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March 25, 2009

Mayor Gregor Robertson  
Vancouver City Hall  
453 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Y1V4

Dear Mayor Robertson,

I am writing to express West Coast LEAF's support for the Living Wage Campaign, initiated by First Call and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), and to urge you to consider passing a living wage bylaw in the City of Vancouver.

A higher percentage of children live in poverty in British Columbia than in any other province in the country. More than half of these children live in families where at least one person has a full-time, full-year job. As you know, children's poverty is inextricably connected to women's poverty; in order to bring the standard of living up for children, we need to raise the standard of living for women, especially for single mothers.

Living wages enhance women and immigrant workers' economic equality, which in turn raises the standard of living for all. A living wage is an hourly pay rate that allows families to meet their basic needs and participate in the civic and social activities that many of us take for granted. A living wage is higher than the legislated minimum wage: in a recent CCPA report entitled "Working for a Living Wage: Making Paid Work Meet Basic Family Needs in Vancouver and Victoria", the living wage for Metro Vancouver is calculated at \$16.74. As an employer, West Coast LEAF ensures that all staff and contractors are paid at least a living wage.

This calculation is, of course, a very modest one: it does not include savings for children's post-secondary education, property ownership or retirement. However, even this modest amount represents a huge difference in women's lives. A living wage should enable families to escape from poverty and to live without severe financial stress, support healthy child development, promote gender equality, and create greater opportunities for women and children to participate in educational opportunities, the workplace and the community. Paid employment should be a path out of poverty, compensated with

adequate wages and benefits that allow parents to raise their children in a healthy environment.

**We urge you to pass a living wage bylaw guaranteeing a minimum living wage to all city employees and contractors.** This wage should be updated annually to reflect increases in the cost of living, as it has been in London, UK. The mayor in London has guaranteed a minimum living wage to all city employees and contractors under new city contracts, a wage that is 35% higher than the legislated national minimum wage. In Vancouver, not only will such a strategy directly affect the over 9000 City employees and their families, but it will also encourage other employers in the City to follow suit, as it has in London.

Thank you for considering our submission on this important issue facing your constituents. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Brewin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alison" and last name "Brewin" clearly distinguishable.

Alison Brewin, LLB  
Executive Director

Cc: Adrienne Montani, First Call  
Seth Klein, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives