

It's Time to Recertify the City of Vancouver as a Living Wage Employer:

The cost of living is higher than ever, ABC's austerity cannot come at the expense of workers' fair wages.

In August 2016, we celebrated with workers, families, unions and colleagues when the City of Vancouver voted to become a Living Wage Employer. After years of organising, this vote enshrined the right for all those working for the City, including contracted and subcontracted workers, to be compensated for their labour at or above the Living Wage. In that moment, the City became the largest Living Wage Employer in Canada, a win for a more livable Vancouver. However, in January 2023 Vancouver City Council voted in a closed door meeting to end the City of Vancouver's certification as a Living Wage Employer, a tremendous loss for working families across BC.

We believe that anyone who works for the City of Vancouver should be able to afford to live in Vancouver. Being a Living Wage Employer is the best way to guarantee that an organisation's workers and contractors can afford to do that. The Living Wage is the hourly amount that someone needs to earn to be able to afford essentials like food, clothing, rental housing, child care, and transportation. It's a barebones calculation - it doesn't include any extras like seeing a show, paying off a loan, or saving for school. In Vancouver today that cost is \$25.68, a 6.6% increase from 2022.

The difference made in workers' lives during the City of Vancouver's time as a Living Wage employer was tangible. The City of Vancouver reported that becoming a Living Wage Employer was "very rewarding" and created "unintended positive consequences, impacting far more than just the City's direct or contractual staff". Staff reported receiving letters from "our graffiti removal services about employees saying just that it changed [their] life."¹

Today multiple other municipalities, and nearly 400 employers across BC are continuing their commitments to paying the living wage despite, or perhaps *because of*, the significant increases to The Living Wage in recent years. Rents and food costs continue to increase across British Columbia. From 2022 to 2023 the average cost of food went up by \$88 per month and the cost of rent increased 19% or \$411 per month.²

In Vancouver those numbers mean more workers are struggling to make ends meet. For example, use of the Greater Vancouver Food Bank has tripled.³ Workers deserve work that lifts them out of poverty, rather than keeping them trapped in cycles of poverty. Paying the Living Wage ensures this is possible.

¹ Supporting the Low-Wage Workforce: A Comprehensive Review of the Living Wage in British Columbia." March 2023. Page 14.

<https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/237/2023/08/FWC-Report-Living-Wage-2023-Final.pdf>

² 2023 Living Wage Report. Available at: <https://www.livingwageforfamilies.ca>

³<https://macleans.ca/longforms/food-banks-affordability-inflation-groceries/#:~:text=The%20GVFB%20serves%20some%2017%2C000.to%20be%20precise%2C%20in%201983.>

The ABC majority at the City of Vancouver, however, has committed to save a few bucks on the backs of the lowest paid workers, in one of the least affordable cities in North America. This decision is a reminder of the big impact that municipal politics can have on the lives of working people. Despite ABC's efforts to undermine affordability, equity, and fairness we know how to win back the Living Wage for City of Vancouver workers because we've done it before.

Back in 2014, the Metro Vancouver Alliance (MVA) organised a broad-based coalition of labour, community, and faith groups to work together for a Living Wage policy at the City of Vancouver. This included hosting a public assembly, with representatives from all the major municipal parties in Vancouver present. The MVA asked each candidate to commit to working together to make the City of Vancouver a Living Wage employer if elected. Following the election, this coalition of community voices continue to campaign, to make those commitments a reality. In 2016, our collective effort became a collective win. A broadly representative delegation spoke in the council chambers in favour of a Living Wage, while a rally took place outdoors. Media noted it was the first time they ever saw a gathering to support a motion being adopted rather than to protest one. The real-life experience of workers who would benefit from the policy were highlighted front-and-centre.

Winning back the Living Wage will not be easy with Mayor Sim and an ABC super majority. It will take the voices of workers, strong organising, and all of us working together, reminding this Vancouver City Council that paying a living wage is an essential part of poverty reduction and a more fair and equitable society. As the cost of living rises, and workers continue to struggle, it's more important than ever to pay the Living Wage.

TAKE ACTION! Add your name to tell Mayor Sim and ABC to reinstate Vancouver's Living Wage: https://www.onecityvancouver.ca/protect_living_wage.

We will follow up with everyone who signs the petition, with more ways to get involved before Vancouver Council votes on the Living Wage this February.

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