



COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date: 19 November 2024
Subject: Airdrie's 2024 Living Wage Calculation
Directorate: Community Safety and Social Services

Issue:

Council is being presented with Airdrie's 2024 Living Wage Calculation for information.

Policy / Council Direction:

Airdrie's 2024 Living Wage Calculation aligns with Council's Social Policy 2020 and Council's 2023-26 Caring Community Focus Area.

Background:

The City of Airdrie is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Canada with a projected population of 103,994 as early as 2027.¹ As Airdrie continues to grow, knowing how our community is faring when it comes to affordability and livability is necessary in creating a community where everyone can thrive and fully participate in community life.

Since 2021, the Alberta Living Wage Network (ALWN) has been raising awareness and shedding light on the affordability and livability in communities across Alberta. The goal of the ALWN is to advance a coordinated living wage movement in Alberta by assisting communities in their annual living wage calculation and providing certification to qualifying living wage employers. The ALWN is an optional member-based organization with 20 municipalities and 133 living wage certified employers across Alberta.

In 2022, the City of Airdrie joined the ALWN. As an active member, the City of Airdrie's Social Planning Department has had the privilege of learning from the ALWN experts, as well as other municipalities and communities, about the benefits of a living wage in the face of the affordability crisis in Alberta. Social Planning, with the guidance from the ALWN, calculated Airdrie's 2024 living wage.

¹ [Airdrie's 2024 Growth Report: Tracking Development and Change](#). Airdrie Economic Development. September 2024.

What is a Living Wage?²

A living wage is a calculation that indicates the actual costs that a resident and/or family need(s) to maintain a good quality of life once government transfers have been added to the family's income and taxes have been subtracted. It includes the basic needs of an average household (food, shelter, and clothing); it also considers costs associated with small investments in education, childcare, and participating in the community.

Living wage has been recognized as a poverty reduction tool and is premised on the belief that government programs like minimum wage are not sufficient enough to lift people out of poverty or to be able to live in their community with financial dignity.

Living Wage versus Minimum Wage

The Living wage is different from the Minimum Wage in several key ways.

Minimum Wage:

- It is the same across the province, even though it costs more to live in some places than others.
- While the minimum wage is mandatory and legislated by government, it is not tied to inflation so buying power decreases every year the minimum wage doesn't keep pace with inflation.
- For years, the minimum wage has been too low to lift even someone working full-time above the poverty line.

Living Wage:

- Each community has its own living wage rate which is calculated using community-specific data that reflects the local cost of living.
- Living Wage is updated every year using freshly gathered data or the most recent Consumer Price Index to adjust for inflation.
- Is an optional commitment of employers to go beyond the minimum standard and pay enough for employees to be able to meet a reasonable standard of living and to participate in their community.

How is Living Wage Calculated?

The ALWN has developed a standardized methodology for calculating living wages across the province and calculates a community's living wage in collaboration with a municipality and/or organization.

It is based on the income needs of the following three household types:

1. A two-parent family with two young children.
2. A lone-parent family with one young child.
3. A single individual living alone.

² The Social Planning Department would like to acknowledge the Alberta Living Wage Network for providing the key content on living wage which is contained in this report.

It assumes that each adult is working full-time hours (35 hours per week) and includes savings for unexpected costs, continuing education, childcare, and a small amount which allows people to participate in the community.

Airdrie’s 2024 Living Wage Calculation

Airdrie’s 2024 living wage is **\$24.30** and is based on a weighted average of three household types:

- Family of four (two income/two child): **\$21.96**
- Lone parent (one income/one child): **\$31.35**
- Single individual (one income): **\$26.26**

In November of each year, the ALWN does a media release of the living wage numbers in participating communities across Alberta. Administration participated in the ALWN media release on November 18, 2024. Table 1 below presents the 2024 living wages for participating communities across Alberta. Of the 15 participating communities, Airdrie has the third highest living wage in Alberta at \$24.30. Jasper ranks as having the highest living wage at \$31.40 and Calgary ranks as the second highest at \$24.45.

Table 1. The 2024 Living Wages of Participating Communities in Alberta* (Highest to Lowest)

Community	Living Wage* (weighted average of all households)
Jasper	\$31.40
Calgary	\$24.45
Airdrie	\$24.30
Fort McMurray	\$23.50
[REDACTED]	
Special Areas	\$22.60
St. Albert	\$21.75
High River	\$21.50
Stony Plain	\$21.30
Edmonton	\$20.85
Spruce Grove	\$20.65
Lethbridge	\$20.00
Grande Prairie	\$18.85
Brooks	\$18.50
Medicine Hat	\$17.55

*The 15 communities listed above represent the communities who chose to participate in the Alberta Living Wage Network’s 2024 living wage calculation media release at the time of report writing.

The Living Wage: Valuable Information to Help Support Social Well-Being in Airdrie

Airdrie’s 2024 living wage numbers offer new information on what it costs to live and participate in community life in Airdrie for different household types. These living wage numbers provide important local level data which can help inform planning around social programs, affordable housing, and other areas. At the employer-level, recognizing that there

are many factors to consider in operating a sustainable local business or organization, employers in Airdrie may or may not choose to explore the living wage further.

According to the Alberta Living Wage Network, a living wage offers a number of benefits to individuals/families, businesses and employers, and to the overall community. These are outlined below.

Individuals and families:

- A living wage provides more freedom to nurture their personal, professional, and community relationships.
- It also contributes to better physical and mental health through reducing stress by not having to worry about access to basic necessities; improves well-being by having the means to afford participation in social activities and recreation, as well as increases access to healthier food options.

Employers and businesses:

- A living wage increases employee productivity and decreases turnover, which makes businesses more profitable and sustainable.

Community:

- A living wage stimulates the local economy and helps build sustainable and vibrant communities.
- It also helps advance societal equity and inclusivity.

Airdrie's 2024 Living Wage Calculation provides new information and data on what it costs to live in Airdrie. For local employers who are interested in learning more about the living wage, the Alberta Living Wage Network is an important source of information on the living wage and living wage certification for employers.

Council Committee Routed Through:

Not applicable.

Administration Recommendation:

Administration recommends that Council accepts Airdrie's 2024 Living Wage Calculation report for information.

Alternatives/Implications:

There are no alternatives put forward as Administration is recommending that Council accepts Airdrie's 2024 Living Wage Calculation for information only.

Budget Implications:

As this Report is provided for information only, there are no foreseeable budget implications at this time.

Communications and Engagement:

Administration worked with Corporate Communications regarding the City of Airdrie’s participation in the Alberta Living Wage Network’s province-wide media release which was on November 18, 2024.

Recommendation:

That Council accepts the report entitled “Airdrie’s 2024 Living Wage Calculation” for information.

Staff Presenter:	Pauline Clark, Team Social Planner
External Presenter:	N/A
Department:	Community Safety and Social Services
Reviewed by:	Kevin Weinberger
Attachments:	N/A

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