



Making Ends Meet: Ten Facts About Toronto's Living Wage

1. **\$18.52:** That's how much two working parents with two children need to each earn an hour just to make ends meet in Toronto.
2. **70,000:** That's how many working poor there are in the City of Toronto (113,000 in the overall region)¹; people who work but who don't earn enough to pull themselves or their families out of poverty. Earning a living wage would be a game-changer for them.
3. **\$11.00** is the current legislated minimum wage in Ontario. It's going up by 25 cents in October, but it's not enough to cover basic necessities such as rent, food, utilities, transportation, child care, or prescription drugs. The living wage calculation reflects the real cost of living and participating in our community.
4. **Toronto is joining an international movement:** Already, employers in Canada and around the world are adopting living wage policies. In the U.K., more than 1,200 employers have signed living wage declarations. In 2014, the mayor of New York expanded living wages to thousands of city workers by requiring companies that do over \$1 million in business with the city to pay a living wage. Other cities like Vancouver, Glasgow, Scotland, and Wellington, New Zealand all have active living wage campaigns.
5. **Public sector employers can help lead the way:** Federal, provincial & municipal, and their boards, agencies and commissions can adopt living wage poli-

cies that affect procurement and contracting out rules to raise the bar for low-waged workers. The public school board in Hamilton became a living wage employer. The City of Hamilton is looking at how a living wage standard could be set through its existing fair wage policy.

6. **Living wage is a progressive employment practice:** There is a growing movement among private sector employers who are willing to pay a living wage and champion the concept. In Waterloo region, more than a dozen employers signed up to become a living wage employer within the first few months of that community's living wage campaign. The Ontario Living Wage Network has set a goal of recognizing 100 living wage employers across Ontario by the end of 2016.
7. **Living wage is good for workers:** In 2013, Toronto was home to three million workers. That same year, the median wage in this city was \$21 an hour – that means half of all Toronto workers make less than \$21 an hour and many struggle to survive on less than the living wage. The median wage in the retail sector in 2013 was \$12.95 an hour; it was \$14 for administrative support services; \$11.50 for accommodation and food services; \$10.25 for gas station attendants; \$15.50 for auto parts retailers; and \$15.58 for textile workers. Decent wages are a critical component of individual and family well-being. Higher wages mean a better standard of living for workers and their families.
8. **Living wage is good for the company bottom line:** The living wage is a call to public and private sector employers to make work pay. Research shows it can be good for employers too: higher wages reduces staff turnover because it's more desirable to work hard and retain a job; that means lower training and recruitment costs; it also reduces the stress on workers struggling to make ends meet at home – a happy worker is a more productive worker.
9. **Living wage is good for Toronto's economy:** When employees earn more, that money is spent at local businesses on goods and services. Living wages help drive economic growth and create more jobs. Also, many consumers want to give their business to living wage employers, so paying a living wage can attract more customers.
10. **It's a way to fight income inequality:** Paying workers a higher wage not only improves their quality of life, it can help reduce income inequality in Ontario. One of the biggest drivers of inequality has been that a greater

share of the gains from economic growth has gone into the hands of the richest 10 per cent while the majority of workers scramble over the remaining crumbs. Ensuring decent wages at the bottom end of the income spectrum is one of the solutions to reducing income inequality. And that's good for Ontario's future.

Download the study, Making Ends Meet: Toronto's 2015 Living Wage, at <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/making-ends-meet>

Notes

1 <http://metcalfoundation.com/publications-resources/view/the-working-poor-in-the-toronto-region-who-they-are-where-they-live-and-how-trends-are-changing-2/>