

Assessment and Analysis for Living Wage Policy Implementation in Camrose, Alberta

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to research, summarize, and report on emerging trends related to living wage movements and policies. To do this, the report examined the relevant scholarly literature, conducted a jurisdictional scan to identify how other communities were addressing living wage issues, and evaluated survey responses from stakeholders in Camrose Alberta, which is the community of focus in this report.

This report is grounded as a needs assessment and is intended to be used by the Camrose Social Development Committee who is the client for this project. The role of this Committee is to serve as an advisory board to the elected council. The client also advises council regarding social issues and prospective solutions to social challenges in the community, with the goal to inform policy decisions.

One of the primary objectives of this report, and to also provide context for the analysis, was to research a living wage calculation for the city given the indicators present in 2017. It is anticipated that this specific research will aid the Committee and the City of Camrose in meeting its strategic social goals. This report seeks to further assist the Committee's ability to support its mandate to inform strategic long-term planning under several identified pillars from Council. Another important objective of the research was to identify key variables for the client related to successful living wage movements and related policy changes.

Based on these objectives, a jurisdictional scan was conducted and the results were compared to existing conditions in Camrose with the purpose of answering the following primary research question: *does a need exist for the client to advocate for living wage policy in Camrose?* In asking this question, the report hopes to shed light on wage-related poverty in Camrose, which is reported by some government agencies to be well above provincial averages. Secondly, this report explores the use of living wages as solutions to this issue with the intention of providing the client with timely information to influence policy decisions.

Methodology and Methods

The methodology for this project is a needs assessment. The project focused on developing evidence on the need for a living wage policy in Camrose and if so, to determine whether or not the Camrose Social Development Committee should try to influence the appropriate and relevant policy actors. Specifically, the design was to create a report that explores the current state of income-related poverty in the community, contrast these findings with other jurisdictions through a jurisdictional scan, and then review publicly available documents to help better understand living wages as a poverty reduction tool.

To collect data for this project, three methods were used. Before community-specific data collection took place, a literature review was undertaken. This review evaluated existing scholarly material and professional resources that focused specifically on the origins of wage movements in other jurisdictions. The literature review also explored the research that exists to better understand the impact that living wages have on the community as whole.

The second method used was an online survey distributed to 177 community stakeholders identified as having defined interests in the wage policy process, outcomes, or related community function. The third method involved the use of a jurisdictional scan to identify observable practices in other jurisdictions who have implemented living wage policy and the data collection method was conducted through a document review.

Key Findings

Literature Review

The literature was drawn from a variety of sources including academic journals, monographs, and non-profit and government publications. These sources reflect a broad scope of living wage interests that focus on several topics including needs assessments, gap analyses, and community and state-level initiatives within Canada and internationally.

There is consensus within the research that wage movements began as the result of low wages, high costs of living in municipalities, and perceived inaction from governing bodies. The literature review also revealed a series of challenges for living wage movements including increased business costs resulting in closures or lower levels of staffing or salaries, loss of competitiveness in regional markets, and a lack of evidence to support the multiple claims of living wage proponents.

Evidence-based decision-making literature was also considered as the client identified evidence based processes as a theme central to the Committee's advisory capacity and that it was important for the recommendations to result from a critical analysis derived from the academic research.

Overall, the literature review findings revealed that a living wage policy's ability to reduce poverty are inconclusive or difficult to quantify, with several studies in support of living wages acknowledging additional research is needed to determine both tangible and intangible outcomes.

Stakeholder Survey

A stakeholder survey was conducted for this project and provided an opportunity to explore local perspectives relative to living wages, minimum wages, and perceptions of benefits from policy changes within this scope. Community stakeholders were identified based on their association to community service organizations including elected officials, businesses, and volunteer groups in the community deemed to be impacted by living wage policies. The insight gained was essential to the recommendations made to the client and the responses from the stakeholders reflect the diversity of perspectives and views within the city.

This online survey was open to respondents for forty days and participation levels were roughly 30% (n = 177). Respondents were mainly members of leadership teams from a diverse number of organizations and sectors in Camrose and the surrounding area. Results indicated respondents are well educated on how wages are determined in their respective organizations.

From the survey, many important findings were made that influenced the recommendations to the client and included the respondents lack of satisfaction with housing, transportation, and

available jobs in the community. The open-ended responses were also beneficial in that they allowed for expansion into topics such as perceived benefits of increased wages and limitations, the impact of living wages on business, as well as insights from target populations of low wage earners.

This research underscores the importance of stakeholder input as several themes emerged including support for a living wage policy in Camrose by the majority of respondents, and the need for an education strategy directed toward supporting wage increases as a part of poverty reduction planning through a holistic municipal strategic plan.

Jurisdictional Scan

A document analysis was conducted across multiple jurisdictions within Alberta, the rest of the Canadian provinces, and internationally with the intention of identifying smart practices for the client. A case study was also completed that aided in the establishment of conditions necessary for the implementation of a living wage policy, and what was the genesis of a living wage movement in New Westminster, British Columbia.

National examples such as those in Finland and the United Kingdom illustrate that much work still needs to be done when developing national-level policy, and that solutions to poverty related and wage policies are most likely to occur on local/provincial/state levels, as federal policies do not account for geographical differences or they become subject to political forces.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are the result of findings from the literature review, survey, and jurisdictional scan of publicly available documents and are suggested to follow the following order of sequence. This data was compared to existing data from Camrose and the Province of Alberta, given recent changes to minimum wages in Alberta, to develop recommendations that are feasible and contextual given the process order.

Recommendation 1 - Conduct an independent wage analysis for the City of Camrose.

It is proposed that the City of Camrose enlist the services of a third-party consultant to determine the true living wage for the city. The numerical data available for the accurate and timely calculation of living wage proved difficult to determine and as such, a wage range of \$13.53 to \$16.97 per hour was provided as varying income subsidies, tax considerations, and employee benefit calculations were unavailable to the researcher. Clarifying an exact number or smaller range would require a report of similar length to this project and would require access to data that was not available to this researcher.

Recommendation 2 - Support the increase of the provincial minimum wage

The Government of Alberta has committed to raising the provincial minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour by October 1st, 2018, and given this wage amount falls within the living wage range projected by this project, it is realistic for the client to publicly support this increase.

Recommendation 3 - Create an education strategy supporting increased wages.

It was discovered in the survey that misinformation exists in the community as to potential benefits of wage increases, therefore an education strategy is suggested to promote benefits to community members and stakeholders, as well as to provincial advocacy bodies such as the Alberta Association of Urban Municipalities (AUMA).

Recommendation 4 - Initiate a holistic city-wide strategy that addresses living wage policy and other poverty reduction policies to collaboratively achieve measurable outcomes.

A holistic and strategic approach became apparent in the needs assessment as Camrose presently lacks certain distinguishing socio-economic characteristics observed in communities that engaged a movement, and enacted living wage policies thereafter. Therefore, it is suggested to maintain living wage considerations favored by the community, living wages become part of a larger healthy-city campaign that includes variables related to poverty reduction, in addition to the pillars identified in the City of Camrose Strategic Plan.

Contents

Executive Summary	iii
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Defining the Problem	1
1.2 Project Objectives and Research Question(s).....	3
1.3 Client and Deliverables	5
1.4 Organization of Report.....	6
2.0 Literature Review	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Theme 1: Different Perspectives of Living Wage Policies.....	7
2.3 Theme 2: Rationale for Conducting a Needs Assessment, GAP analysis, and Current State Analysis	10
2.4 Theme 3: Evidence-Based Change in the Living Wage Context.....	12
2.5 Summary	15
3.0 Methodology and Methods	16
3.1 Literature Review	16
3.2 Methodology	17
3.3 Methods	17
3.4 Data Analysis	19
4.0 Findings: Needs Assessment	21
4.1 Current State Analysis.....	21
4.2 Summary	27
5.0 Findings: Community Stakeholder Survey	28
5.1 Overview.....	28
5.2 Findings	28
5.3 Summary	34
6.0 Findings: Jurisdictional Scan	36
6.1 Provincial Perspectives	36
6.2 International Perspectives.....	40
6.3 Case Study Research	42
6.4 Summary	44
7.0 Discussion and Analysis	45
7.1 Discussion: Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis.....	45
7.2 Discussion: Genesis of a Movement	47

7.3 Discussion: Advocacy and Collaboration	50
8.0 Recommendations	52
9.0 Conclusion	57
10.0 References	58
11.0 Appendices	64

Acronyms and Abbreviations:

AUMA	Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
ACORN	Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now
CAPRA	Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance
CBPR	Community Based Participatory Research
CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
EBM	Evidence Based Management
GBI	Guaranteed Basic Income
GoA	Government of Alberta
GoC	Government of Canada
LICO-AT	Low Income Cut Off-After Tax
LIM-AT	Low Income Measure – After Tax
SDC	Camrose Social Development Committee
UBI	Universal Basic Income

1.0 Introduction

This section provides an overview to living wage issues, the client, and the project objectives that are in support of the research outcomes. There are living wage movements observed around the globe attempting to change discussions regarding functional earnings, and to better understand such a change this project will focus specifically on the City of Camrose, located in Alberta, Canada.

1.1 Defining the Problem

In a broad sense, living wages differ in many ways from minimum wages. Defined as more comprehensive in nature than prescribed minimum wages; living wages take into consideration social benefits, geographical costs of living, as well as the basic expenses needed to support a family, and are suggested to be more comprehensive than legislated, predetermined minimum wages (Harvard University, n.d., p.1). Living wage calculations seek to recognize the cost to live at a socially accepted standard is significantly higher than what minimum wages provide, and encourages the addition of items such as transportation and childcare, rather than wage minimums that are argued to focus on an ability to afford food and shelter. As a result, living wage policy is a way to open dialogue regarding income security, poverty reduction, and the significance of prescribed wage minimums (Luce, 2017).

Luce supports a comprehensive wage definition noting that working should “lift you out of poverty, not keep you in it” (2017). Considering wage minimums are legislated values influenced by reported factors such as inflation and/or poverty levels, questions remain regarding the incentives to consider the many factors calculated in a living wage. For the past twenty years, increased attention has been given to communities who are addressing the effects of the gap between the minimum wage and what is described as a living wage in the United States, Britain and Canada (Luce, 2017).

