an effort to cool off what seems like runaway inflation, the Bank of Canada has been increasing its key interest rate from .25 to 3.25 per cent since March of 2022,⁷ and although inflation is observed to be slowing in recent months, the effects are still being felt by consumers, especially so for low-wage earners, whose pay is not keeping pace with the sharp increases to the overall cost of living. The grim fact is that all gains in affordability that we saw in previous years surrounding such things as government childcare subsidies and the elimination of BC's Medical Services Premium (MSP) have been effectively wiped out by sharply rising costs in other areas, leading to a rather shocking increase in this year's Living Wage figure for the Cowichan Region.

Changes to the Living Wage formula for 2022

Through several years worth of advocacy, we at Social Planning Cowichan along with other calculation partners from smaller, more spread-out rural regions around the province similar to ours, were finally able to make the case that a "one size fits all" calculation model did not necessarily reflect the true to life situation for families in these regions, and in fact was likely underestimating what it costs to live here by a significant margin. With this year's calculation, we are pleased to be using the rural calculation model, which allows for the operation of two vehicles per family (as opposed to the Urban model, which presumes a stronger public transit infrastructure and includes one vehicle plus a monthly bus pass) for transportation.

A new approach for capturing housing costs has also been adopted with this year's calculation to better reflect the true pressures faced by families who rent their home. Until this year, housing costs were estimated using the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's annual rental market survey, using its median monthly rent for three (or more) bedroom units in the primary (or purpose-built) rental market. This has always been known to be an underestimate of true housing costs at any given point in time, given that the dataset is somewhat skewed by long-term renters who benefit from the stability afforded by BC's rent control measures.

This is not necessarily reflective of the sometimes tenuous nature of living as a tenant, and anyone forced to move to a new dwelling for any reason is almost certainly going to have to pay a significantly higher rental rate than longer-term renters, evident upon a cursory look at any current listings. This imposes what has been termed a “moving penalty” on young families, who according to census data are statistically likely to have to search for new housing more frequently (cite: Living Wage 2022 report), forcing them to pay considerably higher-than-average rents. These considerations are worked into the calculation this year, and, despite still being lower than it should realistically be, has helped progress toward a more accurate estimate into the cost of renting in our region.

There is still advocacy to be done to help level things out even more. Glaringly, CMHC data for rental rates covers only the primary rental market (purpose-built rentals, such as apartment buildings) while completely leaving out the secondary rental market (house rentals, rental suites within houses, rented-out condominiums, etc.) which are more common across our region. However, due to lack of alternative data sources available at the time of calculation, we presently have no other figure upon which to base our figure. With that being said, it is also worth mentioning that 2021 was a census year, and although the release of its findings is gradual and staggered, it means more up-to-date information can be utilised in the Living Wage calculation in the coming years. We expect that having this new data will have a major impact on upcoming calculations, allowing us to get a more accurate picture of the costs facing families in our region.



About the Model: A Two-Parent, Two-Child Household

Traditionally, the living wage in British Columbia is calculated for a family consisting of two adults, both aged 31–50, and two children, one aged seven, the other aged four—the most common family unit in BC.⁸ The parents each work 35 hours per week and both earn an equal hourly wage. The calculation guide is based on this family model, but it is important to acknowledge that household sizes and needs vary widely and individual family circumstances may mean that a family requires more or less income to make ends meet. Other types of families will require different wage levels to achieve the same standard of living as our model family. For example, a single-parent family with 2 children may expect to see reduced costs from having a smaller family unit, however the loss of a second income is not equivalent to those reduced costs, as a single income earner might instead have to allot a higher proportion of their income toward housing costs (as just one example).

“Families who work for low wages face impossible choices: buy food or heat the house; feed the children or pay rent? The result can be spiraling debt, constant anxiety, and long-term health problems.”

Methodology

Working for a Living Wage is a calculation guide developed by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), an independent, non-partisan research institute, as well as First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, and it is a part of the Living Wage for Families Campaign.⁹ This guide has been utilized to calculate Metro Vancouver and Greater Victoria living wages since 2008 and is updated annually to reflect the most current and accurate information, including yearly Consumer Price Index (CPI) statistics and modern studies.¹⁰ The guide considers those factors necessary to determining a rudimentary living wage that permits paid fulltime work to provide for basic family needs in a given region. The calculation guide, methodology guide, and sources can be downloaded free of charge from the CCPA at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/livingwage2018>.

