



Living Wage

For Squamish 2024



Living Wage BC



CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
BC Office

Introduction

The cost of living is directly connected to an individual's physical health, mental health, and level of involvement in community, which goes on to impact the local economy and the overall vitality of Squamish. With this in mind, the Squamish Community Foundation joined 25 other community foundations across B.C. who calculate their area's living wage in partnership with [Living Wage BC](#).

No matter where they live, people should be able to afford a decent life. There are jobs that need to be done in every community, and therefore people need homes, services, and a good quality of life in every community. A local calculation allows communities to identify policy advocacy that would address poverty in their community.

Calculating a living wage allows employers and local and provincial governments to ensure that wages reflect the true costs of living and that parents can earn what they need to support their families in our community, and province.

Our updated 2024 Squamish Living Wage report provides the 2024 Squamish Living Wage, discusses the value of the living wage, the role of government and what can be done to address the cost of living.

2024 Highlights

- The 2024 Squamish living wage is **\$26.76** an hour.
- Based on this living wage, a family of four in Squamish must earn a gross household income **over \$91k**.
- The 2024 Squamish living wage is **6.5 % higher than 2023**, a **\$1.63** increase.
- A large gap of **\$9.36** exists between the 2024 Squamish living wage and BC's current minimum wage of **\$17.40** per hour.
- Shelter (rent) costs for the Squamish living wage family **increased by 14.28 per cent** this year—an additional **\$374** per month.
- Preliminary estimates of living wages for two additional family types were produced: a single working-aged adult and a single parent with a young child.
- A single parent family with one child had annual expenses over **\$57,300** and a living wage calculated at **\$29.13**. A single adult between the ages of 35 and 44 had annual expenses over **\$40,000** and a living wage calculated at **\$26.03**. These preliminary calculations and the methodology will be further refined to ensure greater inclusivity.

What is the Living Wage?

The living wage is the hourly rate that each of two parents working full-time needs to earn in order to support a family of four in their community.

To calculate the living wage, we start by determining the cost of a basket of basic goods and services that reflect a decent, but modest, standard of living. For instance, food, shelter, clothing, phone and internet and transportation, to name a few. The living wage also takes into account the various government benefits available to British Columbians to make life more affordable as well as the taxes and deductions that workers pay (such as income tax and Employment Insurance premiums).

By calculating the living wage that accurately reflects the cost of living in Squamish, we can determine what workers need to afford basic necessities and support their children's healthy development.

A living wage is different than a minimum wage. The minimum wage is the legislated minimum set by the provincial government. The minimum wage should be set at a rate high enough to lift an individual worker out of poverty. An adequate minimum wage is the government's responsibility to address working poverty.



The Squamish Living Wage

The Living Wage for Squamish is **\$26.76** an hour, **\$9.36** higher than the minimum wage for BC.

Squamish's living wage increased from **\$25.13** per hour in 2023 to **\$26.76** in 2024. A striking gap exists between the 2024 Squamish living wage and BC's current minimum wage of **\$17.40** per hour.

Based on this living wage, a family of four in Squamish must earn a gross household income over \$91k. Housing alone commands \$2,993 monthly from their budget, while food, the second largest expense in the family budget, adds an additional \$1,359 per month. This situation raises concerns about the stress faced by individuals and families due to the disparity between income and the cost of living.

In 2021, 38% of renter households were spending over 30% of their income on rent and utilities (Vital Signs 2023 Report). Given the increasing pressure of inflation and rising rents in 2024, households in Squamish are facing increasing and unprecedented pressure.



Monthly living expenses for a Squamish family in 2024

	Food	\$1,359
	Clothing/Footwear	\$168
	Housing	\$2,993
	Phone/Internet	\$151
	Transport	\$510
	Other Expenses	\$1,151
	Childcare	\$596
	Non-MSP Health Costs*	\$231
	Contingency Fund	\$312
	Parental Education	\$132
	Total	\$7,603

*Reduction due to change in methodology

How the Living Wage is Calculated

The living wage is the hourly amount that each of two working parents with two young children must earn to meet basic expenses that reflect a modest standard of living. In this calculation, basic expenses include rent, childcare, food, and transportation after government taxes, credits, deductions, and subsidies are taken into account.