Canadian cities have historically placed poverty reduction firmly on their municipal agendas, and have now recognized wages directly impact all who live in a community to a certain degree, particularly when framing wages through a human resource lens (City of Edmonton, 2016, p.1; Bolman & Deal, 2013). Moreover, many communities locally and nationally, have begun to advocate for wage adjustments to reflect the economic and social realities faced by those who receive wages at, or below, the prescribed minimum in each province (Living Wage Canada, 2017).

Despite having fewer minimum wage workers in Alberta when compared nationally, the province recently increased minimum wages from \$12.20 to \$13.60 per hour on October 1st, 2017 to create the provinces first living wage policy (Alberta Labour, 2017). This policy move is surprising to some as Alberta has below average numbers of minimum wage recipients, as the

Government of Alberta (2015) reported that in 2015, a mere 2.2% of workers in Alberta reported earning a minimum wage, compared to 7.7% nationally (Hintz, 2015).

Proponents of living wages argue despite low numbers of minimum wage earners, significant wage gaps remain between minimum wage earners when compared to provincial averages, where hourly wages across sectors is nearly thirty dollars per hour (Hintz, 2015; Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2015). Recognizing this gap, the Government of Alberta recently amended the Employment Standards Regulation to increase the provincial minimum wage to approximately fifteen dollars per hour by October 1st, 2018 (Alberta Labour, 2017).

Following recent minimum wage changes, a need exists to explore the potential impact of such wage policy to the City of Camrose. The City of Camrose (n.d.) declares itself one of Alberta's best cities in which to live, and made civic commitments to follow a triple bottom line of "people, planet, and profits" after a review of available social and economic strategic planning documents (Slaper & Hall, 2011, pp. 1-2; City of Camrose, 2014). It is proposed that living wage policy is interconnected with all three components of a triple bottom line, and current research reveals that no such wage policy or framework currently exists in the City of Camrose.

Living wage policy is described as the development of policy that improves the quality of life for low-wage earners (Ogle, 2016). Living Wages may appear to be a relatively new approach when evaluating strategies surrounding income security, poverty reduction, and the significance of wage floors; however, research shows living wages have been a topic of discussion for nearly a century (Anker & Anker, 2011). As Lammam (2014, p. iii) also notes many "Canadian governments have tried to legislate higher earnings for low-wage workers" for decades to ensure those entering the workforce are paid a minimum income. Luce (2017) finds agreement exists amongst wage experts that the poverty threshold is obsolete and insufficient for measuring the true cost of living, particularly because the minimum wage formula does not account for regional or geographic variance.

Reviewing living wage initiatives reveals these initiatives have origins at municipal levels as they have been initiated and bolstered by community-level support in response to socio-economic conditions (ACORN, 2010., Columbia Institute, 2011). Municipalities manage many of the overt and covert costs related to poverty, and as the Columbia Institute (2011, p.3) reports: "Providing livable incomes and benefits not only leads to better lives for employees and their families, but also reduces the strain on emergency medical care, policing, food banks, housing programs, drug and alcohol programs and other public services." Briggs and Lee (2012, p.1) also discovered that failing to address the root causes of poverty costs Albertans "\$7.1 billion to \$9.5 billion per year in extra costs for health care, child welfare and corrections".

As a tool of poverty reduction, living wage policies offer formulations to measure and respond to incomes required to cover basic costs in a community for a family to live at a socially acceptable standard (ACORN, 2010). Luce (2017) describes variations of these formulas, such as the "self-sufficiency standard developed by the Wider Opportunities for Women, the Basic Family Budget

Calculator created by the Economic Policy Institute, and the Living Wage Calculator developed by Dr. Amy Glasmeier and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology” (MIT).

In 2015, it was reported that the Camrose region experiences higher than average poverty rates when compared to provincial indicators and is actively seeking sustainable solutions to this problem (Government of Alberta, 2016; Holliston, M., personal communication, 2016). Arguably a living wage framework could assist with this solution; however, a needs assessment does not currently exist to assist organisations such as the Social Development Committee seeking to initiate policy or influence decision-makers (Holliston, M., personal communication, 2016).

Located in east-central Alberta, the City of Camrose is Alberta’s 18th largest municipality by population, and is described as a regional economic centre (Statistics Canada, 2016; City of Camrose, 2016). In 2012, the City created an arm’s length Social Development Committee to address pressing social issues, and advise city council on such issues as poverty reduction, housing and childcare (Holliston, M, personal communication).

The Camrose Social Development Committee, the client for this project, is seeking creative, evidence-based, and effective approaches to assist in addressing poverty reduction strategies and wage gaps presently experienced by as much as ten percent of Camrose’s population (Statistics Canada, 2016). Research undertaken for this report is intended to assist the Committee and the city at large to create a strategy that addresses complex issues related to living wage and poverty reduction policies.

Proponents argue living wages are an innovative, and ground-breaking approach to addressing such complex problems; offering solutions to income-security and poverty-reduction challenges. Critics argue that living wages stunt economic growth, and suggest living wage laws reduce job numbers, limit employment opportunities, and make communities less attractive to businesses.

The purpose of this project is to explore wage gaps that exist in the City of Camrose, summarize and report on emerging wage trends from other jurisdictions within Alberta, Canada, and abroad by examining literature and drawing on the experiences of community stakeholders. The research will identify key indicators for the implementation of living wage policy, examine arguments supporting and discouraging living wage policies, and provide recommendations to the client respecting smart practices should they desire to advocate for a policy in their respective community.

1.2 Project Objectives and Research Question(s)

The project seeks to identify key variables for the client respecting living wage movements, and policy change. It is done with the understanding that the Province of Alberta is currently taking steps to improve wages by increasing provincial minimums to the highest levels in the country. The research intends to evaluate this process by reviewing literature and conducting a survey

with key stakeholders in the community. The process chosen is a needs assessment and gap analysis. The rationale behind this choice is that a needs assessment is most commonly conducted to “guarantee that there is a need for a type of program or service and to determine what type of content should be included in the program...” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). The University of Minnesota (2016), further suggests a needs assessment is a “process of investigating a population or community to assess the state of current resources such as knowledge, abilities, interests, and approaches pertinent to the focus of the needs assessment such as a concern, aspiration, or intention.”

Needs assessments are said to provide a “focused examination of the way things currently are, and the way things can or should be to fill a gap in services” (cyfar.org, 2016). Needs assessments provide the opportunity to engage a community and determine what the community recognizes to be the issues it faces, rather than imposing change without stakeholder consultation. The needs assessment process included the following steps (USDHHS, 2013):

- Collecting information about the target community
- Evaluating what needs are being met and what resources exist
- Determining what, if any, needs are not being addressed

This research project proposes to conduct a needs assessment regarding living wages in Camrose to increase understanding within the community respecting living wages, and to seek input from community to learn how wage policies impact the community. Additionally, community engagement is sought to open dialogue specific to living wages, and ensure the client is well informed about the issue of living wages in Camrose and abroad to support evidence-based decision-making processes.

This project also seeks to identify whether living wage policy should be a local initiative when studying poverty reduction and wage floors by evaluating local initiatives and state-level initiatives, as jurisdictional scans reveal that multiple approaches are in use globally.

The primary research question being addressed by this project is whether the need exists for the client to advocate for living wage policy. The evaluation of literature, the completion of a document analysis based jurisdictional scan, and stakeholder responses will guide recommendations to client in this process.

The secondary questions of the project are:

- What is a calculated living wage for the City of Camrose in 2017?
- What key identifiers exist to assist the Social Development Committee to advocate for such a policy, who are the identifiable stakeholders, and what policies exist in other jurisdictions.

- Is there a form of living wage policy would best serve the community? For example, would a policy like those of New Westminster, British Columbia, be applicable where only City employees and direct municipal contractors are impacted (Lammam, 2014).
- What are identifiable practices when implementing living wage policies?

The goals of the project include identifying what gaps exist in wages in Camrose, identifying what would a wage framework could resemble, asking whether community members desire such a change and why.

1.3 Client and Deliverables

The researcher has communicated with Dr. Cody McCarroll, Board Chair of the City of Camrose Social Development Committee, and Margaret Holliston, Vice Chair, to develop this project concentration. Formed as part of the City of Camrose social development strategy, the Social Development Committee (SDC) is responsible for informing and assisting Camrose City Council with respect to social issues through research and advocacy within the City (M. Holliston, personal communication, 2016).

Members are volunteers, and there are no paid staff devoted to the committee's work. The committee holds meetings ten (10) times per year, and is mandated to advise City Council on community issues related to social development including child care, affordable housing, poverty reduction, and citizen engagement while operating within its modest budget (M. Holliston, personal communication, 2016).

Focusing on the foundational principle of community based research where knowledge is co-created; the project is co-developed with the Committee, and the client was provided research updates and data sharing through informal reports at regular meetings (Eikland, 2007). Feedback was sought from the committee at these meetings, and dialogue respecting the project is ongoing whereby “inclusive practices of community-based participatory research (CBPR) and organization development interventions [develop], allowing needs assessments to become the catalysts whereby transformative change occurs within communities” (Ainsworth et al., 2013, p.2)

In support of these objectives, this report provides three deliverables to the client:

- Literature review that provides a summary and analysis of living wage literature focusing on several topics including needs assessments, gap analysis as well as community and state-level initiatives from academic and professional sources.
- Survey results from stakeholders that sought information regarding interest in a living wage policy, perspectives toward wage minimums, and stakeholder views on poverty reduction strategies.

- Recommendations to the client related to living wage movement strategies, lessons learned and smart practices from other jurisdictions, and the most effective approach to pursue based on the research findings.

1.4 Organization of Report

This report is structured so that the first section provides context and background for the research, and the following sections contain the literature review, stakeholder perspectives, and jurisdictional data leading to the findings and recommendations sections to finalize this report.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section of the project report explores findings related to empirical research that exists related to living wage movements and policy. Little empirical evidence exists in Canada to evaluate the frameworks and processes for establishing living wage policies, bylaws, or law. Academic and grey research sources were reviewed from Canadian sources with significant information drawn from empirical and verifiable sources in the United States, and abroad as numerous initiatives exist exploring the advantages and disadvantages of wage reform.

