



November 7, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Calculating a Living Wage for Niagara Region

With the annual cost of household living expenses for a Niagara region family of four conservatively pegged at over \$71,000, the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network has calculated the hourly wage necessary for families to meet these expenses, otherwise known as a living wage, to be \$17.99 for 2018.

As part of National Living Wage Week, the Network has released two new reports, 'Calculating the Cost of Living for Niagara Region, 2018' and 'Calculating the Living Wage for Niagara Region, 2018', which outlines the full methodology used. The reports are available at www.wipeoutpoverty.ca

"A living wage reflects what earners in a family need to be paid based on the actual costs of living and being included in a specific community," says Glen Walker, Chair of the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network. "It is an evidence-based hourly rate at which a household can meet its basic cost of living needs, once government transfers have been added to the family's income and deductions have been subtracted. Included in the calculation are food, shelter, clothing, transportation, child care, non-OHIP medical insurance, continuing adult education, and items that allow for fuller participation in society, such as communication, family outings, and local recreation." Four key items – housing, child care, transportation, and food – account for 72% of the total cost of living expenses.

A living wage is not the same as the legislated minimum wage. It is a voluntary commitment that employers can make to compensate directly-employed and contract-employed full-time and part-time workers.

A recent study found that precarious, unstable employment is a significant issue for many workers in Niagara and has a direct impact on their health and the health of the community. "Providing wages that allow a family to meet its basic household needs is one important tool to address cost of living and precarious employment challenges in Niagara region and should be a consideration for all employers," says Walker.

At the recent Niagara Economic Summit, one of the top concerns expressed by many businesses were challenges with recruitment and retention. "Paying a living wage and providing group health benefits are two key ways to attract quality employees and to reduce on-going costs related to turnover, recruitment, and training," says Walker.

Niagara region currently has seven Living Wage certified employers: Niagara Centre for Independent Living, Niagara Falls Community Health Centre, Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre, PenFinancial Credit Union, Positive Living Niagara, Pre-line Processing, and Women's Place of South Niagara.

"PenFinancial Credit Union continues to be committed to inspiring other Niagara employers to become certified living wage employers. We believe that we all have an obligation to reduce

poverty in Niagara and we will continue to adjust our wages in January 2019 to reflect the new living wage in Niagara. Our Truly Local Commitment is the heart and soul of PenFinancial's values-based banking philosophy, where we believe the prosperity of our members and our community go hand-in-hand and the adoption of the living wage is one of the ways in which we will help improve lives and strengthen communities,” says Jayne Paquin, Director of Human Resources, PenFinancial Credit Union.

Employers who are interested in becoming Living Wage certified can contact the Ontario Living Wage Network for more information at <http://www.ontariolivingwage.ca/>

- 30 -

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network is a collective of over 30 agencies and individuals working to wipe out poverty in Niagara through education, collaboration, and advocacy to address poverty's root causes.

Media Contact:

Glen Walker, Chair, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network

Phone: 289-686-8785

E-mail: gwalker@positivelivingniagara.com