



Living wage to come to Port Coquitlam city hall

"We want to be leaders. We need our residents to be paid fairly to live and prosper": Mayor Greg Moore

[Janis Warren](#) / Tri City News

December 8, 2015 01:29 PM

A BARE BONES MONTHLY BUDGET	
Food	\$ 783
Clothing & Footwear	\$ 191
Shelter	\$ 1,573
Transportation	\$ 517
Child Care	\$ 1,324
MSP Premiums	\$ 144
Non-MSP Health Care	\$ 139
Parents' Education	\$ 91
Contingency Fund	\$ 241
Other Household & Social Participation	\$ 734

Photograph By COURTESY OF LIVING WAGE FOR FAMILIES

Port Coquitlam city hall is on its way to joining New Westminister and, soon, Vancouver, to become a living wage employer.

This week, the city's finance committee unanimously voted to apply for certification to lift its municipal employees and major contractors out of poverty.

This year's living wage for Metro Vancouver is \$20.68 per hour based on CMHC housing costs for the city of Vancouver. But PoCo could have a slightly smaller rate at \$19.75 per hour based on the Tri-Cities Primary Rental Market Statistics.

Steve Traviss, PoCo's human resources manager, told the committee on Monday the cost for the corporation would be in the range of \$6,000 and \$40,000 — just for city staff.

As well, the city would face another \$100,000 bill annually for contract costs that, when combined with the municipal wages, would result in an additional \$140,000 a year. That would translate to a 0.24% tax impact (or \$4.80) for a single-family homeowner.

Still, Traviss said one contract the city has represents half of that \$100,000 hit and council has been considering for some time to bring that work in-house.

In his report, Traviss recommended the committee not support the Living Wage campaign, an effort driven by the Labour Council that was adopted five years ago in the Royal City — the first municipality in Canada.

The topic of introducing a living wage has come before PoCo council a few times and was raised in last fall's civic election by Nancy McCurrach, a labour-endorsed candidate.

If PoCo includes it in its 2017 budget, the living wage would apply to all full-time, part-time and casual employees working for the city as well as contract employees doing more than 120 hours of city work per year.

Up to 10% of total city staff positions can be classified as trainees and therefore wouldn't be paid the living wage. These include aquatic, arena and recreation attendant jobs.

Traviss said New Westminster has kept the living wage out of its collective agreement and provides rebate cheques to city workers who fall below the living wage rate.

PoCo councillors said they'd like to learn more about New West's experience before they officially certify (Vancouver's study is expected to take up to three years before fully implemented).

Mayor Greg Moore said council may be counting its pennies to keep costs down at city hall but paying staff a fair wage makes sense.

And he'd like PoCo businesses to follow suit. "We want to be leaders. We need our residents to be paid fairly to live and prosper," he told The Tri-City News Tuesday.

Coun. Brad West said many PoCo families are struggling to make ends meet given the high price for housing, food, fuel, childcare needs, education and medical expenses, among other things.

"This is about fairness and justice and an increased standard of living," he said Monday night, adding, "I think there's a cost that's worth it."

A call to the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce was not immediately returned; however, Deanna Ogle, campaign organizer for Living Wage for Families Campaign, said she was pleased with the news.

"This is a small cost to the city but a big benefit for families. There are a few families who will really see the benefit because of Port Coquitlam's leadership and we look forward to working with them to ensure it's realized.

"Like in New West, it's not about reinventing the wheel. We want to get the best practices and move ahead."

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