There exists substantial research into living wage movements in the United States since the first living wage ordinance was passed in Baltimore, Maryland in 1994 (Luce, 2017). There is a noteworthy gap however into the study of the efficacy of such legislation specific to poverty reduction. Howard (2000) argues every positive measure, such as living wage increases, are strongly connected to poverty reduction; however, it is less clear that wage policies are more than symbolic in nature, and quantifying outcomes through existing literature less defined (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Luce, 2017).

The literature review begins with an exploration and review of data supporting living wages and research that opposes such policy or change. The review then seeks to establish benefits of conducting a needs assessment and gap analysis, then progresses to explore evidence-based decision making and smart practices as these tools were discovered to be intertwined with living wage debates. Research conducted into the rationale behind evidence based decision making and the corresponding practices is meant to inform, and provide some caution to the client respecting trends in movements comparable to living wages and poverty reduction, as well as potential opportunities that exist within smart practice research.

It should be noted that given differing tax-structures, funding levels, and benefit schemes in the nations reviewed, data was recorded to observe disparity or margins rather than fixed income amounts. In other words, the client should remain mindful of wages in differing jurisdictions are the result of multiple influences and are not directly comparable to Alberta given the economic and political influences in the respective jurisdictions of study.

2.2 Theme 1: Different Perspectives of Living Wage Policies

After reviewing living wage policy research in Canada, it is fair to suggest polarized positions exist respecting any real or perceived benefits of living wages.

Benefits of living wages have been suggested economically; reducing turnover and absentee rates of employees, and to employee well-being by improving the health of affected workers, as well as increasing spending power of those in low wage segments, improved civic participation, and a greater understanding of local cost of living (Luce, 2017; Bhatia & Katz, 2001; Brenner, 2001). The same authors suggesting these purported benefits also urge caution when applying the respective data to large scale applications, as these have yet to be properly studied.

Hudson (2000) finds that in the United States benefits exist in municipalities with living wage ordinances; however, improvements in the U.S. context are described as marginal, and estimates place wage improvements in the statistical range of 7-13% above state imposed minimums, and are also believed to impact corporate fiscal bottom-lines by as much as 1%.

Living wages, for proponents, are suggested to be connected to greater social issues related to the act of working. Cornish (2012) argues supporting living wages is support for basic human rights, as living wages positively influence culture, gender, and race inequality. Cornish (2012, p.20) also describes poverty as not “solely an economic issue, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses a lack of both income and the basic capabilities to live in dignity” and concludes that poverty must be viewed as a central, and urgent human rights concern worthy of concentrated efforts across sectors.

Those in favour of living wages further suggest that “today's minimum wage buys 30 percent less than the minimum wage of 30 years ago” given inflationary concerns, and increasing wage gaps between the richest and poorest segments of society are damaging to local economies (Hudson, 2000, p. 263; Luce, 2017; Lammam, 2014). The concept of wage gaps became a common theme in much of the literature reviewed. Wage minimums fail to address the economic, social, and at times political implications of present day society, and many of the scholars suggest living wages lead to the defined benefits previously discussed with minimal or no observable impact on businesses or job numbers (Luce, 2017; Bhatia & Katz, 2001; Brenner, 2001, Hudson, 2000).

In summary, Luce’s (2017) review of twenty years of living wage ordinances in the United States found:

- There is palpable support for living wages in the U.S. as nearly 150 municipalities have passed formal ordinances since Baltimore in 1994.
- Living wage activists must be wary of compromises that cut benefits and/or rights alongside wage increases. An example would be a reduction in employer-sponsored health benefits in place of higher wages.
- Despite a credible living wage formula component in Canadian and UK living wage campaigns, it might not be necessary for success everywhere, as the benefits of living wages are more than economic.

There is an acknowledgement by the author that while great strides toward what she describes as a reduction in the wage gap; living wage policy movements require strong grassroots support to be successful. Luce (2017) is transparent in her commentary that she seeks to disprove the theory that living wage ordinances lever low-wage workers out of the labor market, that businesses face increased taxes and costs, and that businesses depart jurisdictions with such wage policy.

Citing numerous human benefits, several other studies supporting living wages also focused on tangible economic benefits including support for businesses in the community as disposable income levels rise, and the less-tangible benefits including improved community relationships and in some cases unionization of staff (Bhatia & Katz, 2001; Brenner, 2001, Hudson, 2000).

Luce (2017) completes arguments in support of living wages by noting that policies are unlikely to begin without community initiatives, or pressure from grassroots organisations in the form of a living wage movement; however, once underway there is much political advantage to such movements. This raises an intriguing issue for the client in this project. Questions will need to be asked, and roles evaluated should the committee choose to begin a movement as this committee is accountable to the City of Camrose.

On the opposing side, several researchers have viewed living wage movements as less beneficial to individuals, communities and business alike. Living wages are said to have little financial benefit to employees as Toikka, Yelowitz, & Neveu (2005, p. 62) argue “...additional earnings from living wages largely disappear through benefit reduction and increased taxation, [and]...living wages appear ineffective at raising disposable incomes”.

The Fraser Institutes Charles Lammam (2014) suggests wage policies such as living wages also place unjustifiable hardship on local economies, resulting in either job losses, or reductions in work-hours as employers can only afford to pay higher wages to a smaller number of employees. Lammam (2014) also argues living wages make regions with such wage policies less desirable to corporate interests than areas without living wage ordinances, and hurts economic development as overheads are higher.

Logically, raising expenses to employers through wage upsurges, translates into increased costs to the consumer should the employer seek to maintain an equivalent profit margin. Toikka et al. (2005, p. 63) conclude that laws designed to aid the working poor undoubtedly raise business costs, and introduce an unsustainable element into the employer-employee relationship.

Critical research was similar in nature to arguments promoting living wage policies in that this research is also speculative and relies on market assumptions, and questions the transferability across contexts and localities. By their own admission Toikka et al. (2005, pp. 71-72) state; “the consequence[s] minimum wage laws and living wage laws, to raise family after-tax income is less well understood, [and]...there are large differences in earnings across metropolitan areas (although the sample sizes for some regions are relatively small, so the medians may be imprecisely estimated)”. The authors go on to suggest the best way to aid low wage workers is through tax incentives, and government aid programs that do not affect the larger tax base rather than create wage policies. Luce (2017) specifically argues against increases in tax-based incentives or job grants as her research shows small amounts of these funds remain in the community, and further suggests funding of this nature is more business-friendly than beneficial to employees in this segment.

Advocates opposing wage reform also note that increased wages are detrimental to small business, and lead to an increase in social issues as fewer jobs will be available. Wells (2016, p.236) argues challenges to living wages include:

- No plan(s) to raise wages for all workers.
- Inadequately addresses salary distribution between top salaries and bottom wages.
- Living wages are most often calculated based on a fulltime job, and do not consider “other ‘non-standard’ jobs”, which are said to be growing faster than full-time jobs in Canada.
- Living Wage advocates focus on raising the “working poor” out of poverty, and do not address poverty of the unemployed. In so doing, there is a danger that the unemployed poor, who are already branded as ‘non-deserving’ may be further excluded.

Supporting the above, Lammam (2014) argues that increased wages create an unbearable situation for small business owners, and any increase in wages will lead to higher prices, and fewer jobs, as organizations will not have the ability to employ as many staff. Lammam (2014) further suggests individuals who receive higher wages are less entitled to such wages as higher wages are often a reward for dedicated service, training or skill level.

This raises an interesting issue in the Alberta context, where minimum wage earners make up less than three percent of the work force (Alberta Labour, 2017). Challenges to living wage laws are viewed as twofold. First, there is little empirical evidence presented to contradict wage advocates that ordinances such as these do harm to local economies, despite suggestions that ordinances cause business to reconsider future development in that geographical area. Second, this argument is made without what could be described as the necessary supporting data. Toikka et al. (2005, p.63) describe living wage consequences as “less well defined”, and Lammam (2014) seeks to rely on this very same data to suggest that the negatives of living wages far outweigh the positives. Both authors suggest positive effects of living wages are modest for low wage earners, and as such targeted tax credits will have the greatest impact.

Noting the lack of empirical data in a Canadian context presents obvious challenges for the project with respect to providing the client with the best possible recommendation. As will be discussed in the Section 5, survey results demonstrate similar opinions and positions are held in the community respecting the impacts of living wages, and these findings are discussed with the relevant literature presented in this section.

2.3 Theme 2: Rationale for Conducting a Needs Assessment, GAP Analysis, and Current State Analysis

Exploring change related to policy and policy outcomes, it was beneficial to the client to evaluate the processes chosen to establish the real or perceived needs in the community. As Roberts (2003, p. 241) describes, a needs assessment is often the recommended administrative process

for systematically gathering information on variables that influence the need and demand for different types of practices or responses to gaps in organisation, community or alternate form of collective process. It was also noted that literature reviewed provided clear direction that a proper needs assessment relies on multiple research methods and data sources including surveys, interviews, and careful analysis of existing data. Additionally, needs assessments are described as complex tools, and are not advised to be used without careful consideration to create reliable information (Roberts, 2003).

In this project, a needs assessment was undertaken to address the potential for civic policy creation. The process followed was two-stage. The first being to create a reasonable body of academic literature that explores the foundations of policy changes related to living wages, and the second to gather direct evidence from the community at large through an online survey. The latter will be discussed in greater detail in section 5. This approach was taken to gather sufficient evidence as to the existing literature to provide the client with sufficient data to base a decision to move forward with policy of their own. Roberts (2003, p. 242) is emphatic that “a poorly administered needs assessment wastes organizational resources...” and this report echoes this sentiment.

After reviewing the available literature several key variables were identified respecting living wage policies including social class, status interests in society, and policy frameworks (Vago, 1999). These variables shaped not only the questions created for the project survey, they also the identified needs Roberts (2003, p. 241) offers as essential when reviewing family-related benefits including the need for data respecting employment, wage perceptions, and the “organizational characteristics” that influence demand. The identification of these variables, contrasted against current data, and then compared to the data obtained in the survey then led to the completion of a gap analysis. The results of this comparison are found in section 6.