Use of the CCPA calculation guide requires the input of local prices reflective of the Cowichan Region, and it is notable that these figures are ever changing pieces of information regarding family expenses and government transfers and taxes. Consequentially, the information provided within this report is guaranteed accurate only as of the date of its publication. The Cowichan Valley Living Wage report is updated annually to ensure its reflection of market conditions and government assistance remain as accurate as possible.

In this calculation method, family expenses are divided into 10 categories. The living wage calculation uses Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Market Basket Measure (MBM)—“a measure of low income based on the cost of a specified basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living”¹¹—to determine expenses for the following areas: clothing and footwear, transportation, and other household expenses.¹² Local data is inserted to determine the prices of food, shelter, telecommunications, child care, parent education and transportation. Other expenses, such as medical and contingency amounts are calculated separately.¹³ While inflation costs are typically accounted for in the calculation using CPI data for the previous calendar year, this year's calculation instead adjusted costs using CPI data for the first half of 2021 instead of all of 2020, which being a pandemic year saw prices fluctuate in ways that seemed to display an artificially low rate of inflation for that period of time.¹⁴

What Makes Up A Living Wage?

Breakdown of Basic Household Expenses Per Month

*All prices are reported in Canadian dollars (CAD)

Food: \$1205.83



Obtaining food costs can provide valuable information for population and public health planning, as sufficient, safe, and nutritious food is critical to the health and well-being of our communities.¹⁵ Food security is accordingly concerned with much more than simply having enough to eat, as it instead seeks to provide for a nutritionally adequate, balanced diet that is safe and culturally appropriate. Reports demonstrate that the monthly cost of the National Nutritious Food Basket (NNFB) in BC is steadily increasing over time, and presently at a rate that is outpacing inflation itself. This has a disproportionate impact on households with the lowest incomes.¹⁶

The cost of food was calculated using recent data provided by the BC Center for Disease Control, which calculates the cost of food in each provincial health authority region based upon a random selection of grocery stores and on the federal government's standardized costing tool.¹⁷ The report provides monthly food costs for both adults and children by gender and age categories and is altered using specific values for the Cowichan Valley. Figures from the CDC show that the increase in food costing is actually outpacing inflation in many instances across the province, which disproportionately affects lower wage earners and highlights some major problems with multinational corporations having such a large degree of control over our food supply.

From this new data, food costs have risen an astonishing 25.12 per cent over our previous calculation, completed in 2021. It is worth noting that food is now the second biggest expense for our scenario family, surpassing the cost of childcare with recent investments made to alleviate financial pressures in that area, while the cost of food continues to soar.¹⁸



Clothing & Footwear: \$173.83

This figure was calculated automatically for British Columbia using the MBM amount for 2020, which was then adjusted to reflect current prices using the CPI for 2020 and 2022.¹⁹ Annual clothing costs have shown just a slight increase for a family of 4, for a total cost of \$2,086.00 for the year.



Rent: \$1776.76

The CCPA living wage calculation guide utilizes the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's regional housing prices from their Housing Market Information Portal.²⁰ The portal suggested that the cost of a three-bedroom+ rental in the Cowichan Valley increased by \$258 per month since the last calculation.²¹

As discussed earlier in this report, this year saw a major and important change made to the Living Wage calculation regarding how average housing costs are determined; for the first time, the figure takes into account a portion of "available now" rental unit rates (which skew much higher than the median), as opposed to the past model which presumed a family has been living in their current rental home for quite some time, allowing for some rental rate stability. Nonetheless, we are appreciative of this change, as the situation of many renters (including families) is often tenuous, and at risk of being terminated at any time due to various and often unforeseen circumstances, forcing those having to move to absorb significantly increased costs due to the higher costs of what is available in the rental market in the current situation (as evident in housing rental rates in classified advertisements and on sites like Craigslist and UsedCowichan, etc). Campaign organizers assessed the additional expense of the potential for having to move into a new unit to be reflected by an additional 12 per cent on top of the base rental rate.

This methodology is consistent in participating communities with a population of over 10,000 people across the province. In any case, housing represents the single greatest cost that families in our region are faced with. It should also be noted that the figure provided by CMHC and required that we use by the Campaign for Living Wage is noted to apply specifically to the part of our region that includes the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan. Housing data is not available through CMHC for designated places whose population is fewer than 10,000 people (ie. Town of Ladysmith, Town of Lake Cowichan, the various areas of the CVRD), however it is accepted that this is an appropriate proxy to reflect housing prices throughout the entire region. Furthermore, the CMHC rental data provided accounts only for the primary rental housing market (purpose-built rental housing, such as apartment buildings), but fails to include statistics for the secondary rental market (condominiums or house rented out by their owner, suites within houses, etc.), which are common across our region. With these changes to the calculation parameters, housing rental costs for our scenario family show an increase of 27.78 per cent over last year's calculation.



