



City of Revelstoke Media Release

November 23, 2022
For Immediate Release

Inflation, rising living costs cause major increases in the living wage across BC — 40-year inflation high, rising costs of housing & food affect all BC communities that calculate the living wage—

Revelstoke, BC - The living wage has gone up to \$23.60 an hour in Revelstoke for 2022, a significant increase over the 2021 rate of \$19.51, as shown by this year's Living Wage Update report.

The living wage is the hourly wage that two parents working full-time need to earn to support a family of four. Revelstoke has seen a 21 per cent increase from last year. Other communities across the province that have seen drastic living wage increases include Golden at \$25.56 (31.3 per cent higher than last year's \$19.46), Kelowna at \$22.88 (23.7 per cent higher than last year's rate of \$18.49), and Metro Vancouver at \$24.08 (17.3 per cent higher than last year's \$20.52).

This year the living wage has increased across BC in all the communities where it has been calculated in the past and is driven by two essentials that every family needs: food and shelter.

"With general inflation shooting up to a 40-year high this year, and with the cost of food rising even faster and rent increasing everywhere, especially for families that need to move and are no longer protected by rent control, it's not surprising to see such big increases this year," says Anastasia French, Living Wage for Families provincial manager.

In Revelstoke, housing costs collected through a recent Community Economic Development rent survey generated over 500 responses and allowed for a more accurate reflection in the Living Wage. "When we look at housing in the community, the completed Housing Action Plan is one of those projects that's vital to meeting our local needs," says Mayor Gary Sulz. He adds, "staff's foundational work on the OCP and Zoning bylaws puts this Council in a position to materialize projects that support affordability."

Food is the second-highest cost in most communities, only exceeded by the cost of housing. The price of groceries needed for a healthy diet for a family with two young children has spiked sharply this year, according to the latest BC food costing survey data. Food used to be the third-most expensive item but has now edged ahead of childcare costs after the BC government made major investments in childcare affordability in 2018 that significantly reduced out-of-pocket child care costs for the living wage family, French says.

Golden, which neighbors Revelstoke to the east, calculated a Living Wage nearly \$2.00 more than Revelstoke's. Revelstoke's Community Development Coordinator, Taha Attiah, notes the challenges around calculating a precise rural living wage; "fast-changing tourism destinations like Golden and Revelstoke face expenses typical of smaller remote communities, along with

higher prices due to increased demand for goods and services, additional shipping costs, and a rising average income level.” The costs of owning a second car factored into the living wage being significantly higher in Golden than in Revelstoke, where BC Transit availability in Revelstoke provides an option for low-cost transportation.

The City of Revelstoke has current grants for updating the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Food Security Strategy, which focus on supporting residents affected by the rising cost of living through recommendations for various initiatives. Attiah adds, “the Living Wage communicates cost of living increases in a way that employers and community members have come to understand, and it’s one tool for measuring the affordability challenges our community is facing.”

Lead author for the living wage report, Iglia Ivanova, Senior Economist at CCPA-BC says that “until this year the living wage across most of BC remained below its 2018 peak because policy changes introduced by the BC provincial government significantly improved affordability for families with young children and offset increases in the cost of food, housing and other essentials.”

“However, the savings generated by these policy changes, including significant childcare investments and the elimination of MSP premiums, have now been effectively wiped out by ballooning rent and food costs,” she adds.

The living wage is enough for a family with two young children to cover necessities, support the healthy development of their children, escape severe financial stress, and participate in the social, civic, and cultural lives of their communities. “It affords a decent but still very modest standard of living, without the extras many take for granted”, French explains.

A strikingly large gap exists between the 2022 living wages for communities across BC and the province’s minimum wage (currently \$15.65 an hour).

While many BC employers see the value of paying living wages (with nearly 400 certified Living Wage Employers across the province), Ivanova explains the labour market alone cannot solve all problems of poverty and social exclusion.

“Good public policy can make life more affordable for families and when government transfers don’t keep up with the rising cost of living, the families hardest hit are headed by already marginalized earners, including single mothers, Indigenous people and recent immigrants,” Ivanova says.

Living wage employers include small businesses, non-profit organizations, unions and cooperatives. 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.

For information about becoming a certified living wage employer, contact Living Wages for Families BC through their website, <https://www.livingwageforfamilies.ca/>

For Further Information Contact;

Ingrid Bron, Director of Community Economic Development, 250-837-5345

Taha Attiah, Community Development Coordinator, 250-837-5345