

MEDIA RELEASE

20 May 2008

Victoria



Quality of Life
CHALLENGE

What does it cost to live in BC's Capital Region?

Poverty in British Columbia's Capital Region, particularly among the working poor, is unacceptably high despite the historically low unemployment rates and healthy economy of the past few years.

"The economic viability of this region is at risk," says Maureen Young, Chair, Quality of Life CHALLENGE. "Families are feeling increasing pressure with the high cost of housing, the accessibility and cost of child care, increasing costs of food and transportation and wages that can't keep pace with costs. We're seeing an increase in the numbers of working poor. And the challenge of attracting and keeping families in this region is impacting all sectors."

The Quality of Life CHALLENGE has calculated the Living Wage for a typical family in BC's Capital Region, a two parent family:

- with two children: one who is seven and one who is four years old
- with two parents each working 35 hours per week
- with the four year old in day care because both parents are employed
- renting a 3 bedroom unit (apartment or townhouse)

For 2008, the Living Wage for a family with two children is \$16.39 per hour per person.

The Quality of Life CHALLENGE is a partnership of businesses, community agencies, academic institutions, the faith communities and people experiencing issues relating to poverty. Its goal is to engage all sectors of the community to prevent and reduce poverty in the Capital Region. Working collaboratively, the CHALLENGE explores ways to reduce costs of living and increase sustainable incomes and to create learning opportunities about poverty, how to move out of poverty and how to take action.

The Quality of Life CHALLENGE was the first initiative in British Columbia to calculate living wage data, releasing its first Living Wage calculation in 2006. Research for the 2008 Living Wage was conducted as part of the Economic Security Project, a multi-year research alliance led by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (BC Office) and Simon Fraser University. The project is funded primarily by a grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) through its Community-University Research Alliance program. The Quality of Life CHALLENGE joined the Economic Security Project to contribute to the creation of a standard Living Wage calculation across British Columbia enabling comparison of community data.

Information: Christina Peacock, 383-6166