

Newfoundland & Labrador Association of
Social Workers

Minimum Wage Consultation

Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers

Written Submission

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Presented to: Minimum Wage Advisory Committee

Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers (NLASW)

NLASW is the regulatory body and professional association for over 1500 professional social workers in this province. The vision of the NLASW is excellence in social work.

As a profession, social work is committed to improving the well-being of individuals, families and communities through intervention and counselling, collaboration, research, health promotion, policy and program development, and community capacity building. In this submission, it is our intention to provide input and recommendations as part of the minimum wage review consultation process.

Current Realities

According to a recent report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2019), Newfoundland and Labrador has the third lowest minimum wage in the country, a child poverty rate of 20%, and a gender wage gap that is one of the largest in the country with women earning 66 cents for every dollar earned by a man. The report also noted that 13.4% of households in the province experience food insecurity. These figures are quite concerning from a health and social perspective.

Jackson (2009) noted that “income is perhaps the most important social determinant of health” (p. 12). Therefore, poverty reduction policies, like a competitive minimum wage must be financially supported if we are to enhance the overall health and well being of the people of this province.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2019) speaks about the importance of a living wage which is a wage that a household would need to meet their basic needs. The living wage for St. John's NL was calculated to be \$18.85 per hour based on 35 hours a week.

Recommendations

The NLASW proposes that government consider the following recommendations:

- Annual increases to the minimum wage that are in keeping with a living wage.
- On-going evaluation of minimum wage policies and the impact on individuals and families in the province.
- Continued investments in education, affordable housing, child care and other social programming, along with a strong minimum wage.

Conclusion

Everyone has a right to an appropriate living wage. Ensuring that the minimum wage in the province remains strong is important in building a strong labour force in NL and promoting equality.

As a profession, social workers look forward to continuing to work with government in informing policy and program development in meeting the needs of individuals and families who live and work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

References

- Saulnier, C. (2019). *A living wage for St. John's, NL*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Retrieved November 22, 2019 from website <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Nova%20Scotia%20Office/2019/05/Living%20wage%20for%20St%20Johns.pdf>
- Jackson, A. (2009). Income and income distribution. In Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010), *Social determinants of health: The Canadian facts* (pp. 12 – 14). Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. Retrieved August 21, 2012 from website http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/The_Canadian_Facts.pdf.