Utilities: \$255.89

This figure was obtained automatically through the calculation guide, which uses Stats Canada's 2019 Survey of Household Spending that is then augmented using the 2019 and 2022 CPI statistics for "Water, fuel, and electricity" from Stats Canada, CPI Table 18-10-0005-01 (Formerly CANSIM Table 326-0021).^{22 23} This year's calculation shows a cost increase of nearly \$20.00 per month over last year's figure.



Cell Phone & Internet: \$196.00

For the second straight year, a change has been made to the Living Wage calculation based on the evolving nature and our increasing reliance on telecommunications technology in our everyday lives. With guidance from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Council (CRTC)'s latest report,²⁴ and their forecast of industry and consumer trends, cell phone parameters for the calculation were updated from the slower 3G data network to 4G LTE network, and the minimum data to 4GB (from 3). These changes reflect the latest stats showing that average monthly data usage in Canada is 5.25GB, which helped to highlight that the previous standard of 3GB was insufficient.

The plan used in the scenario also included unlimited Canada-wide talk and text, as well as the cost of the smartphones themselves (one phone/plan per adult in the family).²⁵ A fixed, high-speed internet connection (as close to 50/10 Mbps as possible) in the home is also included in the calculation as well. As expected, these "upgrades" have resulted in an increased overall telecommunications cost over calculations completed in previous years; though, on its own, a cheaper internet service provider that is new to the area was found in this year's research process.

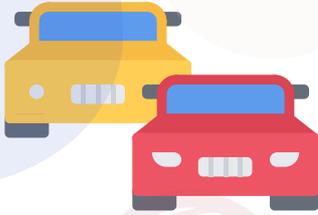
The least expensive unlimited talk and text cell phone plan available in the Cowichan Valley is offered by Koodo at \$63.00 per month per person before tax (including the cost of the phone). The most cost-effective internet provider is Oxio, which offers 75/7.5 mbps internet speed \$49.00/month before tax which includes the rental of a modem. All items considered this shows an increase in cost of \$18.03 per month over last year's calculation.



Content Insurance: \$32.83

The estimated monthly price for renter's insurance used in this methodology was determined by obtaining quotes for the cost of tenant's insurance from three different providers (BCAA, InsureBC, and Sonnet Insurance), and then from those

determining the median cost. The quotes obtained were based on a generic single-family rental home with electric heating and an average price per month +/- \$200 of the Cowichan Valley Regional District's (CVRD) metrics for house type rental information (if applicable). Quotes can vary greatly, however, depending on location and age of the house, renter's history and age, and a number of other factors. For the two-parent, two-child family, a four-bedroom, single detached house with a minimum claim of \$30,000 worth of possessions was used, including any applicable financing fees for monthly payment. This is one area of the calculation where costs were reduced over last year's figure, by a value of \$10.25 per month.



Transportation: \$942.55

As discussed earlier in this report, a major change was made to the Living Wage campaign that allowed the Cowichan Region to calculate under a methodology specific to rural and/or less concentrated regions that allowed for the use of two automobiles for our model family, which we agree is much more reflective of the reality of life in our region.

The calculation used, then, is based upon the MBM 2020 amounts for rural communities in BC (which represents the costs of owning and operating a second-hand vehicle) and was adjusted by the CPI to reflect current prices.²⁶

The annual cost works out to \$11,310.64.



Other Household and Social Participation Expenses: \$1040.27

This number is automatically calculated by the CCPA calculation guide, using the 2020 MBM that calculates “Other” expenses at 75.4% of the combined expense of Food, Clothing, and Footwear. This amount is intended to cover such things as toiletries and personal care items, furniture, household supplies, laundry, school supplies and fees, bank fees, some reading materials, minimal recreation and family entertainment, family outings (ex. museums and cultural events), birthday presents, modest family vacation time, and—when relevant—some sports and/or arts classes for the child(ren).²⁷ This amount has increased by a rather significant \$183.44 per month over last year’s calculation, thanks to rising costs across the board.

