2026 Policy Resolution

2026-5: Make the Minimum Wage a Living Wage for all Manitobans

Mover: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Manitoba

Seconded by: Daniel Waycik

The Province of Manitoba and Manitoba municipalities should:

a) Make the minimum wage a living wage in Manitoba by adopting the living wage methodology developed by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, with a provision that where annual living wage calculations result in a lower rate, the existing living wage shall remain in effect and shall not be reduced.
b) Include living wages in Manitoba contracted and subcontracted services, including a legally binding clause requiring contracted service workers, including those working for subcontracted companies, to be paid the living wage for Manitoba.
c) Become living wage employers and ensure that government-funded agencies and non-profits can pay at least a living wage as a base salary.

Because: Work should not pay poverty wage. Approximately 171,027 workers, or about 1 in 4 (24.6%) of all employees, earned less than a living wage in Manitoba in 2023.

Because: A living wage is the amount needed for a household to meet its basic needs, considering government transfers and deductions. It sets a higher standard for quality of life than the minimum wage does by reflecting what family earners really need to earn, based on the actual cost of living.

Because: Government programs and services such as Rent Assist, child benefits, subsidized childcare and affordable public transit play an important role in calculating a living wage. The more generous these government policies and programs are, the less a family requires in wages to achieve a decent standard of living. For example, the provision of universal childcare lowers the effective living wage rate. It is incumbent, therefore, on employers to lobby the government to provide such services.

Because: The living wage in 2025 for a family of four with two parents working full time was $19.77 per hour in Winnipeg, $17.89 per hour in Thompson, and $16.22 per hour in Brandon.

Because: The living wage alleviates severe financial stress for families by helping to lift them out of poverty and providing a basic level of economic security. Research has shown that paying a living wage has concrete benefits for employers including reduced absenteeism; increased skill, morale and productivity levels; improved customer satisfaction; and enhanced employer reputations. Meta economic studies show that there is no overall job loss amongst the adult population when the minimum is increased, and a nominal impact for young workers.

Because: Women are more likely than men to be living in poverty, earning less pay for equal work, working for minimum wage, and making less than the minimum wage in April 2026 o $16.40/hour. A living wage would help reduce the wage gap and lift women out of poverty, especially Indigenous women, racialized women, and women living with disabilities, who are overrepresented in the province's poverty statistics.

Because: The Province of Manitoba and Manitoba municipalities have a significant connection with many workers in Manitoba. However, not all government employees, either those directly employed or those working for companies that sell goods and services to government, receive a living wage.

Because: 140 US cities and several municipalities in the United Kingdom have implemented a living wage. New Westminster, BC was the first Canadian city to implement a living wage policy. Manitoba, the Assiniboine Credit Union, has adopted a living wage policy that applies to its employees.

Because: Paying a living wage is voluntary. By adopting a living wage policy, governments can demonstrate leadership and set an example for other employers in the private sector to emulate on a voluntary basis. This is a different approach compared to the minimum wage, which creates a mandatory 'floor' that every business is legally required to meet. Efforts to raise the minimum wage to at least a living wage are an important part of the discussion about how to end working poverty.

Because: The Minimum Wage Act indexes the minimum wage to the consumer price index cost of living, but the base rate does not change, so it will never catch up to a living wage unless new living wage legislation is introduced.

How this Resolution will be Advanced: The Make Poverty History Manitoba coalition will continue to lead this campaign in partnership with CCEDNet, the Manitoba Federation of Labor provincially, and CUPE 500 for the City of Winnipeg. CCPA in partnership with CCEDNet will support and encourage the formation of a coalition of employers, organizations, institutions, and community partners that adopt and champion living wage policies in Manitoba, to advance awareness, implementation, and accountability for living wage practices across sectors