The benefits of conducting a gap analysis are reported to be many. Golden, Hager, Gould, Mathioudakis, Pronovost (2016, p.18) define a gap analysis as a comparison of resources, infrastructure, or processes demonstrated against current evidence, research, or best practices to allow for the identification of disparities or inconsistencies. Given the present lack of validated research in Canada, nor Alberta respecting living wage policies, a gap analysis focused on the above noted variables (employment, poverty rates, cost of living) and compared these against communities that have established living wage figures based on the criteria relied upon by MIT and Policy Alternatives. The purpose of this was to establish inconsistencies, and compare the data to present day minimum wages of \$13.60 per hour (Alberta Labour, 2017).

Of note was the consistent findings of outcome uncertainty in comparable communities (specifically Brandon, MB) where costs of living were analogous to those researched in Camrose. This analysis was meant to assess risk and potential response options for the client as proper analysis can provide transparent objectivity required when evaluating a contentious issue such as wages (Toman, 2014).

Toman's (2014, p. 471) view respecting "changes of magnitude" are timely, as he applies the gap analysis process to another relevant topic; climate change, and notes the reluctance or need from opponents to have elements of the data achieve such high levels of clarity they leave no possible alternative. This parallels an essential finding of this review that delaying until all available information flows inward could potentially be detrimental to positive outcomes, and that elements of faith and "failing forward" could be needed given the shortage of like communities in the province, and the identified goals of the client (Hoffman, 2012, p. 64).

As Headley & Choi (1992, p.5) observe a gap analysis presents great "...practical appeal, operational simplicity, and the potential for both immediate and long-term strategic impact." It is this understanding of the gap that becomes essential for the client in this project, aiding the client to better respond to challenges and opportunities thus avoiding what is described as a counterproductive "what went wrong approach" (Headley & Choi, 1992, p.5).

One cautionary note regarding gap analysis data. Discovered during living wage research was an emphasis on losses by one side or another (i.e. corporate or individual) and increased disparity rather than collective gains polarizing the arguments reviewed. This project attempted to avoid such a position and seeks to highlight opportunities for change, not necessarily showcase negative aspects of the current state in Camrose. Offering balance, Toman (2003, pp 478-479) speaks about the dangers of "anchoring our judgements in the status quo", thus ignoring the long-term benefits of the data obtained due to emphasis on negative aspects such as the loss of jobs or reductions in hours versus the collective gains of reducing poverty.

In summary, the needs assessment and gap analysis are offered as a gateway to the client both in identifying priorities, and for creating measurables in order to evaluate the progress (or lack thereof) of the challenges and opportunities respecting wage policies. Given the civic committee make-up/nature of the client the gaps identified will also require a strategy to initiate change. It is proposed that the client rely on a pairing of the gaps with evidence based change strategies to be most effective. These strategies will be discussed in the following section

2.4 Theme 3: Evidence-Based Change in the Living Wage Context

Evidence based change processes are offered as the most rational/applicable in the living wage context. Municipalities choosing to enact such legislation will arguably desire some form of evidence that such change is indeed warranted. Wright, Zammuto, Liesch, Middleton, Hibbert, Burke, & Brazil (2016 p. 161) suggest the "science-informed practice of management" be strengthened, and that decision-making processes are more likely to follow a scientific process of evidentiary significance when evaluating complex problems.

Advocates in favour of evidence based change argue this approach bridges significant gaps between any form of research conducted, and the implementation or practice of the researched outcomes (Wright et al, 2016; Lapaige, 2009). Based on the literature reviewed when writing this report there is considerable concern amongst the academic community that research performed both in, and for the community has challenges respecting its relevance and subsequent

implementation. In other words, there is concern that this gap between research and practice is too great in policy contexts, and may never inform or influence the intended audience (Gubbins & Rousseau, 2015).

The rationale for recommending an evidence based approach is that it counters what Wright et al. (2016) describe as the more traditional decision processes used in organisations; processes the authors group into three categories: “rational, political and garbage can” (p.162). According to Wright et al. (2016, p.162) rational, political, and mixed processes are described as:

1. Rational - where decision-makers approach decisions as rational choices, following a systematic process of problem identification, generation of alternative courses of action and evaluation, and deciding by consensus
2. Political - processes used to manage and/or mitigate the competing interests and power
3. Garbage Can- described as an “organized anarchy in which solutions randomly meet up” mixing participants, choice opportunities and problems

The transition to evidence based processes could mitigate these mixed scenarios, and assist those in both rational and political arenas by providing data that aids in both the commitment to a course of action and the defense of it, possibly bridging this research-practice gap. Gubbins & Rousseau (2015, p. 110) suggest that research, provided it “translates results for practitioner readability in the abstract and implications for practice sections”, as well as provides “actionable knowledge, in tangible forms like tools, decision rubrics, and action guides” offers the most promise to bridge this gap into practice.

Lapaige (2009, p.35) also argues the desire to translate research into practice is universal, and evidence based change presents the best method to do so, although has not proven itself entirely to date; as she states, “a shift from moving evidence to solving problems is due”.

In the living wage context, it is proposed that the evidence based approach offers promising opportunities for the client to engage in conversations with the community, and provides the necessary influence to advocate for change related to this policy in Camrose. Lapaige (2009, p. 45) observed that an “evidence-based” message offers a “lever for the learning of different types of knowledge and for making such knowledge work together”, and in the wage context also presents an opportunity to influence decision makers with relevant information.

To offer balance to evidence based approaches, it is not necessarily a panacea for living wage advocates, and the project would urge some caution to the Social Development Committee should they choose to make this their exclusive approach.

Baba & HeakemZadeh (2012, p. 833) discovered during a review of evidence-based literature that the field itself; much like living wage policies, is also relatively new and is enjoying much popularity, and is often prescriptive in nature “suggesting remedies to narrow the gap between research and practice in the field of management.” This raises issues respecting the genesis of

evidence based approaches, as much of the literature reviewed challenged empirical foundations, with some research even suggesting evidence based practices are philosophical, anecdotal, and are prone to only reflect the lived experiences of the researcher (Wright et al., 2016; Baba & HeakemZadeh, 2012; Lapaige, 2009). Concerns were also raised by these authors regarding what defines or constitutes “evidence”.

The conclusion drawn from this is that any evidence relied upon must be tested, and satisfactory to the client in whatever context. Baba & HeakemZadeh (2012, p. 855) argue significant need for “reliable evidence exists in order to be able to make solid and effective decisions”, and submit that the following five criteria be used to test evidence presented, suggesting the greater these five align, the stronger the evidence:

1. Methodological fit
2. Contextualization
3. Replicability
4. Transparency, and
5. Scholarly and experts’ consensus

Wright et al. (2016, pp. 161-162) also suggest that critiques of these criteria remain, including the need to avoid solely relying on science and rationality as the basis for decision-making, the need to recognize “that evidence alone is often insufficient and incomplete”, and the “importance of the situated expertise of the decision-maker” may be lost when seeking evidence by which to base decisions.

This evidence based approach is said to offer solutions when compared to “best practices”. For this project results of this comparison will yield what are presented as SMART Practices; practices that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely (Doran, 1981; Bjerke & Renger, 2017). This use of smart practices or principles is meant not only to assist in bridging the previously discussed research-practice gap; it is also meant to provide opportunities to measure the progress of change for the client.

Bjerke & Renger (2017) suggest smart practices build organisational capacity, and create a yardstick by which to measure outcomes and objectives. Smart practices intuitively speak to context, and by adopting these principles the client will benefit from the context specific measurements of their progress should they choose to advocate for a living wage in Camrose.

Bardach (2006, p.29) suggests “smart practices are expressions of technical rationality” and must be “distinguished from best practice”. The rationale for his position is that Bardach (2006) believes that best practices have a form of implicit applicability based on some belief within the sector. In other words, it is a tested method of practice, and one in which there is consensus regarding efficacy. Given the limited amount of empirical research regarding living wage policy

implications it is suggested that best practices may be hard to distinguish, and smart practices more easily identified. Bardach (2006, p.29) surmised smart practices “are widely known and highly esteemed...and “best practices are also smart practices...[however] the two are not the same...”. This is a critical and distinctive characteristic, where what is best may not always be smart, and smart not always proven best.

Bjerke & Renger (2017, p.125) support this as they discovered the use of smart practices must be pragmatic, and thoughtfully applied rather than following a step by step process “blind to consequence”. As the client will use this project in a self-assessment fashion, it is suggested that the client remain alive to issues such as bias, assumption, and data focused decision-making. Bardach (2006, p.30) offers support for this with “...identifying smart practices is a matter of both theory and testing...”, and those responsible for delivery of outcomes will be forced to “extrapolate” conclusions from the data available, and “is much more theoretical than empirical, in that smart practices, by definition, take advantage of some underlying potential that is not directly observable, but that must be intellectualized.”

2.5 Summary

The literature review proved helpful in identifying that few communities who have implemented living wage policies did so with comparable data, and those who advocated for this policy change did so as part of a larger process in reducing poverty based on assumptions and good faith. The literature review also shed light on existing knowledge and information gaps respecting intended and unintended consequences of living wage policies, and noted several consistent themes respecting concerns for the outcomes for employees, businesses, and the community as whole.

To be forthright; the empirical data available for or against living wage research is inconclusive. Looking at living wages as a balance of probabilities is perhaps better than looking for complete certainty without fault. As Hudson (2000) notes, every positive step “will help” no matter to what degree, however it is fair to observe that controversial policies have consequences politically, economically, socially, and beyond. Luce (2017) despite her advocacy for living wages, like many others forwarding living wages, admits following her meta-analysis that not all jurisdictions maintained living wage standards post implementation, and she also discovered that some States in the US have now passed legislation preventing municipalities from enacting living wage ordinances in favour of state level wage minimums.

3.0 Methodology and Methods

This project relied on qualitative research methods including a document analysis to complete a jurisdictional scan, and a participant survey as the project is intended to be used as a needs assessment. The purpose behind this methodology is to allow for deeper exploration of what variables exist respecting living wage advocacy across many differing communities and jurisdictions, and to analyse the responses of community stakeholders within the City of Camrose.

Methods include a literature review with participant survey to obtain many perspectives regarding living wages, and a jurisdictional scan to allow for the identification of key wage movement variables to afford the client evidence to assist in decision-making, as well as advocacy processes. This section provides more details on these methods. It then describes the strengths, limitations and risks involved.

