



Alternatives North

MEDIA RELEASE

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Living Wage Recalculation and Recommendations Released for Yellowknife

A recalculation of the Yellowknife Living Wage released by Alternatives North shows that the cost of living for low-income northern families has risen slightly, despite enhanced federal and territorial child benefits.

In order to earn a living wage each parent in a family of four would have to earn \$20.96 an hour working 40 hours a week. The 2017 Living Wage increased \$0.28 per person per hour from 2015. The reference family includes a child in full time child care, and a child in elementary school and represents the most common family type in Yellowknife.

The calculation for Yellowknife uses the methodology of the Canadian Living Wage Framework. Today's estimate has been recalculated due to an error in data discovered in announcing the updated living wage last November 17.

The bare-bones budget includes shelter, food, clothing, transportation, child care, health care services and supplies, and a small emergency fund. The budget doesn't include paying debts, saving money, helping other family members financially or owning a pet, among other things.

Accompanying the updated research are six recommendations (attached) for actions to reduce the cost of living for low-income families including:

- Create buy-in from employers to pay a living wage to all staff
- Support the development of a local food strategy with government partners, individuals and organizations
- Revamp the NWT Housing Corporation's Transitional Rent Supplement program
- Improve the child care subsidy program so that the number of low-income families eligible for child care subsidies is increased

"The benefits of paying a living wage are well established for employers because it reduces staff turnover and increases local spending," says Julie Green, who lead recalculation efforts.

"Government could be doing more, for example, increasing the income cut-off for the NWT Child Benefit so that it helps more low-income families.

Michel Haener, an Alberta-based economist calculated the living wage. She has calculated living wages for other communities including Grande Prairie, Red Deer and Canmore. The nationally-



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recognized Canadian Living Wage Framework provides a methodology that allows living wage rates to be compared among communities.

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The Living Wage recalculation was produced with contributions from Vibrant Communities Canada, Living Wage Canada, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada North. The full report, recommendations and infographic are available online at www.alternativesnorth.ca

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