

West Coast LEAF News Alert April 6, 2009



In this issue of the West Coast LEAF Alert:

A Living Wage for all: West Coast LEAF urges Mayor Gregor Robertson to support the [CCPA/First Call "Living Wage Campaign"](#), ensuring working people are able to meet their family's basic needs. West Coast LEAF has also signed on to the Hospital Employees' Union ["Living Wage Campaign"](#) for hospital workers.

BC Poverty Reduction Campaign: 271 organizations including West Coast LEAF join to call for a legislated poverty reduction plan.

Letter to Mayor Robertson in support of the Living Wage campaign

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,



Alison Brewin, LLB

Executive Director

BC Poverty Reduction Campaign

On February 5, 2009, more than 200 organizations and community leaders joined together to call on all BC political parties to commit to a comprehensive, legislated poverty reduction plan.

The 271 groups are signatories to an [open letter](#) calling on all political parties to commit that, if elected in May, they will implement a comprehensive poverty reduction plan that includes:

- Legislated targets and timelines to reduce BC's poverty rate by one third within four years, and end street homelessness within two years; and,
- Policy actions in seven key areas that would end deep poverty, improve conditions for the working poor, and focus on groups that are most vulnerable to poverty.

In a recent Environics poll, 74% of British Columbians said they would be more likely to support a provincial political party that pledged to make poverty reduction a high priority.

Signatories include health organizations, labour unions, immigrant and refugee organizations, community service agencies, municipal councils, women's groups, and many more.

The group is also urging concerned individuals to join the call for a legislated poverty reduction plan by signing their names to the [open letter](#).

For more information go to the [BC Poverty Reduction website](#).

About [West Coast LEAF](#)

West Coast LEAF's mission is to achieve equality by changing historic patterns of discrimination against women through BC based equality rights litigation, law reform and public legal education.

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