3.1 Literature Review

With limited academic research existing respecting a living wage needs assessment and community development initiatives such as income security, this research project reviewed existing academic studies, identified analogous communities in Canada within published literature, and evaluated primary research findings to identify the necessary conditions and outcomes of this assessment.

Data sources for this review include academic and sectoral publications from verifiable sources, as well as publicly accessible data obtained online through access to the UVic Library both physically and electronically. Searches were completed using search engines including UVic Summon 2.0 and Google Scholar, which allowed for a review of subject-specific materials through open source searches. Journals, government reports, professional reports, and some media reports were also used. Data extracted from the literature was reflected in the survey questions, and themes established reflect current available research reviewed. The intent of this method is to collect and reference data from sources to strengthen evidence-based decision making and support smart practices identified.

The themes explored in this report include a general background on the living wage movement, and indicators present when such legislation was enacted. Search terms include living wage, wage floors, guaranteed incomes, and wage policy utilizing databases through the UVic databases. Additionally, living wage initiatives in Alberta, and throughout Canada to date were explored including the Government of Alberta's 2018 fifteen dollar per/hour minimum wage commitments, and recent Federal initiatives like the Guaranteed-Income program. Living wage initiatives in other countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Finland, are evaluated for reported policy benefits and impacts.

A literature review offers broader understanding of the topic and practices existing; enabling the research to be evidence based, and facilitate “discovery of theoretical linkages among variables and ideas that may not have been considered previously...and provides insight that helps the researcher to make recommendations for future research.” (Griffin, 2000, p. 1). The project also relied on committee members who represent several key community organisations including housing, family services, health, senior’s services, and education. Committee members were instrumental in identifying many of the stakeholders requested to participate in this research

3.2 Methodology

The methodology for this project is needs assessment based, meaning the intention was to create a report that explored current states of income-related poverty in the City, contrast these findings to other jurisdictions through a jurisdictional scan, and review publicly available documents to help better understand living wages as a poverty reduction tool. This information is designed to influence the client’s advocacy position within the city, and provide relevant data to impact the committees mandate (Anker & Anker, 2013). Recommendations will also be made after community survey results are evaluated. Intended as a needs assessment, the research seeks to enable suitable exploration of the research questions including analysis of community perceptions toward living wages and living wage policy.

The literature review offers a wide-ranging analysis of living wages and smart practices toward implementation; the survey sheds light on community perceptions across sectors, and the jurisdictional scan allows for comparative data from multiple jurisdictions to be analyzed. As noted earlier, this approach will aid the client with evidence to best inform decision making processes in their civic environment (Bardach, 2006).

3.3 Methods

Methods included a document analysis led jurisdictional scan, and online survey designed to capture characteristics linked within wage reform advocacy researched to be relevant to wage reforms. The following sections provides more details on these methods, and describes identified limitations and delimitations to this project.

Primary Data Collection: Participant survey

The survey method allowed for exploration of what needs and assets are identifiable within the City of Camrose related to living wages. The data assembled from the survey will assist the client through asset identification, and perhaps other living wage communities through the identification a pattern of needs, gaps, and assets already in place within this community. The sampling was purposeful in that participants who were anticipated to have valuable input, for example the Camrose Chamber of Commerce, and businesses identified were done so based on number of employees and sector as publicly listed on the City of Camrose business directory. Survey questions followed themes emerging from the literature review including perceptions of inequity, demographics, and focused on existing assets and gaps in services.

The survey was distributed through an online third-party provider; FluidSurveys, utilizing existing University of Victoria (UVic) contracts with SurveyMonkey. The survey is approximately 20 questions in length, spanning several topics including awareness of poverty reduction strategies, estimated wage gaps and participants own views on who receives and benefits from wage minimums. Utilizing an online survey meant the researcher could assure respondents that these responses and personal opinions were protected through the settings offered by FluidSurveys, and anonymity of participants and responses remain confidential with no respondents identified in this report.

The sample population of respondents relied on inclusion criteria including non-profit affiliation, government affiliation, businesses, or other community-based organisational affiliations. This extended to elected members of City Council, social service organizations, volunteer boards, and for-profit businesses within Camrose as either leadership team members, employees, volunteers, or board members. The survey invitations (n=177) included the following participant representation:

- Non-profit sector: 58
- Business/Private sector: 62
- Government sector: 57

There were no identifiable exclusion criteria, and snowball methods of inclusion were encouraged throughout the survey process. The process was done in consultation with the client.

Survey participants were selected based on community affiliation, business ownership, volunteer capacities, and status as an elected or municipal official. The online survey was designed to “provide specific information that can be used to create a statistical summary of the thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and opinions” of this target audience. (USDHHS, 2013, p. 5). Initially participant interviews were proposed however given several factors, including the year of this project falling within a municipal election cycle in Camrose and a municipal election held on October 16, 2017. Interviews were considered, yet the election cycle meant an online survey could offer a level of anonymity to participants not found in other methods of research and was favoured.

Secondary Data Collection: Document Analysis and Jurisdictional Scan

Relying on a document analysis allowed for a comparison of a wide range of related journals, papers, reports and then mining relevant information (Elliot, Fairweather, Olsen, & Pampaka, 2016). As Elliot et al. (2016) observe a method such as this requires a researcher to reflect upon how such documents relate, and in what context they were created.

The purpose of a jurisdictional scan for this report was to establish practices, what variables may be linked to the inception of a living wage movement, and to what extent do factors such as politics influence advocacy organisations such as the client.

Jurisdictions were selected on a regional and provincial basis, and included national and international comparators to provide a sampling of jurisdictions either evaluating living wage policies or that have enacted such policy.

The process was not deliberately exclusionary. The focus of the scan centered on client-led variables of guaranteed basic incomes, wage reforms from a municipal perspective, and what policies have impacted living wage movements based on the research questions and available smart practices.

3.4 Data Analysis

When assembling information, the researcher relied on a shared analysis approach where the results are presented to the client in real-time, and the data presented in a format that makes the client a co-learner or researcher (Datta et al., 2014, Salmon 2007). This project remained focused on what Watkins et al. (2012) argues as the need to focus on the scope of a needs assessment ensuring a meaningful plan exists to identifying, analyse, and then react to research outcomes. The project focused on cross-sectional indexing suggested by Cherry (n.d.) which identifies:

- Characteristics (wages) that occur in a distinct place in time.
- Rely on existing, resolute variables (i.e. minimum wage laws, Living Wage calculators)
- View numerous characteristics at once (i.e. earnings)
- Identify prevalent traits in responses to questions regarding Living Wage policies.

Once these results were formulated, the researcher identified and reflected upon potential bias, expectations and attitudes, to objectively review data obtained in the survey and literature review. Following Watkins et al. (2012); a three-step process led to an assessment of “results before solutions”, needs “studied before decisions made”, and informed, justifiable decisions that follow. Therefore, the qualitative methods were reviewed to ensure the quantitative findings do not carry substantial weight over community reactions to the data. As Datta et al. (2014, p. 594) note; it is essential that the “sharing-data process” be an iterative process, where those providing the research data have an active role in its representation, and to ensure that community members understand its implications.

3.5 Project Limitations and Delimitations

The researcher's' role as a volunteer committee member was carefully managed to ensure that viewpoints/worldviews are properly reflected in the questions to stakeholders, the client, and during literature reviews. To counter any perceived or real imbalances, full disclosure is provided to those participating including an information brief providing the researchers intended role, the client's intended role, and the potential uses of data collected in the invitation scripts. At no time did the researcher contact anyone person through any other means than email, limiting any perceived or real power-relationships.

Another limitation of note is the current power imbalance with respect to the implementation of wage legislation. As Lamman (2014) notes, living wage policy is historically seen as a municipal function, and minimum wage legislation a provincial or state-level function. Recommendations may be viewed as another attempt to repel state-level influence over municipalities, that hinder autonomous decision-making abilities. Anker and Anker (2013) argue community participation is essential (including trade unions and employer organizations) when evaluating living wage legislation and therefore multiple sectoral stakeholders were included in the research project, which is viewed as central to co-learning throughout this project.

It should be noted that any risk and potential harm has been reviewed by University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB), and it was deemed that the project posed minimal risk to participants.

4.0 Findings: Needs Assessment

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the foundation of a needs assessment using a current state analysis to best identify gaps in reported incomes, and identify needs within the community related to living wages. The current state analysis will include census data, and illustrates that the income disparity ratios in Camrose are indeed significant, however poverty rates may not be truly representative as regional disparity factors may increase poverty related statistics.

4.1 Current State Analysis

The City of Camrose is home to 20,670 people, with 50% of residents reported as employed in either a full-time, or part-time capacity with reported wages in Camrose (Statistics Canada, 2017; City of Camrose Census, 2016).

