



## New living wage rate for Metro Vancouver increases by 33 cents an hour

This week, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) released a new report *Working for a Living Wage 2012*, which revises the calculated living wage rate in Metro Vancouver to \$19.14 per hour, a 33 cent increase from last year.

According to the report, the rising costs of housing, child care fees, utilities, MSP premiums and telephone rates were the biggest contributing factors for the increase. Although the provincial government offers child care subsidies to low-income families, the rates have remained stagnant for seven years.

A living wage – higher than the legislated minimum wage and calculated regionally based on cost of living – is the amount of income a family of four requires to meet their basic needs – shelter, food, child care, clothing, transportation. The family is characterized by two adults working full-time with two school-aged children.

The living wage can be achieved through a combination of wages plus non-mandatory benefits, such as employer-paid MSP, health and dental coverage. Based on the cost of benefits, the hourly wage rate will be adjusted to reach the living wage rate.

Many working British Columbians are still living below the poverty line. That's about 300,000 to 400,000 people, or 25 per cent of the workforce. And society pays for the costs of poverty through things like social programs and government subsidies. If people earned a living wage, they'd have more money to spend in their local communities and more time with their families, especially helping their children have healthy, productive lives.

### Other living wage campaign news

District 69 (Parksville/Qualicum) recently became the first School District in Canada to pass a Living Wage Policy that would cover all school district employees, including casual and contract staff and all service providers.

And adding to the list of 26 living wage employers – covering about 5,000 workers – two more companies in B.C. have just received certification: SAP Labs Canada, a software company, and Briteweb, a boutique Interactive Design & Communication agency.

Also, check out a recent story in *Our Times* encouraging unions to become living wage employers. HEU and the B.C. Teachers Federation are both living wage employers.

For more information, visit <http://livingwageforfamilies.ca/>.

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