

Twenty-Seventh Legislature Third Session

Standing Committee on the
Economy

Review of Alberta's
Minimum Wage Policy

OCTOBER 2010



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OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Standing Committee on the Economy

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October 2010

To the Honourable Ken Kowalski
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The Standing Committee on the Economy has the honour to submit its Report on the Review of the Minimum Wage Policy in Alberta for consideration by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

(original signed by)

Naresh Bhardwaj, MLA
Edmonton-Ellerslie
Chair
Standing Committee on the Economy

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY**

**Review of Alberta's Minimum Wage Policy
27th Legislature, Third Session**

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Teresa Woo-Paw, MLA
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*Substitution for Doug Griffiths on June 23, 2010.

**Substitution for Ken Allred on April 12, 2010.

***Substitution for Teresa Woo-Paw on September 15, 2010.

****Substitution for Doug Griffiths on July 19, 2010.

†Committee Member from April 14, 2010; Deputy
Chair from April 14, 2010.

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1.0 Introduction

On June 14, 2007, the Government of Alberta announced both an increase to the minimum wage and a change to Alberta's minimum wage policy. It was announced that the minimum wage would increase on September 1, 2007, to \$8.00 per hour. It was also announced that all future increases to the minimum wage, following the September 2007 increase, would occur on April 1 and be indexed to the average weekly earnings for Alberta for the previous calendar year. On April 1, 2008, the minimum wage increased to \$8.40 per hour and to \$8.80 per hour on April 1, 2009.

Until recently Alberta's minimum wage had not been indexed to an economic measure or indicator and was not increased on a set schedule. For instance, the minimum wage was increased to \$5.00 per hour on April 1, 1992, and did not change until October 1, 1998, when it was increased to \$5.40 per hour. The minimum wage was increased twice in 1999, to \$5.65 per hour on April 1, 1999, and to \$5.90 per hour on October 1, 1999. It remained at \$5.90 per hour until September 1, 2005, when it was increased to \$7.00 per hour.

On February 5, 2010, the Honourable Thomas A. Lukaszuk, Minister of Employment and Immigration, announced that Alberta's minimum wage would remain at \$8.80 per hour for 2010. The Minister stated that the decision was based on the Government of Alberta's view that a minimum wage freeze was needed to protect jobs and support the economy.

On February 25, 2010, the Minister sent a memorandum to the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy asking that the Committee conduct a review of Alberta's minimum wage policy (pursuant to Standing Order 52.07(2)) in order to ensure that the policy remains relevant while the economy goes through changes and reflects what works best for Alberta.

As part of the Committee's review of the minimum wage policy Committee meetings were held on April 12, 2010, May 10, 2010, July 19, 2010, and September 15, 2010. In addition, written submissions were solicited from identified stakeholders and members of the public, and public hearings were held on June 15, 2010, in Edmonton and on June 23, 2010, in Calgary. The Committee received 207* written submissions, and 14 interested parties made oral presentations before the Committee at the public hearings.

This report contains the recommendations of the Standing Committee on the Economy following its deliberations on Alberta's minimum wage policy. This report is not intended to be a comprehensive record of the Committee's proceedings. For a complete record reference should be made to *Alberta Hansard* transcripts of the Committee proceedings, the written and oral submissions made to the Committee, the summary of submissions, the research reports that were prepared by the Legislative Assembly Office's research section and other research documents that were submitted to the Committee.

* Of the total submissions received, 181 were a form letter submitted by members of the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association. The remaining 26 submissions were sent by various stakeholders and private citizens.