The living wage calculation does not cover:

- Credit card, loan or other debt/interest payments.
- Savings for retirement.
- Owning a home.
- Savings for children's future education.
- Anything beyond minimal recreation, entertainment or holiday costs.
- Costs of caring for a disabled, seriously ill or elderly family member.
- Much of a cushion for emergencies or other unforeseen expenses.

Earning a living wage alleviates severe financial stress by lifting families out of poverty and ensuring a fundamental level of economic security. Yet, it remains a modest, essential budget, lacking the additional comforts that many of us often overlook but are vital for a dignified life.

Budget Item	Detail	Monthly \$
Food	<p>This estimate reflects the costs of a nutritious diet. It does not cover special dietary needs, cultural or other food preferences, access to time and resources to prepare food, non-food items (e.g., cleaning supplies), take-out food, or kitchen equipment (e.g., utensils). Five percent has been added to account for miscellaneous foods such as coffee, tea, herbs, spices and condiments.</p> <p>This estimate is based on food costing data published by the B.C. Centre for Disease Control and updated for Consumer Price Index (CPI).</p>	\$1,359
Clothing and Footwear	<p>This estimate reflects the total cost of clothing and footwear for a family of 4. This estimate is based on the Market Basket Measure for B.C. and updated for CPI.</p>	\$168
Shelter	<p>This estimate is the median rental figure for a 3-bedroom apartment with a recent moving penalty added taken from census data. The recent moving penalty was calculated from analyzing census data and revealed that people in B.C. who have moved in the past 12 months are paying 18% more in rent when compared to those who have not moved. The total rental figure includes the cost of utilities (taken from census data and updated for CPI) and the cost of monthly tenants insurance (for a 3-bedroom apartment in Squamish).</p>	\$2,993

Phone and Internet	This includes the cost of high-speed home internet, two mobile data plans and the purchase of two basic smartphones	\$151
Transportation	Includes the cost of owning and operating a used car and a two-zone bus pass for one parent, replaced by a discounted student transit pass for eight months annually.	\$510
Other Household and Social Participation Expenses	Includes toiletries, personal care items, over-the-counter medications, expenses not fully covered by insurance, furniture, household supplies, laundry, school fees and supplies, bank fees, some reading materials, minimal recreation and entertainment, family outings (e.g., museums, cultural events), birthday presents, modest family vacations, and some sports and arts classes for children. Covers 75% of food and clothing costs.	\$1,151
Childcare	Includes full-time licensed group care for ages 3-5 for 12 months with fee reduction for participating providers. Also provides before-and-after school care for a 7-year-old for 10 months, applying fee reduction for September to December and regular fees from January to June. Covers full-day care for 6 professional development days (if not already included in out-of-school care fees) and full-day care during winter and spring school breaks for a 7-year-old over 3 weeks. Benefits include the B.C. Affordable Child Care benefit received by parents.	\$596
Non MSP Health Care costs	The cost of a basic extended health and dental plan with Pacific Blue Cross Insurance, which does not include expenses only partially covered by the insurance plan.	\$231
Contingency Fund	Two weeks' wages for each parent, serving as a buffer for unexpected events such as a family member's serious illness or transitional periods between jobs.	\$312
Parental Education	Cost of two standard (3-credit) courses including all relevant student fees.	\$132

Discussion

Although inflation decreased from historic highs, cost increases for essentials continue to push up the living wage. As Squamish continues to grow rapidly and the cost of living rises - more and more community members are struggling to find affordable housing, food, childcare, and transportation. The financial relief provided by government measures intended to help offset rising costs, such as affordable childcare programs and increases in income-tested benefits, is outpaced by the rising cost of rent. The regional calculation of living wage is increasingly relevant and allows the Squamish Community Foundation to bring awareness to this issue and advocate for poverty reduction actions for the community.

The Living Wage calculation is based on the needs of two-parent families with young children, but it is also meant to support all workers. It is important that young adults are not discouraged from having children because of low wages and older workers have extra income as they age.