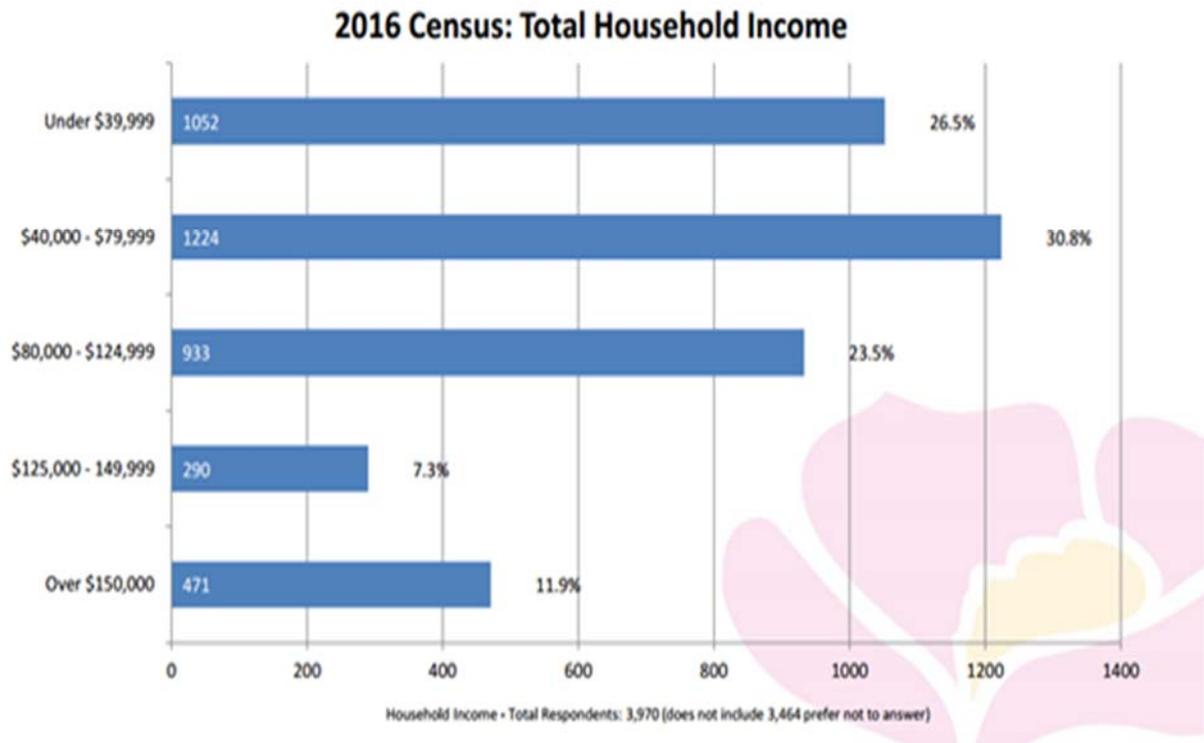


Figure 1. Total household income as reported in the City of Camrose Census 2016 Note: Figure adapted from the City of Camrose (2016) Census data. Retrieved from: www.camrose.com/documentcenter/view/10051.

When compared with federal income data however the region is experiencing at or near-average unemployment rates of 8%, and quantified above average poverty rates of 11.8% compared with 8.8% provincially (Statistics Canada, 2017; Government of Alberta, 2015).

Camrose could best be described as a services-based city, as few numbers of reported jobs in the most recent census are reported in manufacturing and processing. Many employers are specifically customer-service based, with less than 15% of businesses declared as manufacturing, or production industries (City of Camrose Census, 2016).

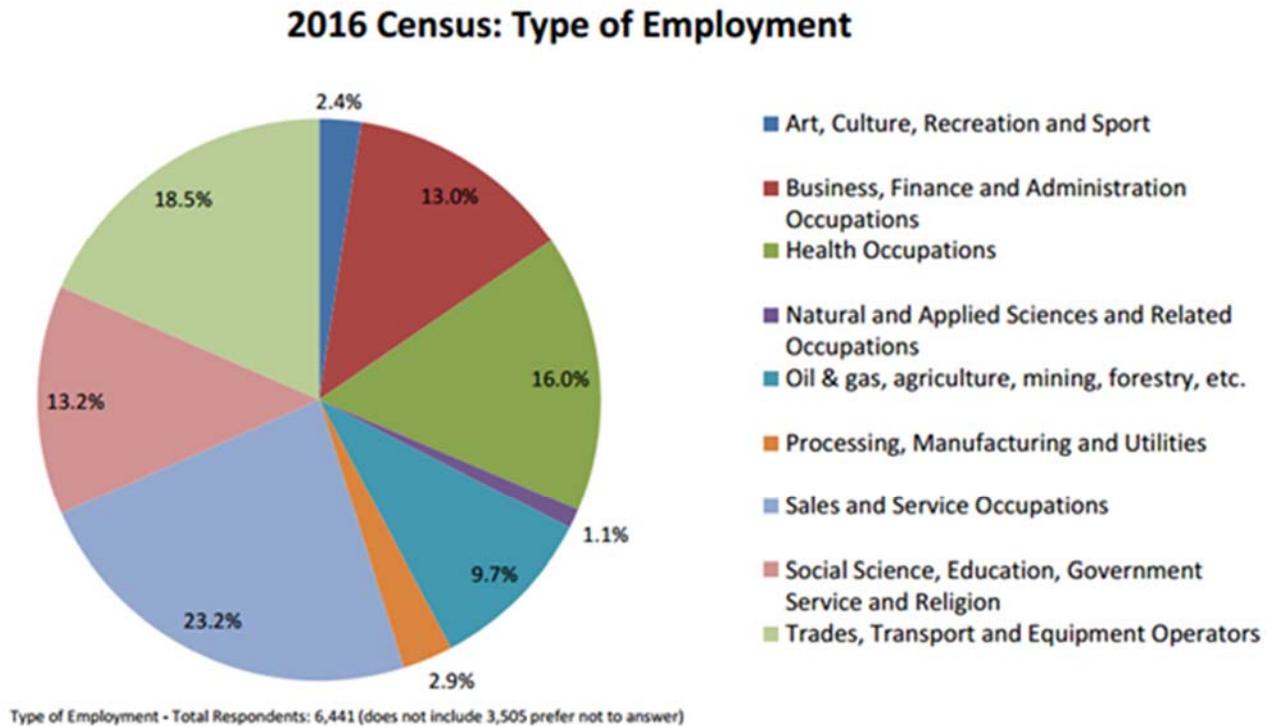


Figure 2. Employment statistics by sector. Adapted from the City of Camrose (2016) Census data. Retrieved from: www.camrose.com/documentcenter/view/10051.

Comparatively, the Province of Alberta reports roughly two million people, slightly less than half of the province's total population of 4.3 million are employed, with approximately 2.2 percent, or 38,600 workers declaring earnings at or below minimum wage (Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2015). These figures suggest that the City of Camrose is experiencing above-average wages when compared to other areas of the province. The census data also notes that 26% of respondents in 2016 declared wages below \$39,999, which when calculated hourly; assuming a forty-hour work week, leaves the maximum before tax earnings at \$19.23 per hour or less for over a quarter of the city's population (Statistics Canada, 2017).

For this research project, the living wage calculation follows the recommended process proposed by the MIT School of Public Administration and Policy Alternatives Canada, which formulates a living wage in the City of Camrose in the range of \$13.53 per hour when factoring in all known federal and provincial subsidies, to as much as \$16.97 per hour without subsidies or income tax

paid (appendix 1). This calculation proved difficult for the researcher as many factors including workplace health benefits, rent subsidies, income thresholds for subsidy programs remain outstanding, and difficult to quantify in general sense.

Moser (1998, p.1) fairly points out that tangible components of poverty, including labour and wages, are more readily identifiable than their intangible counterparts such as household relations, security, and social capital. Moser's (1998) conclusion that asset-focused results offer much more to a community than traditional deficit-oriented solutions undoubtedly contributes to the growing body of knowledge respecting the complexity of poverty.

This complexity is apparent in the City of Camrose as well. Speaking to another key identifier; housing, this project would be remiss to suggest that wage increases alone could offer an ultimate solution, or poverty reduction strategy in the city.

Housing represented a significant challenge for the researcher when attempting to gather comparative statistics from the community. Average rental rates were found to be between \$700 per month for a one-bedroom apartment on the lowest end of the listings reviewed, and \$1,700 per month for a three-bedroom home as the most expensive (see appendix 1).

Additionally, the average rental rate was calculated for two-bedroom rental suites in Camrose, and the monthly average determined to be \$993 per month, where a three-bedroom apartment cost \$1,020 per month (CMHC, 2016). This two-bedroom rental rate places Camrose sixth amongst Alberta's largest centers in terms of cost of housing according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation where the average rent (per month) for a two-bedroom apartment was reported at (CMHC, 2016, p.6):

1. Calgary \$1,258
2. Edmonton \$1,229
3. Canmore 1,091
4. Grande Prairie \$1,022
5. Red Deer \$1,016
6. Camrose \$993
7. Lethbridge \$939
8. Medicine Hat \$825

Comparing three-bedroom apartment rates places Camrose ninth among seventeen centers above 10,000 population in Alberta, although it should be noted that when conducting research for this project not one three-bedroom rental residence was available for less than \$1,200 per month (CMHC, 2017). Housing costs play an obvious role in poverty reduction strategies, and if excessive, can limit opportunities to reduce poverty, even among some communities working

persons (Moser, 1998). When compared to other cities in Alberta it does not appear that Camrose is in an unfavorable position with respect to rental availability as a 10.5% vacancy rate was reported in 2016, and rental rates fall to the mid-range provincially (CMHC, 2017).

Current poverty rates were also reviewed for the City of Camrose, and results of this analysis demonstrate that poverty reduction strategies must include more than wage policies. Statistics Canada (2017) reports that 2,170 Camrose residents are declared “low income” with a median family income of \$17, 160 annually; compared to all family types, where the median income is \$64, 730 annually, nearly four times the amount. In contrast, the average annual salary reported in Alberta in 2016 was \$58,165 (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Perhaps most staggering is the comparison between couple families in both the low income and higher income brackets in Camrose. Low income couple families report a median family income of \$23, 760 while a higher income couple family reports a median family income of \$101, 470 annually (Statistics Canada, 2017). This presents evidence that a significant income gap exists in the city.

Recalling that base estimates for a living calculation in Camrose suggest a range of \$13.53 - \$16.97 per hour (see appendix 1 for calculations), it is arguable that the City of Camrose need not investigate stand-alone wage policies or reforms, particularly with provincial minimums scheduled to rise to \$15.00 per hour in 2018. This topic will be discussed further in the recommendations section. In perspective, these wage figures in contrast to centres such as Edmonton, which is less than one hour’s drive from Camrose; current estimations for living wages exceed \$17.00 dollars per hour, and the City of Red Deer with calculated living wages reported at 14.55 dollars per hour (Living Wage Canada, 2017).

It should also be noted that the 2017 minimum wage in Alberta rose to \$13.60 per hour on October 1st, 2017, and is now the highest minimum wage in Canada (Retail council of Canada, 2017). As of October 1st, 2017, the Employment Standards Regulation now requires employees be paid specified minimum wages.