2.0 Recommendations

The Standing Committee on the Economy makes the following specific observations, opinions, and recommendations with respect to minimum wage policy in the province of Alberta:

1. The minimum wage should be indexed using a formula that could include Statistics Canada's Alberta average weekly earnings, market-basket measures, and inflation. The rationale for this recommendation is that:
 - The minimum wage needs to be predictable for both employers and employees.
 - The approach to minimum wage needs to have clarity, direction and long-term stability.
 - The market is not a reasonable determinant of the minimum wage as some employees might be at a disadvantage without a legislated minimum wage.
2. The formula used to calculate the minimum wage should be stated in the legislation. The rationale for this recommendation is that:
 - Stating the formula used to calculate Alberta's minimum wage ensures that the minimum wage policy is transparent for all Albertans.
3. The minimum wage should be consistent throughout Alberta. The rationale for this recommendation is that:
 - A regional minimum wage differential (i.e., legislating different minimum wages for certain areas in Alberta) does not support small businesses. If higher minimum wages were paid in Alberta cities, employees may leave rural communities in order to earn a higher wage.
 - It would be difficult to develop a process where different minimum wages would be legislated in various locations within the province.
4. The minimum wage should also be consistent for all minimum wage earners. The rationale for this recommendation is that:
 - A minimum wage differential for employees who receive gratuities or for new employees to receive a training minimum wage creates a minimum wage policy that is too complex. Albertans prefer simple policies over complex policies.
5. The base minimum wage, that is currently \$8.80 per hour, should be raised to \$9.05 per hour in three months. Further, subsequent changes to the minimum wage should be announced annually, giving enough advance notice to allow businesses and wage earners time to plan. The rationale for this recommendation is that:
 - Employers need reasonable notice of changes to the minimum wage in order to have time to plan and budget for increases.
6. The Minister of Employment and Immigration should enter into discussions with the appropriate representatives of the Government of Canada to encourage the Government of Canada to raise the basic personal exemption for income taxes to a level more in line with Alberta's basic personal amount. The rationale for this recommendation is that:
 - Minimum wage earners may be unduly penalized if they are subject to income tax and therefore may not opt to enter the workforce.
7. In the interests of developing longer-term solutions than can be achieved through minimum wage policy alone, the Government of Alberta should recognize the need for a designed-in-Alberta poverty reduction strategy, study best practices in other jurisdictions and engage in broad-based public consultations in order to create this strategy.

Appendix A: List of Presenters and Submitters

The following organizations and individuals made oral and/or written presentations to the Standing Committee on the Economy as part of the Committee's review of Alberta's minimum wage policy. Public hearings were held on June 15, 2010, in Edmonton and on June 23, 2010, in Calgary.

Oral Presentations

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Batke, Perry and Zweste, Barry	Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association
Cattarinich, Xavier and Lepora, Nick	Calgary Workers' Resource Centre
Curran, Gerard, Gonsalves, Lee, Thomas, Chris, and von Schellwitz, Mark	Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association
Kolkman, John	Edmonton Social Planning Council
Kwasny, Steven	Alberta Students' Executive Council
McGowan, Gil	Alberta Federation of Labour
McKeon, Bob, PhD	Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, Office for Social Justice
McPherson, Barbara and Sigurdson, Lori	Alberta College of Social Workers
Meades, Dan	Vibrant Communities Calgary
Miguel, Cecilia	Women Together Ending Poverty
Moore-Kilgannon, Bill	Public Interest Alberta
Okita, Kerry Lynn and Storm, Lindsay	Women's Centre of Calgary
Shymka, Michael and Wilford, Perry	Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association
Truscott, Richard	Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Written Submissions

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Achen, Darrell	Phoenix Grill Ltd.
Adams, Bob	Boston Pizza
Allan, Stuart	Buzzards Restaurant and Bar
Allan, Trudy	Coyotes Deli and Grill
Allen, Rob	Hudsons Canadian Tap House
Ammar, Keith	KWA 2000 Investments Ltd.
Andrews, Ryan	Boston Pizza Cochrane
Arndt, Barry	Boston Pizza
Backstrom, Joyce C.	Edmonton Local Council of Women
Barnetson, Bob, PhD	Athabasca University
Barnsley, Doug	McDonald's Restaurants
Bazel, Sandy	Black Diamond Hotel
Behiez, Ken	Boston Pizza
Bienach, Guy	OPM Asian Bistro and Lounge
Bigland, Mike	A&W Cochrane
Bilawchuk, Cyre	Moxie's Classic Grill
Bishop, Tim	Tim Hortons
Black, Pete	Joey's Sherwood Park
Blais, Maral	CHOP Restaurant
Blokzyl, Pieter	Whitco Restaurants Ltd.
Borle, Jason	Hudsons Canadian Tap House

