



City of Quesnel Achieves Designation as a “Living Wage” Employer



When I was on the provincial government’s Budget and Finance Committee I had the privilege of touring the province a number of times and heard directly from communities and interested stakeholders about key issues impacting the province’s economy and social fabric. A common concern the Committee heard from community and business leaders had to do with the increasing gap between what people earned, particularly on the lower end of the wage spectrum, and what it cost to live in the communities they worked in.

This wage gap is a major stumbling block for the economic and social health of communities that are booming as well as those that are struggling or going through significant transition. The reason is simple: if people can barely afford to live where they work then they cannot participate fully in the local economy or be engaged in the social dynamic of their community, either as participants or as volunteers. To engage in the local economy, and to participate more fully in their home community, people need to have some disposable income; that is, they need an income that allows them to cover their essential living expenses while also covering nominal recreation and entertainment costs and allowing them to save some money.

That’s the principle behind the Living Wage for Families Campaign, which defines a living wage as the income needed for food, clothing, shelter, childcare, transportation, some savings to cover illness or emergencies, and nominal costs associated with recreation and entertainment. As part of our strategic plan for the City, Council made a decision to engage in this campaign and seek designation as a “Living Wage Employer” and I’m happy to report that the plan we submitted to the Campaign’s Employers Committee was approved, making the City of Quesnel the second municipality to receive this designation.

The actual dollar value of a living wage is established regionally based on regional economic drivers and data. For Quesnel that amount has been determined at \$16.52/hour. This wage is based on what a family of four with both adults earning full time wages would need to meet the income criteria I outlined above. Fortunately, most of the City’s employees and contractors already earn above this amount, so the net financial impact to taxpayers of bringing those who do not (mostly contractors) is minimal.

Obtaining this designation is part of Council’s commitment to ensure our community thrives during this transition period. As we shift from an industrial economy to a more service oriented one, the City can help lead the way by establishing benchmarks which challenge all employers to pay wages that reflect the true costs of living in our community and which also give people the ability to engage more fully in our local economy and social dynamic.

If you have any questions about this initiative, please contact me directly at bsimpson@quesnel.ca or any member of Council.

For more information about the Living Wage for Families Campaign please visit www.livingwageforfamilies.ca.

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