



The Community Social Planning Society  
of Cranbrook and Area  
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Dear Fair Wage Commission, Cranbrook.

Thank you for coming to Cranbrook to hear from our citizens about the proposed minimum wage increase to \$15/hour. Members of the Cranbrook Social Planning Society applaud this rational decision that will help working people living in poverty and increase economic activity.

The Community Social Planning Society of Cranbrook and Area has been in existence since May 7th, 2008 with a MISSION to improve the living circumstances of all citizens through social planning initiatives, collaborative engagement, and strategic action and a VISION of a healthy, caring and inclusive community through collaborative strategic action, resulting in a stronger community. Social planning is the development of plans and strategies in the areas of education, public health, and social services to facilitate proactive planning for positive social change in the community.

Some of the key areas of recent focus for the Cranbrook Social Planning Society have been poverty reduction, housing, and early childhood development. These three issues are deeply linked to income insecurity and the importance of fair wages. A local example is our dire child care situation. Very often Early Childhood Educators (ECE) are not making a living wage and cannot afford a place to live in Cranbrook, which leads to daycare closures or limited spaces due to staff/child ratio. This has an impact on families that are looking for safe, affordable, quality care options for their children, and if this care cannot be found parents can't work and spiral into financial hardship or they leave the community.

We conducted a comprehensive child care needs assessment in 2015, and last year we pulled together local statistics on housing and poverty for dual reports. The picture in our community is clear – many people are having a hard time finding affordable housing and feeding themselves and/or their children. Food bank use is climbing in Cranbrook, similar to other communities around the province, and the demand for free school lunches is also going up. Current statistics from the Cranbrook Food Bank show that in the last year, 29% of all food hampers distributed went to working people (24% working part time and 5% working full time).

After years of being the only province in the country without a poverty reduction plan, we are encouraged and relieved that work has finally begun to create a poverty



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reduction strategy for British Columbia. We congratulate the government for beginning this necessary work, because it costs much more to manage people in poverty than it will to actually lower the poverty rate.

Raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour is a perfect strategy to support poverty reduction planning for British Columbia and bring a human rights perspective to this effort. It doesn't make sense that people who are employed full time are also using the food bank. It is unacceptable that citizens in Cranbrook who hold down steady jobs and support our economy can't afford local housing.

Just last week there were 3 important reports released that demonstrate unequivocally the poverty problems we are facing not just in British Columbia but around the country. We had the BC Child Poverty Report Card, the National Housing Strategy, and Tackling Poverty Together (from the federal government). The evidence is more than clear. The time to act is now.

We realize that sometimes there is a fear about the impact of increasing the minimum wage on small businesses. To this point we want to bring your attention to the fact that higher wages improve productivity and decrease absenteeism, and in fact many small businesses already pay better. We understand that most minimum wage workers work for large corporations with 100 or more employees; these businesses could afford an increased minimum wage of \$15 per hour. To be absolutely honest, we find it offensive that any business would be allowed to operate on the backs of poor people.

The Cranbrook Social Planning Society supports the recommendations put forward by the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition. We want the Government of British Columbia to increase the minimum wage incrementally, and reach \$15 an hour by January 2019. We also ask that all workers be paid the minimum wage with no exceptions.

Thank you for receiving our input. Democracy thrives on consultation and transparency.

Sincerely,

Rita Romeo, Chairperson  
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