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Brandt, Gerry	Mountain View Restaurant Inc.
Brodeur, Roger	Boston Pizza Calgary Trail
Brodeur, Terry	Boston Pizza
Brooks, Trevor	Cactus Cage Barlow Trail Ltd.
Brown, Kevin	BCM Restaurants (Central)
Brown, Kevin	BCM Restaurants (West)
Brunet, Donna	Denny's Restaurants
Bryshun, Jamie	Divino Bistro
Buchanan, Carol and Michael	Buchanan's Chop House
Burney, Kirk	Moxie's Classic Grill
Burns, Jason	East Side Mario's
Campomar, Miguel	Cactus Café Macleod Trail Ltd.
Carramusa, Richard	North Hill Holdings Inc.
Carramusa, Richard	South Hill Holdings Inc.
Capito, Carlo	Sawmill Sherwood Park
Cattarinich, Xavier	Calgary Workers' Resource Centre
Chalmez Gibbs, Kristine	Moxie's
Cho, Sean	Denny's
Cline, Sariena	Boston Pizza
Corrigan, Bobbie	Boston Pizza
Cowan, Meghann	Moxie's 17 th Ave
Cooney, Nathan	Motion Picture Theatre Association of Alberta
Coyle, Richard	Boston Pizza
Crossley, Cara	Moxie's Restaurants
de Groot, Travis	Earls Campus Towers
Deegan, Brougham	Namee Restaurants Inc.
Denton, J. Brad	Dencan Restaurants Inc.
Desaulniers, Shawn	Belgo Brasserie
Dillon, Brian	Joey Restaurant Group
Dixon, Scott	Boston Pizza Vegreville
Donagby, Siobhan	Tim Hortons
Dufrense, Stephen	The Social Justice Ministry, St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Church
Duke, Cameron	Joey Restaurant Group
Dunn, Kurtis	Moxie's
Erk, John	The Dog and Duck Pub and Restaurant
Evans, John	Bumpy's Cafe
Felt, Murry	928802 Alberta Ltd.
Ferguson, Gordie	908230 Alberta Ltd.
Gagnon, Deborah	Denny's of Canada
Germain, Cam T.	A&W
Getty, Darren	Joey Restaurant Group (South Commons)
Gillingham, Michelle	Boston Pizza
Glover, Matt	Hudsons Canadian Tap House
Goheen, Brian	Chiro Foods Ltd.
Goodchild, Tom and McCullough, Len	The Sawmill Restaurant Group
Govenlock, Alice	A&W Esso East
Gow, William	Gow-Woo Food Services Ltd.
Graham, Carmen	Boston Pizza
Greensude, Donald Brett	The Blind Monk
Gretton, Michael	Private Citizen

