



Backgrounder

Updating the Waterloo Region Living Wage Calculation for 2017

Introduction

A living wage is not the same as the minimum wage, which is the legal minimum all employers must pay. The living wage sets a higher test — a living wage reflects what earners in a household need to bring home based on the actual costs of living in a specific community. The living wage is a call to private and public sector employers to pay wages for both direct and externally contracted employees sufficient to provide the basics and participate in community life.

The living wage is calculated as the hourly rate at which a household can meet its basic needs, once government transfers have been added to the family's income and deductions have been subtracted. The living wage gets families out of severe financial stress by lifting them out of poverty and providing a basic level of economic security.

A living wage:

- enables working families to have sufficient income to cover reasonable costs
- promotes social inclusion
- supports healthy child development principles
- ensures that families are not under severe financial stress
- is a conservative, reasonable estimate
- promotes significant and wide ranging community support
- is a vehicle for promoting the benefits of public programs such as child care, accessible public transit and extended health benefits
- helps to break the cycle of poverty

Based on the expenses for a family of four with both adults working full-time year-round at 37.5 hours per week, the living wage for the Waterloo Region is \$15.42 an hour.

Calculating the Living Wage for Waterloo Region

The 2017 living wage calculation uses the Canadian Living Wage Framework: A National Methodology for Calculating the Living Wage in Your Community and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Ontario Family Expense Workbook to develop the living wage calculation. The Family Expense Workbook was reviewed by CCPA-Ontario and the living wage calculation generated using the CCPA-Ontario Living Wage Calculator.

To update the calculation for Waterloo Region, Living Wage Waterloo Region surveyed members of the Waterloo Region community to gather input on whether there should be any changes to what is included in the family expenses. Changes were made to the telephone and internet/cable categories. In previous year a telephone, internet and cable/satellite bundle was used to calculate these costs. Survey responses indicated the need to add mobile phones and replace the cable/satellite with an internet movie subscription. This year's calculation thus includes the cost of two mobile phone plans, internet services and a subscription to an internet movie service (i.e. Netflix). Other than that, items included in the Family Expense Workbook are similar to those in previous years.

Reference household:

Two adults (male and female) each age 35, a 7-year old boy and a 3-year old girl.

Based on both parents working 37.5 hours a week full-year.

Basic Living Wage Formula Calculation

Annual Family Expenses	=	Income from Employment (Living Wage)	+	Income from Government Transfers	-	EI & CPP Premiums, Federal and Provincial Taxes
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Description of Expenses

Food: the food expense is taken from the 2015 Cost of Nutritious Eating for the Region plus a CPI (Consumer Price Index) adjustment (CANSIM table 326-0200).

<http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/healthyLivingHealthProtection/resources/NutritiousFoodBasket2015.pdf>

Clothing and Footwear: The amount is drawn from the Statistics Canada Survey of Household Spending (CANSIM Table 203-0022). The data are from 2014 with a CPI adjustment (CANSIM table 326-0200).

Rent: Average rent for a 3 bedroom apartment in the Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo CMA. *CMHC Rental Market Report: Ontario Highlights*, Fall 2015.

https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64507/64507_2015_B02.pdf?fr=1475787993465

Utilities: The average estimated monthly electricity usage amount of 414 kWh was calculated from data sourced from the Survey of Household Energy Usage (2011). The monthly cost of electricity was based on an average estimated cost from K-W Hydro, Waterloo North Hydro, and Energy+ Cambridge and North Dumfries. <http://www.ontarioenergyboard.ca/OEB/Consumers/Electricity/Your+Electricity+Utility>

Tenant Insurance: A quote for tenant insurance was sourced from the Kanteix.ca.e

Telephone: Living Wage Waterloo Region surveyed people in Waterloo Region (at two community festivals and via survey monkey) to gather input on family expenditures. Of 141 people surveyed, overwhelming responses indicated that cell phone should be included (84.4%), very few responses indicated a land line (23.4%). Cell phone plans for each adult we priced through Wind Mobile.

Internet: Price for internet was source from a local internet service provider (Voice Network Inc.) that provides internet service and a land line for a comparable price to other independent internet service providers operating in the Waterloo Region. The calculation also included a subscription to Netflix. Again, in the community survey, less than 40% of respondents indicated cable or satellite as necessary to include in the living wage basket of goods and services. But close to 50% indicated an internet movie service, such as Netflix be included and more than 80% indicated internet service.

Household Items and furniture: Sourced from the Statistics Canada Survey of Household Spending SHS (2014) CANSIM Table 203-0022, this expense category includes household furnishings and furniture but not equipment. We assume the rental unit includes equipment.

Vehicle & Misc. Transit: Based on the cost of operating a 2012 Hyundai Elantra (as recommended in the CCPA Ontario Family Expense Workbook). Depreciation, Insurance, Gasoline, Oil Changes, Vehicle Registration, Repair costs and Winter Tires.

