

Newfoundland & Labrador
**College of
Social Workers**

Minimum Wage Review Consultation

Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers

Written Submission

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Presented to: Minimum Wage Review Committee

Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW)

The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW) regulates the practice of social work in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) under provincial legislation titled the Social Workers Act, SNL 2010, c.S-17.2. The vision is Excellence in Social Work.

As an organization, NLCSW is committed to advancing health and social policy in the public interest through a social justice framework. The NLCSW believes that health and social policy development must reflect the social determinants of health framework as outlined in our social policy position framework https://nlcsw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/NLCSW_Social_Determinants_of_Health_Policy_Framework.pdf.

Income is an overarching determinant of health and when people have access to an appropriate income, including an adequate minimum wage, the health and well-being of individuals, communities and populations is improved. In this submission, it is our intention to provide recommendations as part of the minimum wage review consultation process.

Background

Many individuals and families in NL continue to experience poverty, precarious housing, and food insecurity. As noted in the Big Reset Report released in 2021, “employment is the best path out of poverty” (p. 26). However, the report also highlighted that full time employment is not always a safeguard against poverty as many people who are employed receive low wages. Employment and income are interconnected, and a robust minimum wage is needed to ensure that people who are employed are able to meet their basic needs and participate fully in their communities.

The majority of those who earn minimum wage are employed in retail trades (Statistics Canada, 2019). While all employment sectors are valued, the COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrated the crucial and essential role of employees who work in retail trade. A competitive minimum wage focused on the recruitment and retention of people in these employment settings is necessary.

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

It is important to ensure that the provincial minimum wage is progressive and that benchmarks are set for annual increases. The NLCSW 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.
- Implementation of paid sick leave for all employees.

Conclusion

Everyone has a right to an income that meets their needs. 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

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