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## Press Release

### Nearly 50% of Nova Scotians earn less than a living wage—New Report

September 7, 2022

**Halifax/Kjipuktuk**—The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Nova Scotia released its annual living wage update. The new wages are: \$22.40 for the Annapolis Valley, \$20.00 for Cape Breton, \$23.50 for Halifax, \$20.40 for the Northern region, and \$22.55 for the Southern region. The wages all increased from between 5% and 8% this year.

As author and living wage calculations lead, Christine Saulnier says of these living wage rates, “These increases are due to a combination of cost increases in rent, food, and gas, and because there was little improvement in tax credits or income benefits. The higher living wage rates mean almost 50% of Nova Scotia employees are paid less than a living wage.”

Saulnier further notes, “Governments can lessen the load on employers’ shoulders. They can directly provide more income support to employees, invest in lowering the costs for working people and regulate costs for essentials. They can expand universal programs ensuring people pay less out of pocket for health care, massively invest in non-profit, cooperative, affordable housing, and make public transportation more accessible and affordable across the province.”

“It is unsurprising to see the living wage calculations rise sharply this year. With the lowest living wage in our province at \$20, it is plain to see that the current minimum wage of \$13.35/hour is simply not in touch with reality. It is important for policymakers to acknowledge the strong evidence presented in this report in favour of legislating a much higher minimum wage,” said Suzanne MacNeil, spokesperson for Justice For Workers Nova Scotia.

MacNeil adds, “It is little wonder that we see firms claiming labour shortages. The problem isn’t just low wages. Working conditions in many low-waged jobs leave workers without security. It is well past time for our government to modernize labour standards and strengthen worker health and safety protections, including ensuring at least ten days of paid sick time. We are still in a pandemic.”

“Child care is the third most costly item in the living wage budget for all communities. As such, we must acknowledge the significant impact that historic reduction in fees and investment into child care could have on affordability in the region,” said Nikki Jamieson, Coordinator of Child Care Now Nova Scotia. “Though, as the report reminds us, we must remain mindful that affordability does not reflect availability. Many communities have little to no access, which makes the expansion of spaces vitally important.”



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Jamieson continues, “Moreover, a fee cut is meaningless if child care spaces decline because we lose Early Childhood Educators. We continue to hear from ECEs and know they are considering leaving their professions at alarming rates because their wages do not reflect their important role, educational specialty, or experience. These educators earn a median wage of \$17 an hour, which is well below a living wage in any region. Child care is one sector where low wages and lack of benefits exacerbate labour shortages and gender inequality.”

-30-

The report, *Living Wages in Nova Scotia 2022, Working for a Living, Not Living to Work*, is available for download at <https://policyalternatives.ca/offices/nova-scotia/publications>

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