



WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

A Living Wage is the amount of income an individual or family needs to:

- Meet **BASIC NEEDS**;
- Maintain a **SAFE, DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING** in their community; and
- Save for **FUTURE NEEDS AND GOALS**.

Calgary's Living Wage Action Team has determined that an individual working full time (35 hours per week, 52 weeks a year) needs to make a minimum of **\$12.25 per hour with benefits** to earn a Living Wage (or **\$13.50 without benefits**). This figure is based on the hourly wage required to reach Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) amount for an individual without dependants.

The minimum wage in Alberta is \$8.80 per hour. Working a standard work week of 35 hours per week, 52 weeks a year, an individual without dependants employed at minimum wage would have a net annual income of only \$15,072 (including holiday pay). This income falls \$3,301 below Statistic Canada's 2008 LICO for an individual in a large city (\$18,373).

Alberta's minimum wage is not a Living Wage.

DID YOU KNOW?

Between January and June 2009:

- 60,100 Calgarians earned less than \$12 an hour: that's over 1 in 10 people in Calgary's labour force.
- Women were disproportionately represented among low wage earners: 39,000 earned less than \$12.00 an hour.
- Not all low-wage earners were teenagers: 39,200 Calgarians over the age of 25 are trying to support themselves on less than \$12 per hour.

ORIGINS OF A LIVING WAGE

The concept of a Living Wage formerly began over a century ago in 1891 when Pope Leo XIII insisted that the state must adopt and encourage Living Wage policies. He explained, in part, “Wealthy owners of the means of production and employers must never forget that both divine and human law forbid them to squeeze the poor and wretched for the sake of gain or to profit from the helplessness of others.”

In the 1990s, Living Wage campaigns were launched by collaborative community initiatives in the United States as a means of addressing increasing poverty faced by workers and their families.

Over 140 jurisdictions in the United States currently have Living Wage ordinances that guarantee a minimum hourly wage at a rate that exceeds the legal minimum wage. These policies have reduced poverty, increased productivity, reduced staff absenteeism and turnover, and improved the quality of life for hardworking people.

In Canada, Living Wage policies have been proposed, or are being considered, in Vancouver, the Waterloo region, Hamilton, Ottawa, and in Calgary.

LIVING WAGE IN CALGARY

In 2003, Vibrant Communities Calgary developed a document that would help local groups better understand how a Living Wage campaign could be part of a broad-based sustained poverty reduction initiative.

Since then, the City of Calgary has developed a Sustainable Environmental & Ethical Procurement Policy that encourages all city suppliers and their subcontractors to “make every effort to ensure that workers receive wages that exceed legislated minimums that meet basic needs by local standards”; the Calgary Chamber of Commerce implemented a policy to pay its workers and contract staff a Living Wage; the term, Living Wage, has attracted greater internet traffic in Alberta than in any other province in Canada; and the Living Wage movement has attracted the support of a diverse range of community leaders, including the Raging Grannies and the president and CEO of First Calgary Savings.

The Living Wage movement in Calgary continues to grow through the Living Wage Leader program, an initiative that recognizes and rewards employers that pay their employees a Living Wage. If you are a Living Wage Leader, or know an employer who is, email Vibrant Communities Calgary: info@vibrantcalgary.com.

**POVERTY,
RESULTING IN
PART FROM LOW
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CONTRIBUTING
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TO CRIME,
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AND OTHER
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Lois Mitchell, the Board of Directors Chair of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, with Vibrant Communities Calgary's former Director, Salima Stanley-Bhanji. The Calgary Chamber of Commerce pays all its employees and contract staff a Living Wage, and is a proud member of the Living Wage Leader Program

"WE ARE COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING MEMBERS DESIRE TO IMPROVE CALGARIANS QUALITY OF LIFE, AND WE WILL LEAD BY EXAMPLE."

- Lois Mitchell, Board of Directors Chair of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, 2009

"HAPPY, HEALTHY EMPLOYEES, LEAD TO VIBRANT WORKPLACES AND STRONG COMMUNITIES. FOR US, A LIVING WAGE ISN'T A LUXURY; IT'S A NECESSITY."

- Dave Gregory, President and CEO, First Calgary Savings, 2008

EVERYONE WINS WITH A LIVING WAGE!

EMPLOYERS WIN:

- greater corporate social responsibility
- higher employee loyalty and productivity
- lower absenteeism
- decreased employee turnover
- cost savings for staff hiring and training

EMPLOYEES WIN:

- increased wages
- access to benefits and workplace support
- increased savings, credit and investment in assets
- reduced stress
- improved health
- greater economic self-sufficiency
- reduced reliance on social programs

COMMUNITY WINS:

- increased social participation
- increased taxpayer base
- increased consumer purchasing power
- reduced costs to health care and social services
- increased local investment

"AS THE MECHANIC ALWAYS WARNS US:
"YOU CAN PAY NOW OR PAY MORE LATER.""

- Economists Arthur Donner, Mike McCracken, and Armine Yalnizyan, 2008



Above: L to R. Alderman Druh Farrell and Bonny Johannson celebrate a Living Wage, 2009. Left: L to R. Bob McInnis and Christy Switzer, respectively, past and present co-chairs of the Calgary Living Wage Action Team, 2009

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

- Create and endorse a Living Wage Policy for your employees
- Be a champion for the Living Wage movement by raising public awareness of the benefits of a Living Wage
- Volunteer your time and expertise by joining Vibrant Communities Calgary's Living Wage Action Team
- Support the work of Vibrant Communities Calgary by making a charitable donation
- Join the Living Wage Leader Program - ask us how

LIVING WAGE RESOURCES

- Business for Social Responsibility: <http://www.bsr.org>
- Let Justice Roll: <http://www.letjusticeroll.org>
- Living Wage Resource Centre: <http://livingwagecampaign.org>
- Responsible Wealth: <http://www.responsiblewealth.org>
- Vibrant Communities Canada: <http://tamarackcommunity.ca>

LIVING WAGE ACTION TEAM MEMBERS

Bonny Johannson, Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre
 Brian Hoffart, United Way of Calgary and Area
 Cara Chalmers, Louise Dean Centre
 Carol Lawson, Public Interest Alberta
 Christy Switzer, Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids
 Dan Meades, Vibrant Communities Calgary
 Deborah Apperly, Calgary Workers Resource Centre
 Fred Robertson, Volunteer
 Holly Heffernan, Calgary and District Labour Council
 John Rook, The Salvation Army Community Services

Jordan Hamilton, Vibrant Communities Calgary
 Marilyn Wilson, Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre
 Robyn Winograd, Jewish Family Services
 Rudy Raduloff, Volunteer
 Sarah Newman, Vibrant Communities Calgary
 Sylvia Loewen, University of Calgary
 Yvonne Schmitz, Volunteer
 Walter Hossli, Momentum
 Xavier Cattarnich, Calgary Workers' Resource Centre
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