Also included is the purchase of 20 adult and 20 child Grand River Transit tickets per month.

2 Week family vacation: One week camping at a Provincial Park and a one-week staycation with visits to 4 or 5 local attractions.

Monthly Family Dinner and Movie: The cost of restaurant meals are obtained from the SHS (2014) CANSIM Table 203-0022. The movie expense is based on the family seeing four movies during the year. The cost of tickets is sourced from <http://www.cineplex.com/Theatre/galaxy-cinemas-waterloo>.

Personal Care: Personal care includes costs such as soap, shampoo and personal hygiene related items. It is sourced from the Statistics Canada Survey of Household Spending SHS (2014) CANSIM Table 203-0022.

Recreation: Includes a membership for each family member at the YMCA of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo and a family membership at the Museum.

School Supplies and school fees: School supplies costs and costs of school related activities are recognized and sourced from the Statistics Canada Survey of Household Spending SHS (2014) CANSIM Table 203-0022.

Reading and Entertainment Supplies: This cost category recognizes reading materials such as books, magazines and newspapers. It is sourced from the Statistics Canada Survey of Household Spending SHS (2014) CANSIM Table 203-0022.

Bank Fees: The calculation recognizes that there are costs associated with maintaining most bank accounts and performing financial services. Bank fees are sourced from the SHS (2014)

Laundry: Based on a survey of the cost of wash and dry at three laundromats in Waterloo Region assuming four loads of laundry per week. Plus the cost of Tide PODS (72 pieces) and Bounce Dryer Sheets (200 Sheets) priced at Walmart.

Parent Education: Based on the average of four courses at Conestoga College and assuming that 2 course are taken per year, plus registration fees and textbooks.

Child Care: Based on the cost of centre based care for the 3 year-old and school-based before and after school care for the older child during the school year and home-based child care for the 7-year old during the summer. Source from Region of Waterloo Children's Services, *Early Learning and Child Care Profiles 2015*. http://communityservices.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/childrensServices/resources/DOCS_ADMIN-

Other Expenses: Other expenses includes a residual amount based on the Statistics Canada Survey of Household Spending SHS (2014) CANSIM Table 203-0022 and the cost of life insurance through Equitable Life and Critical Illness insurance from BMO Insurance (both sourced from Kanetix.ca.) for each adult.

Non-OHIP medical: Blue Cross Blue Choice Balance Plan, plan details retrieved from Kanetix.ca.

Contingency: A small contingency amount equal to 4% of household expenditures.

Table 1		
Family Expenses		Annual
Food		8,356
Clothing and Footwear		2,411
Shelter	Rent	13,848
	Hydro	1,044
	Telephone	1,085
	Tenant Insurance	213
	Internet and Cable	961
	Household Items and Furniture	541
Transportation	Vehicle & misc. transit	7,292
Other	2 wk family vacation	1,047
	Monthly family dinner and movie	1,323
	Personal care	841
	Recreation	1,987
	School Supplies and school fees	70
	Reading and Entertainment Supplies	327
	Bank Fees	166
	Laundry	1,436
Education (adults)		1,006
Child care (before subsidy)		18,687
Other expenses		1,449
Non OHIP medical		3,340
Contingency amount	4.0%	2,697
Total Family Expenses		70,127

Government Transfers and Taxes

Based on total household expenditure, the CCPA-Ontario Living Wage Calculator then calculates the amount of taxes paid by the household and income from Government Transfers and then generates the hourly living wage rate.

Table 2	
Gov't transfers	
Canada Child Benefit (CCB)	7,400
Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB)	-
Ontario Child Benefit (OCB)	-
Child Care Subsidy	10,029
GST Credit	-
Total Income from Transfers	17,429
Table 3:	
Living Wage and Government Deductions and Taxes	
Household Employment Income	60,154
Federal Income Tax	2,853
Federal Refundable Tax Credit	-
Provincial Income Tax	841
Provincial Refundable Tax Credit	-
Total Government Taxes	3,694
Total Refundable Tax Credits	-
Tax after credits	3,694
Income after taxes and credits	56,460
Less: CPP and EI Contributions	3,762
Plus: Total Government Transfers	17,429
Income after tax and transfers	70,127
Living wage	15.42

Results

Total household expenses are higher \$70,126 in the calculation for 2017 compared to \$65,581 in the calculation for in 2016. The largest increase in family expenditures was in childcare costs, which increased by \$3,255, from \$15,432 in the 2016 calculation to \$18,687.

There was a substantial increase in child benefits: \$7,400 for 2017 versus \$3, 929 for 2016 plus the Universal Child Care Benefit (\$2,640), which was taxable income.

The net result is that the living wage calculation for 2017 has declined to \$15.42 from \$16.05 for 2016.