

LIVING WAGE HAMILTON



We want everybody to be working above the line

EMBARGOED: until Friday, June 26, 2015 at 9:00 am

New Living Wage leaders sign on in Hamilton

HAMILTON – Hamilton’s living wage working group will recognize 20 local employers committed to help build a prosperous local economy and become living wage workplaces – at a lunch hour event on Friday June 26th at Hamilton’s Waterfront Centre.

Among the growing roster of notable employers: Hamilton’s largest community health and social service agency, **Good Shepherd Centres** and the **Hamilton Chamber of Commerce**. The Hamilton Chamber becomes the first Chamber of Commerce in Ontario to sign a living wage declaration.

“We are thrilled with the leadership demonstrated by all of our local employers. Together, we’re helping to demonstrate that a living wage is good for employees, good for the community, and good for business – Hamilton is quickly becoming a leading living wage community in Ontario and, also, in Canada,” said Judy Travis, Chair of Hamilton’s Living Wage Working Group.

Journalists are invited to attend the living wage employer recognition lunch:

Friday, June 26: 12:00 noon – 1:30pm

Waterfront Centre, 555 Bay Street North, Hamilton

The employer recognition lunch also kicks off the official start of the Ontario Living Wage Network, which is funded by the Atkinson Foundation. The network draws on the leadership of Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction director, Tom Cooper, who will split his duties with the Roundtable as the new coordinator of the Ontario Living Wage Network.

Ontario Living Wage Network participants are meeting in Hamilton on the 26th, planning the next steps for what is emerging as a widespread movement of living wage initiatives unfolding across the province.

“The Hammer has been at the forefront of Canada’s living wage initiatives, it’s fitting that Tom Cooper will help spearhead the Ontario Living Wage Network” says Trish Hennessy, director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, a key partner in creating the network.

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For more information, please contact: Judy Travis at (905) 521-5777 or Tom Cooper at 905-512-7863.

Background:

Living wage initiatives are based on the premise that work should lift employees out of poverty. Living wage is the amount of money a worker needs to earn at a job to cover the cost of basic necessities and to adequately participate in community life. It sets a different standard than minimum wage: an employee working 35 hours a week at minimum wage would fall below the poverty line. Hamilton's Living Wage is \$14.95/hour.

The Ontario Living Wage Network

Living Wage initiatives are active in close to 20 communities across Ontario supported by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Ontario Office) and local community organizations. Trish Hennessy, Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Ontario) will speak at the Hamilton event and announce the establishment of an **Ontario Living Wage Network** to support and help coordinate local living wage efforts across the province. The network will be supported for 18 months through funding from the Atkinson Foundation. "Living wages are a critical component of individual and family well-being. Higher wages mean a better standard of living for workers and their families. It's a message that's gaining traction across Ontario," said Hennessy.

Profile of Hamilton's latest Living Wage Leaders

Good Shepherd Centres

Hamilton's largest community and health and social services agency, Good Shepherd Centres provide emergency and longer term resources and supports to individuals and families impacted by social isolation, homelessness, abuse, mental illness, substance use and poverty. Nearly 90,000 meals were served at Good Shepherd's daily hot meal program and 42,500 people visited emergency food banks.

"Good Shepherd is committed to the task of building a truly inclusive community where every individual can live, thrive and contribute to their fullest potential. We recognize that a Living Wage is an important contributor to individual and family health and well-being and to the resilience and prosperity of our community as a whole." – Brother Richard MacPhee, Executive Director Good Shepherd Centres

"Being a Living Wage employer signals Good Shepherd's commitment to our employees and to the health of our community. Good Shepherd strives to foster an equitable and inclusive employment environment that fosters excellence in our service to vulnerable people in the community of Hamilton. We deeply value the skills, energy and commitment that our employees contribute to our mission." Sam Cino, Assistant Executive Director of Corporate Services & Human Resources

Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is the definitive voice of Hamilton business and becomes Canada's first Chamber of Commerce to officially sign on as a Living Wage employer for its own employees. The Chamber champions the interests of ethical, free enterprise by effectively engaging business, community and government in the promotion of long-term prosperity for Hamilton. Individual members of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce are not bound by the Chamber's Living Wage commitment.

"As an organization, our greatest asset is our human capital. To attract and retain the best and brightest talent, to me it's sensible to peg a living wage as your entry-level baseline." Keanin Loomis, President – Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

Living Wage Hamilton is an initiative of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, McMaster Community Poverty Initiative, Workforce Planning Hamilton and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. Visit www.livingwagehamilton.ca.