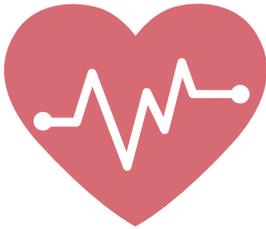


Childcare: \$1344.67

The family model includes 2 children, and assumes the four-year-old to be in full-time day care (licensed group child care) and the seven-year-old to be in before and after school care during the school year, full-time daycare for three weeks during winter and spring breaks plus 6 professional development days off from school, and in six weeks of full-time summer care.²⁸

Full-time rates for daycare for the youngest child, and 10 months before-and-after school care for the school-aged child is available through data published by the BC Government, and was automatically populated in our calculation by the CCPA. Full-time daycare for the younger child was reported to be \$10200 annually, which includes a \$100 per month fee-reduction (an initiative brought in by the BC Government in 2018 in order to enhance childcare affordability for families). Before-and-after school care for the school-aged child was \$4150 per year.

Costs of the remaining care (professional development days, winter/spring breaks, and full-day care through the summer) were provided by the Cowichan Valley Child Care Resources and Referral Program, operated by the Clements Centre Society. The program undertakes a regular survey of local care providers, and staff were able to provide a range of fees across the remaining categories / circumstances of care required as part of the calculation. Through this information, it was determined that, for the school-aged child, the cost of full-day care during the year's 6 professional development days is \$216, \$480 for full-day care for winter and spring breaks (3 weeks total), and \$1070 for a full-day care summer program (1 month and 2 weeks).²⁹ Annual costs for childcare in the Cowichan Region are \$16,136.00.



Healthcare Expenses: \$225.00

This estimate assumes that the family's health care expenses are equivalent to the cost of purchasing private health insurance. This amount was automatically provided by the CCPA, obtained from the expense of purchasing Pacific Blue Cross Insurance, including coverage on the extended health care plan, prescription drug option, and dental option. Showing an increase of 19.7 per cent since last year's calculation, annual healthcare costs are up to \$2700.00.



Parent Education: \$122.52

The Living Wage calculation allows for one parent to be attending university classes part-time. For credit-based undergraduate programs (including career and technical programs) at Vancouver Island University's Cowichan Campus, tuition fees are \$159.54 per semester credit hour.³⁰ Calculations are for two courses per year (3 credits/course), with a student activity fee at 4% tuition, and a student services fee of \$7.07 per credit.³¹ The Cowichan campus also has a student union monthly fee of \$16.54.³² Finally, an estimate of the cost of textbooks was provided by the Living Wage campaign organizers, determined to be \$150 per course.³³ Total cost is \$735.12 per semester.