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Guenard, Paul	744426 Alberta Ltd.
Gurlevitch, Mark	Dencan Restaurants
Gurr, Kevin	Boston Pizza
Hamelin, Stephen	Saltlik
Handford, Bradley	Moxie's Classic Grill
Hans, Ruby	Dencan Restaurants Inc.
Hansen, Sean	Boston Pizza
Hare, Tammy	Panago Pizza
Harris, Marlan	A & W Restaurant
Hasham, Asif	Hudsons Canadian Tap House
Hay, Sheldon	Boston Pizza Westlock
Heath, Alex R.	Money Pot Eatery and Pub
Heck, Justin	Private Citizen
Herzog, Neil	Boston Pizza
Higgins, Joanna	Joey Jasper
Higgins, Kim	McMatt Investments Ltd.
Houseworth, Troy	Boston Pizza
Hoyle, Ryan	Cactus Café West Edmonton Ltd.
Hughes, Dave	Tim Hortons
Humphreys, Jonas	Moxie's Classic Grill
Ison, Craig	Bears Den Restaurant
Jaber, Sal	890576 Alberta Ltd.
Jaber, Sal	Mama Pizza (Millwoods) Ltd.
Jabr, Rick	674 784 Alberta Ltd.
Jacobs, Archie	961885 Alberta Ltd.
Jacobs, Sylvia	Boston Pizza
Jain, Alap	Denny's Restaurant
Jenkins, Andrew	Boston Pizza Beaumont
Johnson, Matthew	Earls Restaurants Ltd.
Johnson, Scott	643267 Alberta Ltd.
Johnson, Sid	Stadus Food Service Ltd.
Kaiser, Dave	Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association
Kalkounis, Dimitri	Moxie's Restaurants
Kayter, Jason	Moxie's/Chop/Shark Club
Khosla, Amit	Northland Properties Ltd.
Klein, Jim	Panago
Koehn, Brent	Joey Restaurants
Konopski, Larry	Northern Food Services
Kozak, Carla	Provincial Council of Women of Alberta
Kristensen, Jan	Boston Pizza
Kumar, Ravi	Denny's Restaurant
Kwasny, Steven	Alberta Students' Executive Council
Laprairie, Bob	Laprairie Food Services Ltd.
Latha, Fareen	Moxie's Classic Grill
Larkee, Trevor	The Pantry Edmonton
Lindsay, Joanne	Denny's Restaurants
Lindsay, Kip	Boston Pizza
Lo, David	1023305 Alberta Ltd.
Lo, Ivy	LCW Holdings Inc.
Lyons, Mary-Anne	Avondale Ent Ltd.
Ma, Julie	Moxie's Classic Grill

NAME	ORGANIZATION
MacDonald, Mark	Boston Pizza
Maclver, Lena	Oil City Hospitality
MacKay, Sandra and Darrel	Tim Hortons
MacPherson, David	Boston Pizza
MacTaggart, Joanne	Moxie's Classic Grill
Marcoun, Clark	Boston Pizza #108
Marlowe, S. Michael	Private Citizen
McLellan, Pamela	Denny's Restaurant
Meades, Dan	Vibrant Communities Calgary
Milsap, Scott	Tim Hortons
Morris, Rob	MCG Restaurants Ltd.
Nanda, Rajeev	Dencan Restaurants Inc.
Nederveen, Paul	Private Citizen
Ngo, David	Denny's Peigan Trail
Nisbet, Dean	Boston Pizza Capilano
Novasat, Adina	Moxie's
O'Byrne, Karen	Private Citizen
Olson, Terry	Boston Pizza
Parker, Andy	Moxie's Classic Grill (Fort McMurray)
Parker, Andy	Moxie's Classic Grill (Grande Prairie)
Peerless, Todd	Tim Hortons
Pempeit, Larry	Canadian Paraplegic Association (Alberta)
Perera, Vipula	Decan Restaurants Inc.
Phenix, Mike	Moxie's 17 Ave
Pierce, Maria	Velvet Restaurant
Pilarski, Peter	Retail Council of Canada
Predy, G., MD, FRCPC	Alberta Health Services
Radke, Reg	Brooks and District Chamber of Commerce
Rattai, Fred	Private Citizen
Reboh, Christina	Earls Restaurant
Reglin, Natalie	Boston Pizza Lacombe #112
Reid, Fran	1264290 Alberta Ltd.
Reid, Mike	923560 Alberta Ltd.
Rhyasen, Clare	Max Pasley Ent. Ltd.
Robbins, Steve, Schmidt, Dale et al.	Northern Alberta Boston Pizza Franchises
Rook, John, PhD	Private Citizen
Salatino, Andrew	Denny's Restaurants
Sali, Cassandra	Denny's Restaurant
Scalzo, Joe	Boston Pizza
Schuler, Evelyn	Private Citizen
Shariff, Naheed	Rafiki Enterprises Inc.
Sieweke, Tony	Boston Pizza
Simmonds, Jason	Boston Pizza
Smith, Guy	Alberta Union of Provincial Employees
Sroka, Rob	Lavtor Holdings (Alberta) Ltd.
Stewart, Philip	A&W (980311 Alberta Ltd.)
Stimpson, Peggy	Red Pepper Pub
Streisel, Tim	625569 Alberta Ltd.
Studholme, Calvin	Boston Pizza
Sutherland, Craig	Boston Pizza Innisfail
Sutherland, Craig	Boston Pizza Olds

