

## Alberta’s Minimum Wages

There are two minimum wages in Alberta, one for workers who frequently serve liquor, and one for all other minimum-wage earners.

Alberta’s *Employment Standards Regulation* section 9(a.1) states (emphasis added): “for an employee who, as part of his or her employment, serves liquor, **other than on an infrequent or occasional basis**, directly to customers, guests, members or patrons in premises for which a liquor licence has been issued under the *Gaming and Liquor Act*, the rate is \$9.05 per hour.”

On September 1, 2012, the general minimum wage is set to increase by \$0.35/hour – from \$9.40 to \$9.75 - while the liquor-servers’ minimum wage will stay the same at \$9.05.

	Minimum Wage Today	Minimum Wage on Sept. 1
Liquor Wage	\$9.05	\$9.05
General Wage	\$9.40	\$9.75

As of September 1, the general minimum wage will be linked to an average of the annual increases in Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in Alberta. The liquor wage will stay the same until there is a \$1 difference between the two wages (i.e. the general minimum wage will be \$10.05), then the two wages will increase at the same rate.

About 26,000 Alberta workers earn minimum wage.<sup>1</sup> At \$9.40, Alberta has the lowest minimum wage in Canada. When the general minimum wage goes up to \$9.75, we will have the second-lowest minimum wage in Canada after Saskatchewan.

The *Swiss Chalet* case brought to the Alberta Labour Relations by UFCW 401 involves the employer attempting to classify all servers as ‘liquor servers’ even though they serve beer or wine infrequently, if at all.

As of September the 4<sup>th</sup>, the employer will be in the position to lock out the workers if they don’t agree to take the lower liquor-servers’ wage of \$9.05 an hour. The workers will be having a strike vote on September 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.employment.alberta.ca/documents/LMI/LMI-WSI-minwageprofile.pdf>