

OP-ED

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New Living Wage rates announced for Simcoe County and District of Muskoka

This week the Ontario Living Wage Network announced that a living wage in Simcoe County is now estimated at \$22.75 and in Muskoka it is \$20.60. With the cost of everything from groceries to rent and everything in between continuing to rise, we should not be surprised by this news.

“If you work full time, you should be able to make ends meet.”

This statement from the Ontario Living Wage Report is as simple as it gets.

Living Wage should not be a political lightning rod – it is simply stating that if we want folks to live above the poverty line, they need to earn enough to do so.

Unsurprisingly, the wage that an individual needs to “live on” in our community has once again gone up.

How is a “living wage” calculated?

A living wage is calculated through the collection of costs for basic goods and services. This calculation includes:

- Food
- Shelter
- Clothing
- Transportation
- Medical Expenses & Insurance
- Communications (cell phone, internet)
- Childcare
- A minimal allowance for other sundry expenses

Some of these calculations are uniform across the province (such as clothing, medical expenses & insurance), while others (such as food, shelter, transportation, childcare, and communication) vary by region. What is not included in a “living wage” is any type of savings.

Living wage is literally the amount needed to live day to day, week by week, month to month.

So, what does that mean?

It means that, essentially, if someone is earning less than a living wage they are falling behind. They are having to decide what bill they won't pay, which meals they will skip, what their children will have to go without. It also means that, even though someone could be gainfully employed, if they are earning less than a living wage, they could be one surprise expense away from being unhoused.

Period.

If we are serious about ending poverty, we need to think beyond food banks, clothing drives, and emergency shelters: these may be part of a necessary response to poverty, but they are not the solution.

The solution, quite simply, is paying individuals a wage that, at the very least, is enough to live on.

Source: Ontario Living Wage Report

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About United Way Simcoe Muskoka

Poverty touches most aspects of a person's life from food, shelter, and employment, to mental and physical well-being. United Way Simcoe Muskoka seeks to improve lives and build communities by leveraging collective resources and mobilizing collective action to achieve the greatest impact. Through services such as the Urgent Needs Fund and by funding critical services throughout our communities, United Way Simcoe Muskoka is ensuring that residents have the resources and assistance they need to unlock their full potential.

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