

## Higher wages not the only way to make life easier for employees

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Paying employees at least \$14.88 an hour -- the "living wage" in B.C.'s capital region postulated in a new calculation -- would be difficult for many employers, researcher Jane Worton acknowledges.

But she suggested hard-pressed businesses can support their employees through benefit plans, child care or paying for the cost of a bus pass.

Manager Dave Hill, who has been working at Munro's Books for 30 years, praised owner Jim Munro for such businesses practices as employee profit-sharing, which make employees feel they have a real partnership in the store.

"After our year-end, we get a percentage of profits," Hill said. "Half of the profits are invested in the business, half are spread between employees depending on the number of hours they work."

Most senior Munro's employees own their own homes, Hill said.

"Jim's created a real livelihood for people."

Chris Dysart, owner of Brown's the Florist, opened her books to her staff and told them she would increase their wages if they could find ways to reduce costs, Worton said.

"She wanted to make a difference. In the end, it translates into customer service and retention of employees."

Worton is also researching how much it costs single parents and single people to live here. Those statistics are to be released today as part of Corporate Social Responsibility Week.

Employers interested in learning more about the living wage dialogue can follow up with Ruth Underhill at 383-6166 or send an e-mail to [ruthu@communitycouncil.ca](mailto:ruthu@communitycouncil.ca).

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