



An Open Letter to Metro Vancouver Municipal Candidates and Parties: Help BC's Low-Income Families -Adopt the Living Wage-

We the undersigned organizations, representing over 300,000 people, call upon candidates and parties running for municipal council and school board in BC in November 2011 to commit that, if elected, you will adopt a Living Wage Policy that ensures that all staff and contracted workers are paid a Living Wage.

- **High living expenses and low wages mean that tens of thousands of working families are living in poverty in BC.** For seven years running, our province has had the highest child poverty rate in Canada. Child poverty in BC is very much a low-wage story; the vast majority of BC's poor children live in families with working parents.
- **Parents in low-wage jobs are trying to bring up children with one hand tied behind their back.** Families who work for low wages face impossible choices — buy food or heat the house, feed the children or pay the rent. The result can be spiraling debt, constant anxiety & long-term health problems.
- **Municipal Government is paying a large price for the low-wage sector.** When children live in poverty, or when parents are compelled to work multiple jobs to stay afloat and end up with little time with their children, all of society pays the price, and not least the municipal governments and school boards that must consequently pay in additional services and policing costs.
- **Living Wages are a simple and just solution.** Receiving a living wage would allow families with children to escape poverty and severe financial stress. It would support healthy childhood development, and permit families to participate in the social, civic and cultural lives of our communities.
- **Local Government has a responsibility to play a leadership role.** We look to our local governments to help raise the bar -- to set a higher standard. If enough local governments become living wage employers, they will create a market for those local service contractors who in turn pay the living wage.
- **And Living Wages are good for business.** Better pay translates directly into a healthier local economy. Low-income families spend almost all their money close to home. And businesses that have adopted the living wage report higher productivity and reduced turnover.

We urge those seeking office in November to run on a platform of turning our cities and towns into living wage communities. In doing so, our BC local governments would join with more 140 US cities that have a living wage policy in place. The living wage would make our communities truly livable for all.

-Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA)
- Anglican Diocese of New Westminster's Eco-Justice Unit
-BC Acorn
-BC Association of Social Workers
-BC Government and Services Employees' Union
-BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
-BC Society for Public Education
- BC Schizophrenia Society-Penticton Branch
-BC Teachers' Federation
-Britannia Community Centre Services
-Canada Without Poverty
-Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC
-Citywide Housing Coalition
-Coalition of Childcare Advocates
-Co-Development Canada
-Committee to End Homelessness (Victoria)
-Community Savings Credit Union's
-Council of Canadians

-Council of Sylvan United Church
-Dietitians of Canada – BC Region
-Ethos Strategy Group
-First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
-Health Officers Council of BC (HOC)
- Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA)
- Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)
-Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP)
-Jewish Family Service Agency
-Lookout Emergency Aid Society
-Longhouse Council of Native Ministry
- Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
-MOSAIC
-North Shore Women's Centre
-Pacific Community Resources Society
-Parksville/Qualicum KAIROS
-PLEA Community Ser. Society of BC
-Parent Support Services Society of BC
-Pivot Legal Society

- Positive Living Society of BC
-Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS)
-Public Service Alliance of Canada-BC
-Richmond Poverty Response
-Richmond Women's Resource Centre
-Salmon Arm Kairos Committee
-Streams of Justice
-Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC)
-Social Justice Centre UBC
-SOS (Settlement Orientation Services)
-South Vancouver Family Place Society
-Surrey Urban Mission
-United Way of the Fraser Valley
-United Way of the Lower Mainland
-Vancouver and District Labour Council
-Vancouver Status of Women
-Vancity
-Victoria Raging Grannies
-Williams Lake Social Planning Council
-West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)

PLEASE NOTE: The Living Wage is calculated annually by the CCPA and First Call. As of May 2011, it is \$18.81 per hour in Metro Vancouver. It is calculated to provide a family with two earners (both working full-time) and two young children with a wage sufficient to cover their basic living expenses such as food, clothing and shelter. The living wage calculation methodology can be used to calculate the living wage for any BC community. See www.livingwageforfamilies.ca for more details.