



## Living wage movement reaches 157 employers across BC, including first restaurant since 2015

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**(Vancouver)** Eleven BC employers recently achieved Living Wage certification, bringing the total of certified employers across the province to 157. This represents over 21,600 workers who are earning a decent wage in their communities.

The BC-based Living Wage for Families Campaign certifies and provides ongoing support to employers who pay at least their regional living wage to their staff and contractors. Becoming a Living Wage Employer is a voluntary commitment that employers of all types can make to invest in their communities and local economies.

Nikkei Ramen-ya, a small ramen restaurant in Courtenay, has become the first restaurant since 2015 to certify as a Living Wage Employer.

“We have experienced, like everyone else, the skyrocketing costs of living and the stagnation of family incomes,” shared Greg Masuda, Owner and Operator of Nikkei Ramen-ya, “so when we opened our family business in 2016, we wanted to help our employees by being a Living Wage Employer.

“But the slim margins typical of the restaurant industry meant we couldn’t reach our goal without increasing prices or compromising our position on our no-tipping policy.”

In most restaurants, staff are paid the minimum wage and rely on tips in order to take home enough money at the end of each shift. Nikkei Ramen-ya was able to pay a living wage by adding a ‘Living Wage Top Up’ on their bills.

“Our ‘Living Wage Top Up’ surcharge will vary with the changes in the living wage for our region here in the Comox Valley,” explained Masuda. “This also accomplishes a few other important things: transparency (to our customers), accountability (to our employees), and advocacy (for a living wage).

“Since we began charging our ‘Living Wage Top Up’ on February 1, 2019 the overwhelming majority of our customers have enthusiastically supported this approach, and the performance and reliability of our employees has improved.”

Halena Seiferling, Campaign Organizer with the Living Wage for Families Campaign, noted that leaders like Nikkei Ramen-ya provide positive examples for other employers. “In traditionally low-paid sectors like the food service industry, Nikkei Ramen-ya’s model is an exciting option for employers that want to do better by their staff but struggle with how to make it work financially.”

The newest Living Wage Employers also include: fellow Vancouver Island businesses Safe and Sound Window Film and Island Basement Systems; Metro Vancouver employers Knifewear, Bartec Fire Safety Systems, Rise Women’s Legal Centre, Khora Architecture + Interiors, Realize Strategies Co-operative and the British Columbia Federation of Students; Prince George-based Dandy Auto Spa; and Canadian Pro Clean in Chilliwack.

Each year, the Living Wage for Families Campaign works with community partners across the province to calculate local living wages. The 2019 living wages range from \$14.03 per hour in Prince George to \$19.50 per hour in Metro Vancouver. The living wage is the hourly amount a family needs to cover basic expenses. The calculation is based on a two-parent family with two children – the most common family unit in BC – with each parent working full-time.

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