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Thivierge, Joe	A&W Food Services of Canada Inc.
Thomson, Scott	Moxie's Classic Grill
Thorne, Ted	Moxie's Classic Grill
Thys, Eric	McDonald's Spruce Grove/Stony Plain
Tooke, Rob	Wild Bills
Toth, Jim	Boston Pizza
Triantafyllakis, Angela	Earls Tin Palace Ltd.
Trimper, April	Boston Pizza
Tsang, Kam	Denny's Restaurant
Verma, Nirmal	A&W Restaurant
Walia, Amrit	Denny's Peigan Trail
Wanda, Rakesh	Dencan Restaurants Inc.
Warman, Tyler	Boston Pizza
Watters, M.	Denny's
Weidinger, Jim	Shark Club Bar and Grill
Wesley, Glen	Boston Pizza Westmount
Whitefield, Jeff	Wild Bill's Saloon
Whitefield, Jeffrey	Wild Bill's Saloon, The Drake Inn, The Wood Restaurant
Whitman, Rielly	Earls
Whitney, Greg	945994 Alberta Ltd.
Whitney, Kristine	945994 Alberta Ltd.
Wickramage, Sanjaya	Dencan Restaurants Inc.
Wild, Timothy and MacKay, William R.	Private Citizens
Wilson, Tracy	Denny's
Wirzba, Wally	600525 Alberta Ltd.
Wirzba, Wally	E.I.W.M. Holdings Ltd.
Wojtaszek, Duncan	Council of Alberta University Students
Wolfe, Katie	Calgary's Living Wage Action Team
Yaghi, Terry	852822 Alberta Ltd.
Yasinski, Mike	Hudsons Canadian Tap House
Yates, Mike	Hudsons Canadian Tap House
Yeung, Francis	Denny's Peigan Trail
Yoingco, John	Dencan Restaurants Inc.
Zacharias, Menno	MLHZ Ventures Inc.

**Appendix B: Minority Report
(Harry B. Chase, MLA)**



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ALBERTA

Harry B. Chase
MLA, Calgary-Varsity
Alberta Liberal Caucus Whip
Deputy Chair, Standing Committee on the Economy

September 28, 2010

Mr. Naresh Bhardwaj
Chair, Standing Committee on the Economy

A Minority Report on Alberta's Minimum Wage

The Alberta minimum wage at \$8.80/hr is too low; 4th lowest (of 13 provinces and territories) in Canada, as of Mar. 2010.ⁱ Earning minimum wage, at 35 hrs/week for 52 weeks, the annual after-tax income of the average Albertan with no dependents is \$15,072 (including holiday pay) -- \$3,301 below LICO, Statistics Canada 2008.ⁱⁱ \$8.80/hr before-tax ranks AB 7th, and 5th after-tax.ⁱⁱⁱ

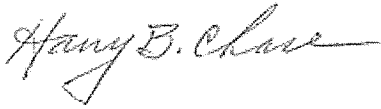
Women are disproportionately represented as minimum wage earners.^{iv} Over two-thirds of Alberta's 20,000 minimum-wage earners are women. More than half of them are over 25 years of age... Alberta's female single parents are more likely to live in poverty than other Canadians: half of our province's women earn what qualify as "poverty wages."^v

Low income children in Alberta live in deeper poverty than children in other provinces. Almost two-thirds (65%) of low income children in Alberta live in lone parent households in which their parent works either full-time or part-time. Aboriginal children are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as other Alberta children. Recent immigrant and visible minority families experience higher unemployment rates placing them at greater risk of living in low income.^{vi}

Without a long-term goal of establishing a 'living wage', Alberta's workers and taxpayers will continue to suffer as businesses pass on their costs to social and health programs (poverty and health problems are correlated^{vii}). Based off the Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) measurement of Stats-Can, the average Albertan with no dependents needs to be earning \$12.25/hr (or \$13.50/hr without work benefits) in order to make ends meet.^{viii}