Table 1

Minimum Wage by sector and date of wage increases October 1, 2016 – October 1, 2018

Type of employee	October 1, 2016	October 1, 2017	October 1, 2018
Most employees – General minimum wage	\$12.20/hour	\$13.60/hour	\$15/hour
Liquor servers (as of Oct. 1, 2016 the liquor server rate was eliminated)	\$12.20/hour	\$13.60/hour	\$15/hour
Domestic employees (living in their employer’s home)	\$2,316/month	\$2,582/month	\$2,848/month

Note: Table adapted from Alberta Labour (2017). Retrieved from: www.work.alberta.ca/employment-standards/minimum-wage.html

This compares to data from Statistics Canada (2016) which shows a high discrepancy between high wages and low wage earners in Alberta generally, and statistics indicate that wage increases will impact a significant number of households in Camrose. This discrepancy and opportunity for poverty reduction is illustrated in Table 2 on the following page.

Table 2

Total household after-tax income in thousands of dollars per year. Groupings based on 2015 reported incomes for private households - 8,055 households reporting.

Under \$5,000	85	
\$5,000 to \$9,999	55	
\$10,000 to \$14,999	95	
\$15,000 to \$19,999	275	
\$20,000 to \$24,999	520	
\$25,000 to \$29,999	380	
\$30,000 to \$34,999	400	
\$35,000 to \$39,999	455	
\$40,000 to \$44,999	405	
\$45,000 to \$49,999	365	Total 3,035
\$50,000 to \$59,999	685	Total after tax household income at \$13.53 (2 income earners)
\$60,000 to \$69,999	650	
\$70,000 to \$79,999	595	Range for \$15.00 per hour minimum (2 income earners)
\$80,000 to \$89,999	570	
\$90,000 to \$99,999	515	
\$100,000 and over	2,000	
\$100,000 to \$124,999	810	
\$125,000 to \$149,999	520	
\$150,000 and over	675	

Prevalence of low income based on the Low-income cut-offs, after tax (LICO-AT)

Total:	4.4 %
18 to 64 years (%)	5.0 %
65 years and over (%)	1.2 %

Note: Adapted from 2016 Census data provided by Statistics Canada (2017). Retrieved from: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp->

pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=POPC&Code1=0123&Geo2=PR&Code2=48&Data=Count&SearchText=Camrose&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All

4.2 Summary

These figures suggest that Alberta Government (2015) LIM-AT statistics related to poverty in the electoral district differ considerably from statistics Canada data (Low Income Measure-After Tax of 11.8% compared to 10.1%). This is possible due to the inclusion of other communities in the Alberta government figures such as the neighboring City of Wetaskiwin where the same after tax Low Income Cut Off-After Tax (LICO-AT) prevalence is observed at 12.8% (Statistics Canada, 2017). There many other possibilities for this discrepancy as well and this will remain an area noted for further research. It is not to suggest that poverty must be at a certain unbearable threshold to generate a movement, it is however suggested that poverty levels in Camrose may be overstated in the provinces findings. These poverty figures also demonstrate certain socio-economic conditions that existed in New Westminster, BC and in the UK prior to the national minimum wage implementation, do not necessarily exist in Camrose at the time of this report. Section 6 will provide further insight related to such factors.

The introduction of a \$15.00 per hour minimum wage could offer the most potential to improve the wages received by nearly 4,000 homes in the community, notwithstanding the living wage calculation falling within the range provided. This suggests that by encouraging the adoption of the provincial minimum wage as a living wage in the city will, for the moment, offer the client the ability to positively impact nearly half of all homes in the community irrespective of employment status.

5.0 Findings: Community Stakeholder Survey

5.1 Overview

A community survey was distributed to a total of 177 recipients, and 60 responses were received over the 40 days the survey was active. The participants were identified as community stakeholders through affiliation with for-profit businesses, non-profit groups, and government agencies in either a volunteer or career capacity.

The results of the survey demonstrate strong community capacity and knowledge base relative to living wage policy, and the need for further efforts from the client to ensure accurate information is represented which were noted throughout the literature reviewed. This suggests several themes emerged from the responses including target demographics, effects of wage increases (or decreases), and the need for further consultations with stakeholders.

5.2 Findings

The online survey was open for responses between August of 2017 and early September of 2017 and comprised of twenty questions. Two separate invitations were dispatched, and given the anonymous nature of the survey, results were recorded without any identifying features associated to respondents. A total of 177 invitations were issued, and FluidSurveys recorded 60 respondents to the survey. It became clear to the researcher that respondents did not answer each individual question as most questions recorded between 50 and 55 responses.

In short, there is positive support for a living wage policy in Camrose, with 76% of respondents indicating they would support such a policy.

Do you believe that the Camrose area would benefit on a social basis from policy that advocates for Living Wages?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		75.9%	41
No		24.1%	13
Total Responses			54

Respondents also indicated they possess a moderate to high level of awareness respecting living wages, although few knew of other jurisdictions with such policies, and only 30 respondents offered responses.

Please select what best describes your knowledge of, or awareness of, what is described as a “Living Wage” in place of a minimum wage?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very Aware		34.5%	19
Moderately Aware		49.1%	27
Low Awareness or Unaware		16.4%	9
Unaware		0.0%	0
Total Responses			55

Living Wage policies are described as policies that encourage, or mandate the use of calculated wages based on an actual cost of living, in addition to prescribed minimum wages. Would you agree with findings in other jurisdictions that Living Wage policies may improve local economies?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Agree		75.0%	39
Disagree		3.8%	2
Unsure		21.2%	11
Total Responses			52

These answer pools suggest an above average knowledge base with an accompanying reluctance state which community are known. The target audience results also indicate a strong mix of organizations represented:

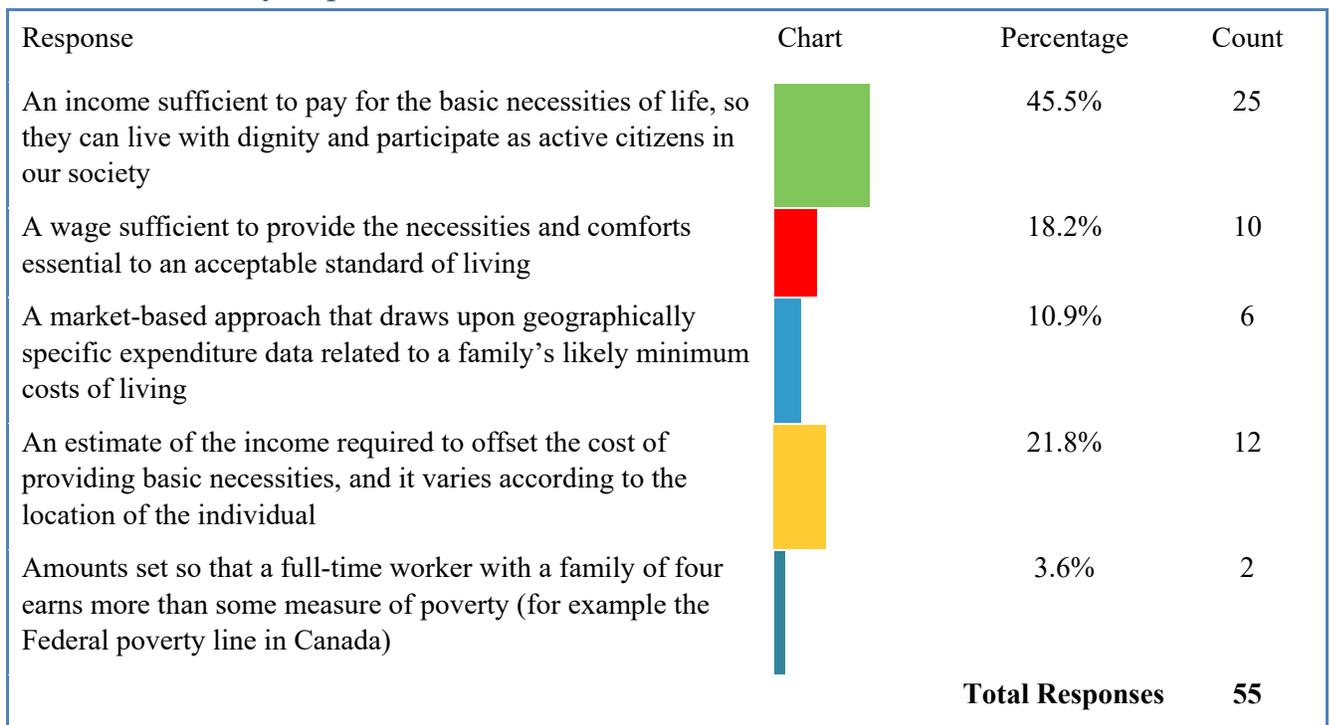
How many employees does your organization presently employ?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Less than 10		30.9%	17
10-25		12.7%	7
26-100		18.2%	10
Greater than 100		38.2%	21
Total Responses			55

Of interest to the researcher was the preferred definition of living wage. Numerous studies and journals exist each offering a definition, and each considering factors that relate to poverty, wages, income disparity, and cost of living. The rationale behind offering multiple definitions without providing the source, was to explore whether more elaborate, descriptive, and/or problem-oriented definitions would be favoured by respondents. It is of note the following answers were fixed and not randomized in the survey, and the potential for response divergence exists given the format and design of the survey question.

This appears to be the result, as survey results indicate the most popular definition belonged to Living Wage Canada (2017) with 45.5% support. The least supported definition was the definition offered by the Fraser Institute (2014) recording only 3.6% support.

There are several available definitions of what is considered a living wage. Which definition would you prefer?



It should be noted that response one is the definition used by Living Wage Canada, response two is used by Merriam-Webster Dictionary, response three is preferred by researchers at MIT, response four is provided by the Government of Alberta, and response five the Fraser Institute.

Once established, respondents were asked to estimate a living wage for this region in their experience. The results suggest that most respondents believe the corresponding wage to live at a socially acceptable standard in Camrose falls between thirteen and eighteen dollars per hour.

Based on your chosen definition, what would you estimate a calculated Living Wage to be (in dollars per hour) for the Camrose region?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Less than \$10 per hour		0.0%	0
\$10-\$12 per hour		5.5%	3
\$13-\$15 per hour		23.6%	13
\$16-\$18 per hour		43.6%	24
\$19-\$21 per hour		10.9%	6
Greater than \$22 per hour		16.4%	9
		Total Responses	55

Several poverty reduction strategies were identified by the Government of Canada (2015), and respondents were asked to rate these based on importance. The results indicate that housing, income security, and ending chronic homelessness are seen as the most highly effective strategies to reduce poverty. Economic development was rated as moderately effective by a significant margin and reductions in predatory lending practices was viewed as the least effective poverty reduction strategy.