This year, preliminary estimates of living wages for two additional family types were produced: a single working-aged adult and a single parent with a young child. Preliminary estimates showed a single parent family with one child had annual expenses of over \$57,300 and a living wage calculated at \$29.13. A single adult between the ages of 35 and 44 had annual expenses of over \$40,000 and a living wage calculated at \$26.03. The calculations and methodology will be further refined to ensure greater inclusivity, over the next year.

The Role of Government

The government can help by:

- Raising the minimum wage.
- Offering more-generous government transfers for low and middle-income households.
- Investing in programs and infrastructure that make life more affordable for all such as: affordable housing, universal access to low-cost child care, free transit for youth 18 and under, and an expansion of publicly funded dental, pharmacare and mental health services.

Without urgent government action to address the affordability crisis, the living wage will continue to increase rapidly and thousands will be stuck with low wages, earning less than it actually costs to live in our province.



What can the government do to reduce the cost of living?



More affordable housing



Better and cheaper public transit



Expand dental and pharmacare



Increased cash benefits

The Benefits of Paying a Living Wage

Good for Community

Poverty imposes a hidden cost on our communities. We foot the bill through heightened demand on emergency health services when people can't afford essential medications. Our education system strains under the weight of parents unable to adequately support their children's learning due to juggling multiple jobs. Embracing a living wage means investing in community health and well-being. It's a proactive step toward building stronger, more resilient communities where everyone can thrive.

Good for the Economy

When low-wage workers receive higher wages, they tend to spend their money within the local economy. A living wage enables families to engage more fully in their communities' social, civic, and cultural activities. They contribute to local businesses and participate actively in community events. Everyone gains from the reduction of poverty within our communities.

Good for Employers

Paying living wages can have concrete benefits for employers, such as lower absenteeism and turnover rates, enhanced skill development, improved morale and productivity, decreased recruitment and training expenses, and heightened customer satisfaction.

What benefits have you found from being a Living Wage Employer?



What is a Living Wage Employer?

A living wage employer is a company or organization that commits to paying its employees wages that are sufficient to meet basic living expenses. These employers prioritize fair compensation that allows workers to live decently without the need for additional government assistance. Beyond wages, living wage employers often offer benefits such as healthcare coverage, paid time off, and opportunities for career advancement and fostering a supportive and stable work environment. By adhering to living wage standards, these employers contribute to broader societal goals of reducing poverty and promoting economic stability.

A growing number of B.C. employers see the value of paying a living wage. Currently, there are 450 certified Living Wage Employers across B.C., including many small businesses, non-profit organizations, unions and cooperatives. As of October 2023, ten municipalities, three First Nations Councils and three school boards have adopted living wage policies, including North Vancouver, Quesnel, Victoria, Métis Nation, and Squamish Nation.

Becoming a living wage employer not only supports employee well-being but also strengthens communities and promotes economic fairness for all.

To find out how to become a Living Wage Employer, you can connect with Living Wage for Families BC and join their certification program:

https://www.livingwageforfamilies.ca/what_is_a_living_wage_employer



“Squamish Nation has been a proud Living Wage Employer since July 2020. Being a Living Wage employer helps us show that we value our employees by ensuring they earn enough to take care of their families and also build a strong and healthy Squamish Nation community. We strongly encourage all other employers in the community to join us in becoming a Living Wage Employer.”

K'ana/Deborah Baker, Squamish Nation Councillor

Squamish Living Wage

The Squamish Community Foundation sincerely thanks Living Wage for Families BC for their assistance and support for the living wage calculation for Squamish.



Squamish Community Foundation humbly and respectfully acknowledges that this report was produced on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw.



About

Squamish Community Foundation

Established in 2003, the Squamish Community Foundation is an independent, charitable organization dedicated to enriching the quality of life for community members in Squamish. We facilitate philanthropy by partnering with donors and connecting them with the community causes they value. Our focus is on building permanent endowments that address long-term community challenges as well as immediate needs. From the income earned on our endowment funds, we invest in people, groups, and community impact. With projects like Vital Signs and Living Wage Reports, we are working to build community knowledge, engagement and leadership.