Contingency Amount: \$275.21

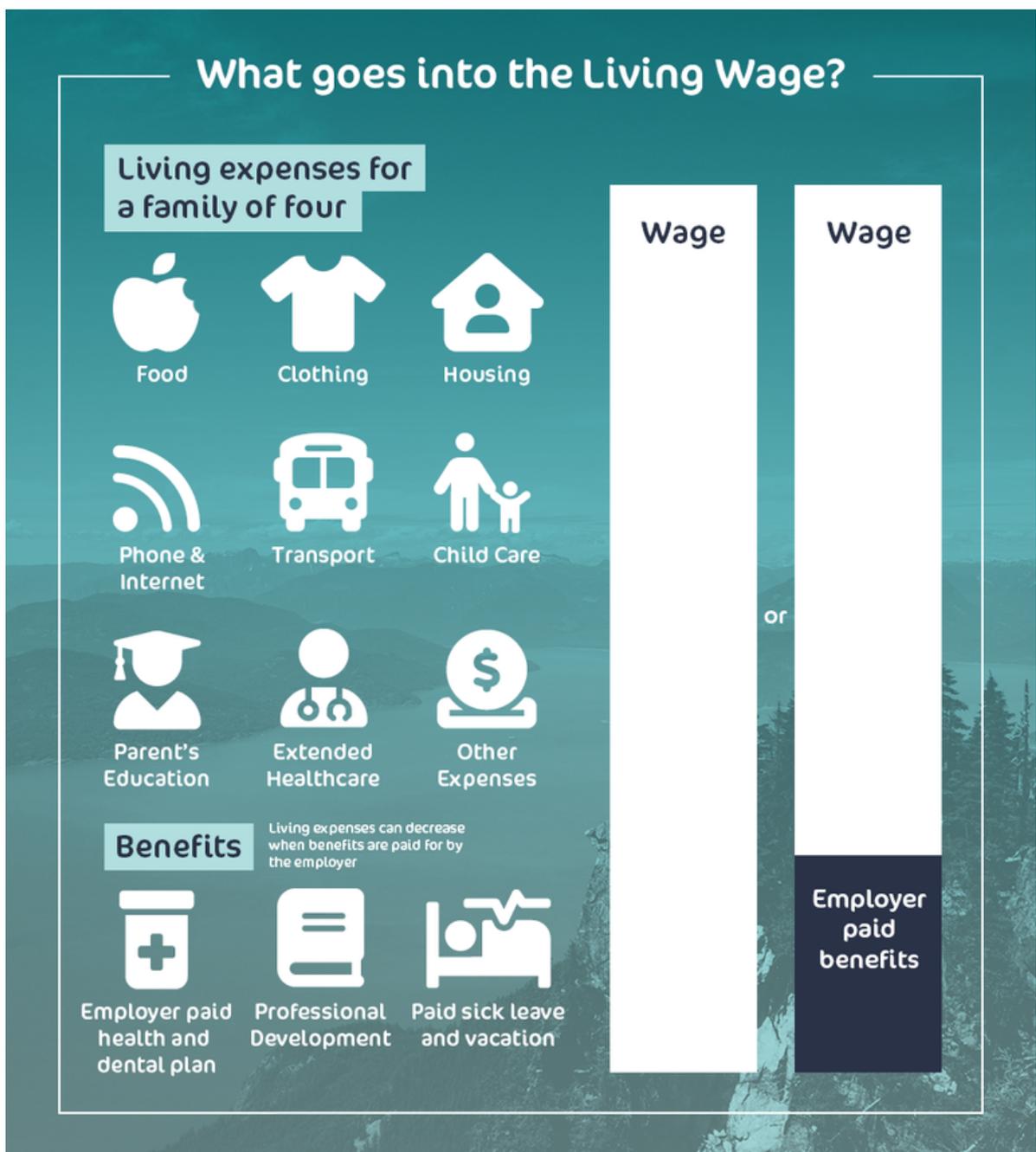
This source of savings is meant to provide some element of protection in the case of unexpected events like the serious illness of a family member or transition times between jobs.³⁴ It is provided as an expense for each parent and is calculated by the equation: (The living wage amount * hours worked per week * two weeks). This amount has necessarily risen by 42.4 per cent since 2001's calculation.

What is NOT included in the Living Wage calculation?

It is important to note that this calculation represents a “bare minimum”, and fails to include additional expenses such as:

- Debt repayments from credit cards, loans, or other interest payments;
- Future savings for home ownership, retirement, or children’s post-secondary education;
- Anything beyond minimal recreation, entertainment, and holiday costs;
- Costs of caring for a disabled, seriously ill, or elderly family member.

*All government deductions, taxes, and subsidies are calculated in the spreadsheet provided by the CCPA and were verified to be accurate at the time of writing.



Source: <https://www.livingwageforfamilies.ca>



\$23.53

Hourly Living Wage Cowichan 2022

Living Wage in the Cowichan Region has INCREASED by 20.6% since 2021; by far the biggest increase in Living Wage since calculation began.

Year	Living Wage	Percent Change from Previous
2014	\$17.04	n/a
2015	\$17.55	↑ 3.0%
2016	\$18.81	↑ 7.2%
2017	\$19.05	↑ 1.3%
2018	\$18.18	↓ 4.6%
2019	\$18.15	↓ 0.2%
2020	Not calculated due to COVID-19	n/a
2021	\$19.13	↑ 5.4%
2022	\$23.53	↑ 20.6%



History of the Living Wage

The living wage movement began in earnest in 1994 in Baltimore, Maryland and has since gained support throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom as an effective means to combat stagnant wages and poverty.³⁵ “The Living Wage for Families Campaign was formally launched in the fall of 2008 with the publication of *Working for a Living Wage* and is guided by an advisory committee made up of representatives from unions, businesses, parents, immigrants, and community groups.”³⁶

The Living Wage for Families Campaign is a B.C.-based organization that certifies employers that pay a living wage and advocates for complementary government policies that would help families make ends meet. They publish Living Wage Facts & Myths.

