The Issue

A job is the best way out of poverty, but only if the wages cover the basic cost of living.

The Manitoba minimum wage is $11.35 per hour. However, this is not based on any estimate of the cost of living. A recent Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives study found a worker earning minimum wage would need to work 63 hours per week to afford a one bedroom apartment. A two-parent family with both parents working full time on minimum wage still leaves them with a household income that falls $1,500 below the poverty line. And for single parents, working full time at minimum wage earns them an income that falls $8,000 below the poverty line.

According to Statistics Canada 38,600 Manitobans work for minimum wage, 55 per cent are over age 20. Another 73,700 Manitobans earn 10 per cent above the minimum wage. This means that over 100,000 Manitoba workers are living on or at poverty wages.

Across North America, workers are fighting for the right to a fair wage of at least $15 per hour. Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia have all substantially increased their minimum wages in recent years to approach this standard.

The Province's Role

The province determines the minimum wage. The longstanding practice of small increases has not really reduced poverty in Manitoba. Provincial governments have made regular increases to the minimum wage, but the pace of these increases is not enough to lift low-income working families out of poverty. For example, Winnipeg Harvest reports 13% of people accessing their services identify as having a job.

Increasing the minimum wage to the Low Income Cut Off Before Tax (LICO-BT) measure for a single parent family ($16.5ì) sets the minimum wage based on the actual cost of living.

Questions to Ask

- Do you believe worker's pay should cover basic cost of living?

- Do you support increasing the minimum wage to the Low Income Tax Cut Off Before Tax measure ($1Î .5ì)?

- Do you think that someone working full-time should have to use a food bank to get by? If not, what will your party do to fix it?

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Social Planning Council
of Winnipeg

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