



## New living wage calculations released

Today, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and the Living Wage for Families Campaign released their annual living wage calculations for major communities in the province.

And not surprisingly, the growing living wage rates supersede what many workers currently earn – showing a clear pattern between low wages, quality of life and child poverty.

Metro Vancouver's living wage is now calculated at \$20.68 (up from \$20.10 in 2014), with Greater Victoria (\$20.05), School District 69 (Parksville-Qualicum, \$17.27) and the Fraser Valley (\$17.66) also increasing from last year.

Different from the government-regulated minimum wage, the living wage is calculated as the hourly rate which a family of four – two full-time working adults with two young children – needs to meet basic monthly expenses (including housing, food, child care and transportation). This calculation takes into account government taxes, credits, deductions and subsidies, along with increases to MSP premiums.

A living wage is a combination of wages and benefits – meaning the hourly wage rate plus non-mandatory, employer-paid benefits like extended health and MSP premiums.

Researchers attribute the rising costs of monthly housing and child care for driving up the 2015 living wage calculation by 58 cents.

According to their report *Working for a Living Wage 2015: Making Paid Work Meet Basic Family Needs in Metro Vancouver*, child care costs jumped \$83 while rental properties climbed \$75, significantly increasing a family's monthly expenditures.

B.C. has one of the worst child poverty rates in Canada and researchers blame low wages as a key factor. Thirty-two per cent of children in poverty live in a home with at least one adult working full-time, and many others live with families working one or more part-time jobs.

In 2007, HEU was a pioneer in launching the Living Wage Campaign as a bargaining initiative to show health authorities and the multinational corporations, who had taken over support services at health care sites in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, how poverty-level wages impact workers, their families and communities.

Since then, nearly 40 Canadian cities, including 18 in B.C., have launched living wage campaigns and initiatives to address the issue of low-wage work.

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

April 29, 2015