Why Child Poverty in BC is a Low-Wage Issue

According to the updated Child Poverty Report Card for 2020, produced by First Call: Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, one out of every five BC children are poor, or 159,570 children.³⁷ Particularly troubling about these recent findings is that, despite government action on childcare affordability and the elimination of MSP premiums, these numbers have changed very little since 2018, while BC’s child poverty rate stands at 18.5%, slightly higher than the Canadian average of 18.2%. Child poverty is largely due to BC’s the stagnant income of parents as one out of every three children facing poverty in BC have at least one adult working on a yearly, full-time basis.³⁸ In fact, the majority of poor children in BC live in working poor families, a classification given to those who work but do not earn a net income above Canada’s poverty line.³⁹

In a 2008 study, economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago who examined 23 years of household spending data found that an increase in the minimum wage leads households with a minimum-wage worker to significantly increase their spending over the next year. In fact, for every dollar increase in the minimum wage, families with a minimum-wage worker tend to increase spending by more than \$800 per quarter.

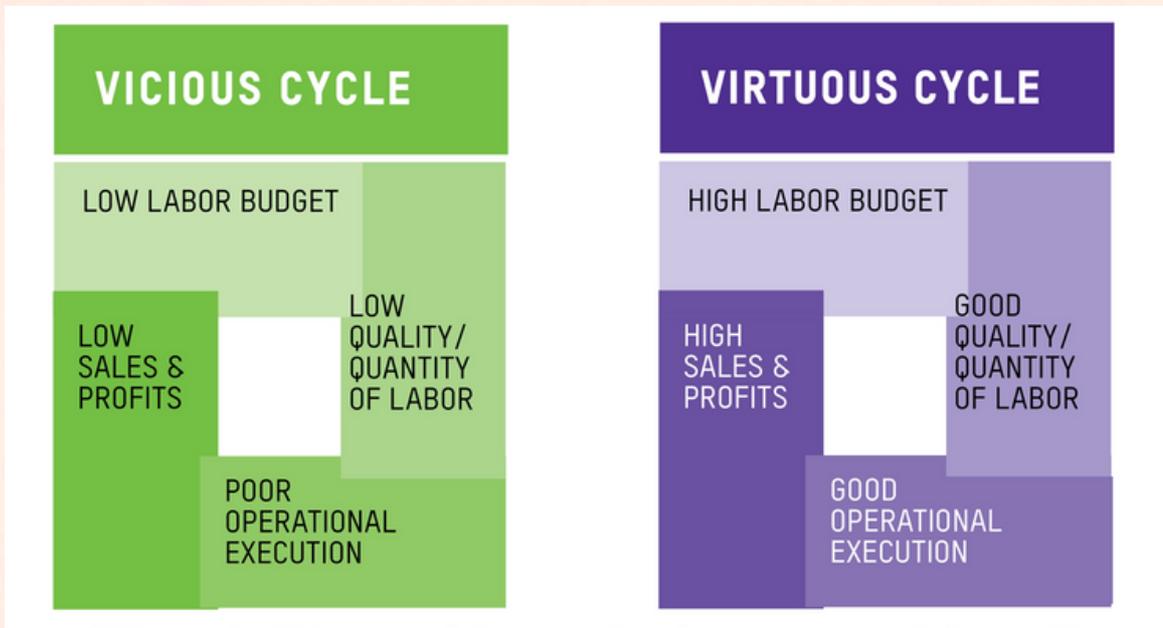
Becoming a Living Wage Employer

A Business Case for the Living Wage

Often viewed as conflictual are the best interests of business and its employees; however, along with improving working conditions and the financial security of labourers, employers and businesses can too gain from the adoption of a living wage policy. Studies have found that in the case of living wage practices, businesses can expect to see improved job quality, productivity, and service delivery, as stresses from economic anxiety are eliminated and incentives are restructured, resulting in an instant return when viewed in terms of productivity.⁴⁰ This also leads to lower rates of absenteeism and employee turnover, creating significant savings in hiring and training, and both contributing even further to heightened output.⁴¹ Local businesses can also expect to see a stimulated economy as increased “disposable income [is] likely to boost purchases more for lower-income than for higher-income households.”⁴³ Lastly, businesses will experience greater corporate social responsibility and firm reputation which leads to becoming an employer of choice, necessary for retaining a talented and motivated workforce.⁴² As a mayor of London—a living wage city—once put it, “what may be viewed to a company [as] an unaffordable cost [a living wage]... should more often be viewed as a sound investment decision.”⁴⁴