Minimum wage increases are only part of the solution – a poverty reduction strategy is badly needed. The boom-and-bust scenario in AB makes it all the more necessary to have a cohesive support system for economic downturns. Currently, there are 6 provinces following such a strategy: QC, NFLD/LB, ON, MB, PEI, and NB. Other than QC (2002) and NFLD/LB (2006), the strategies are too new to do a quantitative assessment as they only began in 2009. NB became the most recent province to implement such an initiative noting “all citizens and sectors of society play a key role in the reduction of poverty.”^{ix}

I was disappointed that the committee’s consensus of support for the Alberta ‘average weekly earnings’ index being the primary mechanism in determining increases in the minimum wage was abandoned in the last meeting, after five months of collaborative effort. **I believe the addition of ‘market basket measures’ and inflationary considerations like the ‘consumer price index’ has the potential of making the formula for calculating the minimum wage unnecessarily complex, and in so doing, could further delay the increase in the minimum wage which has been frozen since April of 2009.**



Harry Chase
MLA, Calgary-Varsity

cc: Jody Rempel, Committee Clerk
Paul Hinman, MLA Calgary-Glenmore
Rachel Notley, MLA Edmonton-Strathcona

END NOTES

ⁱ Government of Alberta. Ministry of Employment and Immigration. "Minimum Wage Profile: Apr. 2009-Mar. 2010." April 2010. Available: <http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/LMI/LMI-WSI-minwageprofile.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Vibrant Communities Calgary. "Living Wage Fact Sheet." Aug., 2009 Available: http://www.vibrantcalgary.com/uploads/pdfs/VCC_Living_Wage_Fact_Sheet_August_2009.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Government of Alberta. Ministry of Employment and Immigration. "Additional Information for the Standing Committee on the Economy." Aug. 13th, 2010.

^{iv} Government of Alberta. Ministry of Employment and Immigration. "Minimum Wage Profile: Apr. 2009-Mar. 2010." April 2010. Available: <http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/LMI/LMI-WSI-minwageprofile.pdf>

^v Shannon Phillips. "Glass Ceiling: More women are in the workforce than ever before. But Alberta's wages and workplaces still heavily favour men," in *Alberta Views*, May 2010. Available: <http://albertaviews.ab.ca/webexclusives/phillipsmay10.html>

^{vi} Public Interest Alberta. "We Must Do Better: It's Time to Make Alberta Poverty-Free." Nov. 2009. Available: http://www.pialberta.org/content_pdf/wemustdobetterhighlights

^{vii} Dennis Raphael. CSJ Foundation for Research and Education. "Poverty, Income Inequality, and Health in Canada." June 2002. Available: <http://www.povertyandhumanrights.org/docs/incomeHealth.pdf>

^{viii} Vibrant Communities Calgary. "Living Wage Fact Sheet." Aug., 2009. Available: http://www.vibrantcalgary.com/uploads/pdfs/VCC_Living_Wage_Fact_Sheet_August_2009.pdf

^{ix} Government of New Brunswick. Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation. "Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan." Nov. 2009. Available: <http://www.gnb.ca/0017/promos/0001/pdf/Plan-e.pdf>

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Phillips, Shannon. "Glass Ceiling: More women are in the workforce than ever before. But Alberta's wages and workplaces still heavily favour men," in *Alberta Views*, May 2010. Available: <http://albertaviews.ab.ca/webexclusives/phillipsmay10.html>

Public Interest Alberta. "We Must Do Better: It's Time to Make Alberta Poverty-Free." Nov. 2009. Available: http://www.pialberta.org/content_pdf/wemustdobetterhighlights

Raphael, Dennis. CSJ Foundation for Research and Education. "Poverty, Income Inequality, and Health in Canada." June 2002. Available: <http://www.povertyandhumanrights.org/docs/incomeHealth.pdf>

Vibrant Community Calgary. "Living Wage Fact Sheet." Aug., 2009. Available: http://www.vibrantcalgary.com/uploads/pdfs/VCC_Living_Wage_Fact_Sheet_August_2009.pdf
