

## COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

### 2. Recertifying Vancouver as a Living Wage Employer

Submitted by: Councillor Boyle

#### WHEREAS

1. The Living Wage is a standardised calculation done annually by the Living Wage for Families Campaign and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It is the hourly amount that each of two parents, both working full time, need to earn in order to afford basic expenses like food, clothing, rent, and child care once government taxes, credits, deductions and subsidies are taken into account. It is a barebones budget that does not include debt repayment or savings for future plans. The Living Wage for Metro Vancouver is currently \$25.68.
2. In July 2015 Vancouver City Council unanimously passed a public council motion to become certified as a Living Wage Employer by the Living Wage for Families Campaign.<sup>1</sup> The text of the motion read:

*That Vancouver City Council affirm its commitment to have the City of Vancouver be certified as a living wage employer by the Living Wage for Families Campaign and direct staff to report back on the steps necessary to achieve that goal.*

3. The following year, in August 2016, Vancouver City Council unanimously approved a staff report outlining a plan to become certified as a Living Wage employer by implementing measures to ensure that direct employees and individuals employed by contracted service providers, including subcontractors, are compensated at or above the Living Wage rate.<sup>2</sup>
4. In 2016 the Metro Vancouver Living Wage was \$20.64. At the time all City of Vancouver employees were paid at or above the Living Wage, and the move to become a certified Living Wage employer had the most significant impact on contract workers providing security, janitorial and graffiti removal services. The City of Vancouver became the largest Living Wage Employer in Canada.
5. The City of Vancouver reported that becoming a living wage employer was “very rewarding” and created “unintended positive consequences, impacting far more than just the City’s direct or contractual staff”. Staff reported

---

<sup>1</sup> 2015 Council motion to become a Living Wage Employer:  
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20150707/documents/motionb2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 2016 Staff report to become a Living Wage Employer:  
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20160921/documents/cfsc1g.pdf>

receiving letters from “our graffiti removal services about employees saying just that it changed [their] life.”<sup>3</sup>

6. In January 2023 Vancouver City Council voted in a closed door meeting to end the City of Vancouver’s certification as a Living Wage Employer.
7. Costs, including rents and food, continue to increase across British Columbia. The average monthly food basket has increased by 6.1% since last year, and shelter costs for the Metro Vancouver living wage family jumped by 16.6% this year. The living wage is impacted by Federal, Provincial and Municipal policies that impact the cost of housing/rent, childcare and more.
8. 13% of children in BC are living in poverty, and the majority of poor children in B.C. live in families with parents who work in the paid labour force. Paying the Living Wage is a key route out of poverty for these families.
9. There are nearly 400 Living Wage Employers in BC who have committed to ensuring their direct and contracted staff earn a Living Wage. This wage can be made up of base pay and any non-mandatory benefits they offer. There are 16 local governments/public bodies (including municipalities, school boards and First Nation councils) who are certified living wage employers in BC.
10. Despite the significant increase to the Living Wage, nearly 300 organisations in BC recertified as a Living Wage Employer in 2023, including the City of Victoria, Vancouver School Board and Vancity Credit Union. There are also over 100 new Living Wage Employers, including Mobi Bikes, Metis Nation BC and Kindred Construction. The City of Vancouver was the only municipality not to recertify as a Living Wage Employer in 2023.
11. 98% of Living Wage Employers reported a benefit from being part of the program. These benefits include:
  - a. Easier to recruit staff
  - b. Lowering staff turnover
  - c. Increased productivity
  - d. It helps an organisation live up to their values
  - e. Increased publicity
  - f. Improved morale
12. The City of Vancouver being a Living Wage employer aligns with Vancouver’s Healthy City Strategy, which sets out a vision of a Healthy City for All; a community where together we are creating and continually improving

---

<sup>3</sup> Supporting the Low-Wage Workforce: A Comprehensive Review of the Living Wage in British Columbia.” March 2023. Page 14. <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/237/2023/08/FWC-Report-Living-Wage-2023-Final.pdf>

conditions that enable everyone to enjoy the highest level of health and well-being possible.

13. People who work for the City of Vancouver should be able to afford to live here, raise their kids here, and contribute to the life of their community. Paying the Living Wage to all direct staff and contractors will help create a fairer, healthier, more affordable city for all of us.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Vancouver City Council affirm its commitment to have the City of Vancouver be re-certified as a living wage employer by the Living Wage for Families Campaign and direct staff to report back by Q3 2024 on the steps necessary to become re-certified as a Living Wage employer in 2025.

\* \* \* \* \*