

Living Wage

1. What is your position on the living wage?

A living wage policy impacts people – young to old who work full time, part time or casual employment. A living wage brings take home wages/compensation that is enough for a healthy lifestyle that meets basic needs (food, shelter, transportation and other household costs), helps bring one out of poverty, brings dignity to one's life and can give a citizen more opportunity to participate in our community with social participation and inclusion. A living wage policy is an important conversation in each Alberta community, including Red Deer, about the calculation of living costs. The living wage calculation is based on the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the living wage Canada frame work, used by other Canadian cities.

As City Councillor this past term, I supported the notice of motion by Councillor Buchanan, supporting a living wage in Red Deer and a living wage policy. I also appreciate the work the Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance (CAPRA) has done and the release of the living wage report for Red Deer and central Alberta. In Red Deer, the living wage for 2016 is \$13.81 for a couple with two children, \$14.10 for a single parent and one child, and \$13.68 for a single adult.

A living wage will help people and families working and living in poverty. It's also important to note that a living wage is different than the provincial minimum wage and which is currently at \$13.60 per hour as of October 1st, 2017.

2. How will you implement a living wage strategy for all workers at the City of Red Deer, including contracted services?

Without seeing the wage schedules and contracts for City of Red Deer employees, I would surmise they have met the living wage.

Contracted services are through the City's procurement policy as the City of Red Deer enters into hundreds of contracts each year for goods and services through RFP's – requests for proposals. It's important to ensure the contracts are awarded to fair minded, non-discriminatory employers and those who pay a living wage. Council as a whole, can follow up with administration to ensure the policy meets the living wage standard.

3. How will you advocate to the provincial government for changes to the municipal government act to enable living wage in government procurement practices?

At this stage with amendments the provincial government has brought forward to the Municipal Government Act (MGA), which did not include a living wage, enabling a living wage in government practices in the MGA would not be the approach I would take at this time. Rather, for the reasons that not everyone works, I would pursue a poverty reduction strategy, through advocacy and conversations with provincial government leadership. Poverty and homelessness are clearly linked. And poverty is more than just income or a living wage; poverty includes access to services and supports and integration and inclusion in our community. As homelessness and poverty impacts so many in our community and throughout Alberta, I believe

there is strength as Alberta municipalities work together for poverty reduction supports in our communities. This includes social housing, temporary shelters, increases in mental health supports, and a long-standing need for Red Deer and central Alberta, a treatment/addictions centre. Similar advocacy must happen with the Federal government for poverty reduction actions, work with provincial and municipal governments to reduce homelessness and increase access to affordable housing.

4. How will you foster a living wage culture in the community, both with business and consumers?

- City Council can find ways to support CAPRA for the work you do within our city, including project work. This could include CAPRA communications to citizens and employers about the importance of a living wage and the living costs within our city.
- Living wage conversations are ongoing conversations with business and consumers.
- Living wages can also include benefits to individuals that subsidize living costs such as health care funds, or a transportation fund, e.g. transit support.
- Council can link the living wage and conversations to the City of Red Deer's Social Policy Framework, community goal: *"The City and the Community will work toward achieving: Jobs and Wages: A broad range of employment and related opportunities exist to support upward economic mobility and provide sufficient wages in an equitable manner, so that individuals and families can afford a dignified standard of living and have opportunities to contribute to the well-being of others"*.
- Conversations with the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Business Association and their members to encourage a fair living wage, to acknowledge fair wage employers, along with employer recognition a living wage can bring less turnover and less training costs to a business.
- CAPRA and the Red Deer community can celebrate and recognize employers who pay a living wage which means not only healthier lifestyles for individuals/families, but also more disposable income spent at businesses throughout the city.