The Economic Context for the Living Wage

In Canada and in developed countries around the globe, stagnant wages have increasingly become a significant issue for the working class, as tougher competition for steadily inferior wages has led to greater income inequality and a diminished working class. The Cowichan Valley is rapidly growing unaffordable and unlivable for average families, which is why the living wage seeks to provide for an income that more accurately reflects current prices and living expenses to compensate where provincially mandated minimum wage requirements have failed. Wage increases have often been resisted on the basis of contributing themselves to inflation, so negating the positive impact of a wage increase. However, reviews of the research done on the effects of wage increases for those in the lower classes of society have soundly rebutted this logic, illustrating that in the real world, wage increases—even when swift—fail to causally contribute to substantial inflationary pressures as it does not alter the money supply in the economy and only minimally augments the money in circulation, while the loss to businesses in wages can and is most often offset by increased productivity.⁴⁵ As such, the argument for the living wage holds in macroeconomic terms, as the process can instead promote money circulation and investment—an economic stimulus for local economies.



In her groundbreaking work, Zeynep Ton describes the benefits a business can reap from a “good jobs” strategy. She characterizes “vicious” versus “virtuous” cycles in labor practices. In the vicious cycle, businesses respond to short-term pressures to pay low wages with few benefits. The result is that workers are disengaged, and the business suffers: absenteeism is common, turnover is high, mistakes are frequent, and the operation is eventually plagued with problems.

In the virtuous cycle, workers are regarded as an integral part of the business. Businesses that pay higher wages attract more loyal and productive workers, experience less absenteeism and turnover, and see fewer mistakes and accidents.

The Social Case for the Living Wage

The goal of the living wage is to promote social health and sustainability; it is designed to enhance the long-term well-being of the employee, as well as that of one's family and community. At the current minimum wage of \$15.20/hour, there are thousands of families in British Columbia who are living below the poverty line. For families, this means children are unable to live a stable lifestyle due to frequent movement and the resulting lack of continuity in their education and with friends. Moreover, parents are forced to work more at lower wages, leading to less time spent with their children. A statement from Ellen Pেকেles, the Senior Vice President of Operations at Vancity—BC’s largest living wage employer—addressed this saying, “If both parents in a family are working full-time, their children should not be living in poverty. Just as we consider our environmental footprint, it’s our hope that more BC employers will consider their social and economic impact and pay their employees a living wage.”

Studies show that living wage employers also cut costs when it comes to hiring and training new employees. Learn more in [How Living Wages Benefit Employers](#).

Additionally, according to the Living Wage for Families Campaign, income is perhaps the most important determinant of health. This occurs because our income level shapes our overall living conditions, affecting psychological functioning and influencing health-related behaviours. In terms of civic engagement, allowing adults to work fewer hours to get by allows for greater participation in community life and ability to provide volunteer services, and the opportunity to spend more time with children in both personal and community capacities, while also the opportunity to pursue further education and/or skills training in order to qualify for higher-paying positions is now readily available. In these ways, the cause of a living wage is the cause of a bettered community, whereby the economy will be stimulated, and social health will improve for all.

Supporting a Living Wage

While the benefits of becoming a Living Wage employer are clear, local businesses can now begin the process of becoming a certified living wage employer through the official [Living Wage for Families BC campaign](#). More information on the process, guidelines and criteria are available on the campaign's [website](#). We encourage all local businesses to take the steps toward becoming a living wage employer in our region, and are excited to recognize and share the success stories of businesses rising to the challenge of paying all staff and contractors a living wage going forward.

In the meantime, here are some other immediate steps that businesses can take to add value to employees with little-to-no cost involved. Some you may be doing already! The following is a short list of ideas that can help move toward becoming an employer of choice:

