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CITY OF WINNIPEG – LIVING WAGE

Overview

CUPE 500 has been encouraging the City of Winnipeg to adopt a living wage standard for some time.

The City has been looking into a Poverty Reduction Strategy, which could include ensuring that all City employees and contractors & subcontractors hired by the City are not paid poverty-level wages, through a Living Wage policy.

Many of the lowest paid workers are Indigenous, youth, newcomers, and women.

CUPE 500 believes a Living Wage policy for the City of Winnipeg will help lift workers out of poverty, and in particular marginalized workers.

How to calculate a living wage?

- The "Living Wage" framework was developed by a non-profit organization called Living Wage Canada.
    - This organization, developed a formula that can be used anywhere in Canada to calculate the hourly rate a household can meet its basic needs in the community they live in.
    - This means that the "living wage" for Winnipeg would consider the actual cost of housing, transportation, childcare and medical expenses in our community.
    - The calculation does not include the cost of saving for retirement, owning a home, expensive recreational activities or costly holidays.
    - Nor does it include the additional costs that may come with caring for disabled, seriously ill, or elderly family members.
    - This means a Living Wage is still a "bare bones" budget for families, but it does set wages at a level that should help lift families out of poverty.

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- The last time the calculation was done for Winnipeg was in June of 2017.

    - Using the framework developed by Living Wage Canada, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba calculated that the living wage for a two full time working-parent, two child household in Winnipeg was $14.54/hour.
    - It is likely that if this calculation was done today the living wage would be somewhat higher.

In Manitoba, the current legal minimum wage is $11.65/hour – an amount insufficient to meet a family's basic needs.

Key Takeaways

No City of Winnipeg employee should receive an hourly wage that is below the Living Wage in Winnipeg. Those currently earning less than a Living Wage should have their hourly wage adjusted upwards to ensure that no employee of the City of Winnipeg receives poverty-level wages.

The Living Wage Policy adopted by the City of Winnipeg should include a process to ensure the hourly wage floor for City Employees is no less than the Living Wage for Winnipeg in the future. This should not just be a one-time adjustment, but an on-going commitment.

CUPE 500 also believes it is important for the City to ensure that in addition to its own employees, companies the City contracts and subcontracts with are also paying their employees a living wage. In the past the City has had national media organizations investigating the poor working conditions of City contractors – the City can, and should, do better.

Other cities in Canada, such as Vancouver and Burnaby, have made living wage standards part of their RFP process. This is an achievable and realistic goal.

CUPE 500 believes contractors and subcontractors must be part of the Living Wage Policy.



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