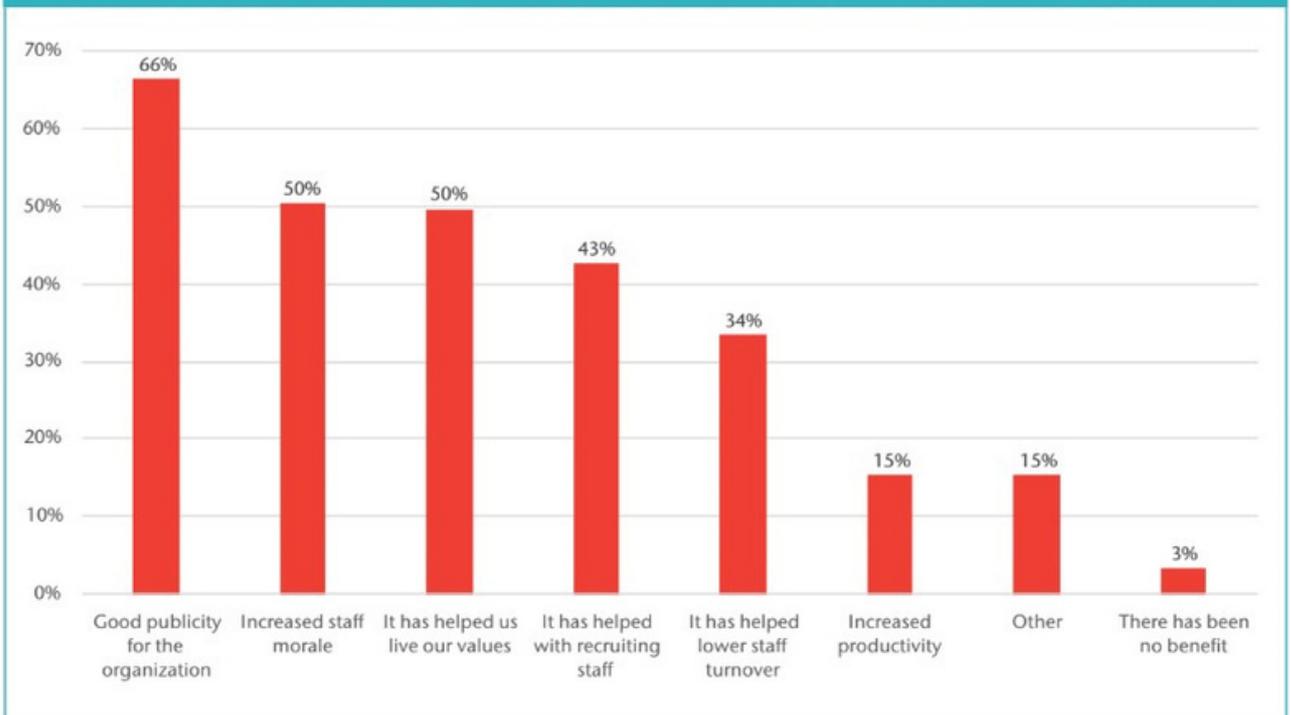
- Offer Flexible Hours – Take employee needs into account when scheduling;
- Eliminate Split Shifts – These increase transportation and childcare costs;
- Phone-In Policy – Allows children to call in at any time they wish;
- Provide Employees with Discounts on Goods and Services;
- Free Meal for Employees (food industry specific);
- Strive to Promote from Within – Relevant skills for future positions or other employment;
- Provide Incentives – For obtaining specific training objectives;
- Offer “Personal Days” rather than “Sick Days” to provide greater flexibility in usage.

Employers get behind the living wage

A growing number of BC employers are seeing the value of paying living wages—there are nearly 400 certified Living Wage Employers across BC, including many small businesses, non-profit organizations, unions and cooperatives. Fourteen local governments have adopted living wage policies as of October 2022, including the cities of Burnaby, Langley, New Westminister, North Vancouver, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, Quesnel, Vancouver and Victoria.

These employers have committed to pay all their direct staff and contract employees a living wage and to require their major service providers to also pay a living wage, including for janitorial, security and food service contracts. Living Wage for Families BC, a program of the Vancity Community Foundation, runs the living wage certification for employers in BC. For the full list of Living Wage Employers or to become a Living Wage Employer, please contact Living Wage for Families BC (www.livingwageforfamilies.ca).

Figure 1: Reported benefits of being a certified Living Wage Employer



Source: 2022 BC Living Wage Employers survey conducted by Living Wage for Families BC.

In a 2008 study, economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago who examined 23 years of household spending data found that an increase in the minimum wage leads households with a minimum-wage worker to significantly increase their spending over the next year. In fact, for every dollar increase in the minimum wage, families with a minimum-wage worker tend to increase spending by more than \$800 per quarter.



Conclusion

As one of our organizations research and reporting functions for the region, Social Planning Cowichan has been tracking Living Wage in the Cowichan Region since 2014. Over this time, we have seen an unprecedented rise in the cost of housing, increases in the cost of food, services, and overall, a growing divide of income inequality in our community. Dependant on small and medium sized local businesses to drive our economy Cowichan, like many other regions, are faced with growing staff shortages, families will increasingly be forced to choose whether they can continue to afford to live in the Cowichan Valley. While a Living Wage in Cowichan is not going to solve every challenge facing families in our region, it is certainly a step in the right direction.

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- Canadian Centre of Policy Alternatives



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