Respondents were also asked about their knowledge of how wages were determined in their respective organisations. Responses varied considerably, and ranged from completely unaware, to competition, education, qualifications, and experience. Experience and qualifications were the two most commonly reported variables, and of the 52 responses the most common theme appeared to be the need to possess the requisite experience with an organisation to benefit from income growth. Applying a living wage policy was seen by some as counterintuitive, as it may remove this characteristic of earning one’s salary through an individual's tenure with an organisation, education, and market demand.

Two response questions were posed to respondents to capture views perceptions respecting minimum wage recipients, national poverty strategies, and why respondents would or would not support such policy. Again, there was observable variance in the answers and respondents generally appeared to support poverty reduction; however, raised issues that wages alone, and wage policy alone would be insufficient to address the problem. Excerpts of the responses indicate the following:

Would you support a living wage policy in Camrose?

“No, I pay my staff above minimum wage, as the minimum wage continues to climb, i have to continue to my staff more. The time is coming where I will need to evaluate possibly reducing staffing in order to cover that cost. I believe that everyone has the right to earn what they are worth, not what they 'think' they are worth. If you are actually worth more, find somewhere that can pay more.”

“No, I feel it only inflates the costs of everything... would continually move up...”

“Yes. I think employers can better afford to pay decent living wages. If they can't then perhaps they need not be employers. Also, our current government decreased small business taxes by 1% to assist smaller, retail employers with the incremental increase in minimum wage to \$15/hour. They could be somewhat negatively impacted. But the large minimum wage employers - the Wal-Mart's of the world - are making billions off the backs of very low-paid and part-time employees. Those employers comprise a significant portion of our workforce. If all those employees were paid a bit more, then they could afford to spend a bit more in our local economy, perhaps even relieving some of the pressure on not-for-profit services, like the Food Bank, that help make up for the lost income through low wages”

“Yes. Although there is no consensus among economists regarding the overall socio-economic effects of a living wage, most economists support the idea. My current perspective is most influenced by the recent work of Armine Yalnizyan, an independent economist who has written extensively on this subject. Yalnizyan argues that a living wage "boosts the economy from the bottom up" by increasing consumer spending. The high concentration of service and retail industry employers in Camrose would be hurt by increased labour costs, but should also see a subsequent increase in consumer spending to offset these costs. Based on now outdated data, approximately 33% of Camrose workers earned less than a living wage (2011 Stats Can). Many local people would benefit and some employers should see increased revenue to offset the higher cost.”

Further questions were asked related to low wage recipients and it is observed that doubts remain, as do concerns regarding threats to job numbers, misconceptions surrounding age demographics and who presumably benefits from higher wages, and the inference was drawn by several respondents that increased wages equal inflated prices or costs for services and goods.

Interestingly, above average numbers of respondents declared themselves to be members of a leadership team, or an elected official. As key stakeholders were identified it was deemed essential to have input from the eight persons holding elected office in Camrose, and it was flattering to have a majority respond to the survey.

Please describe your role in your organisation (multiple descriptions allowed):

Response	Chart	Count
Member of a Leadership Team (Any Sector)		34
Elected or Appointed Official		5
Board Member		4
Community Volunteer		5
Other		17
Prefer not to answer		0

Questions were then asked if an explanation of why or why not respondents supported living wages. Reaction favoured support for living wages.

Would you support a living wage in Camrose? Please explain?

Of the 44 responses to the question of whether support exists for living wages in Camrose, 32 respondents answered with a definitive “yes” while the remaining 12 either were either unsure or opposed the concept citing varying concerns. Those in favour of wage policies cite many of the less tangible characteristics noted by Moser (2015) including investment in the community, improved relationships, and spin-offs including greater spending power among lower-wage earners and social capital increases. The responses below best capture this conclusion:

“No. An increase in minimum wage will eliminate jobs for teens and marginal workers with no skills or limited ability to work”

“Yes! My only hesitation is that it wouldn't go far enough. In my experience the majority of working people do not earn what they are worth. Most of the scarcity that we see in this region is due to bottlenecks in distribution of resources not production. People shouldn't live in poverty just because there are pejorative associations with their job or career if it's a necessary or desired service it should pay enough to be a full participant in society. Since all currency is fiat based we are courting disaster the longer we refuse to see people as the source of value in society.”

Finally, the survey results confirm misinformation exists relating to low income earners, as according to the Government of Alberta (2017) the fastest growing segment of low wage earners

are above the age of 55, while survey respondents indicate the group to benefit most are under 24 years of age.

Wage policies are said to impact all workers across sectors. What age group would you believe is most likely to earn a minimum wage?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Younger than 18		54.5%	30
18 - 24		38.2%	21
25 - 34		0.0%	0
35 - 44		0.0%	0
45 - 54		0.0%	0
55 - 64		0.0%	0
65 or older		1.8%	1
Prefer not to answer		5.5%	3
		Total Responses	55

Following this question, another question related to target groups for low wage earners was asked. The 44 responses were similar in nature and again most responses identified younger age groups, individuals with disabilities or health challenges, and the inexperienced as most likely to benefit from living wage policies. Some of the responses included:

What segment of society do you believe would benefit most from Living Wage policies?

“Everyone would benefit from a living wage. People who have a secure source of income positively impact economies.”

“The ones that either are controlled by fear of success or are not driven to achieve more.”

“Youth and individuals with disabilities/ mental health issues unable to work.”

“The young and inexperienced and the elderly living on fixed incomes.”

5.3 Summary

There is an overall optimism in the survey results that suggests a desire by most respondents to implement a policy respecting wages in Camrose. This desire is bolstered by survey responses acknowledging income disparity within the City Camrose, despite the various reasons for such gaps provided by respondents. The survey results also demonstrate over 80% of stakeholders

surveyed are moderately aware, or very aware of living wage policies, and aligned predictions of an appropriate living wage in the community with future provincial minimums set to be in place by October 2018 (Alberta Labour, 2017).

6.0 Findings: Jurisdictional Scan

Speaking now to a request of the client for more information regarding what other communities are experiencing, and whether living wage policies or calculations have been completed led to the completion of a jurisdictional scan. The scan initially focuses on Alberta, then expands to contrast other provinces and territories within Canada, and finishes with a brief review of international initiatives in Finland, and the United Kingdom. It should be noted that numerous international bodies and nations have explored or applied wage policies that were not covered in this research. The countries were selected as they reflect an emerging policy currently under review, a nation without wage minimums, and national movement that utilized multiple strategies (Kay, 2017).

6.1 Provincial Perspectives

Nationally, minimum wages vary significantly by province and territory; with the lowest minimum wages paid in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, and the highest now extending to Alberta and Nunavut.

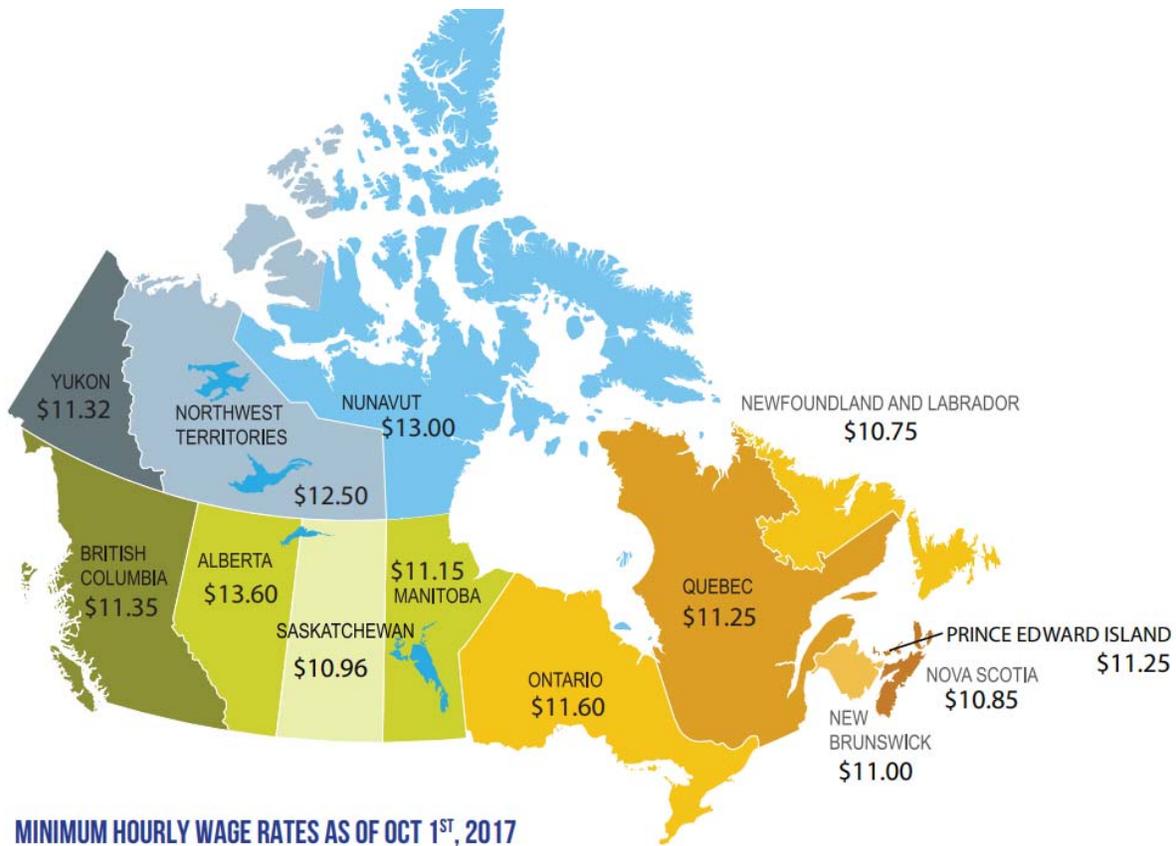


Figure 3. A comparison of minimum wages. Adapted from the Retail Council of Canada (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.retailcouncil.org/sites/default/files/MinimumWageMapOCTEN.pdf>

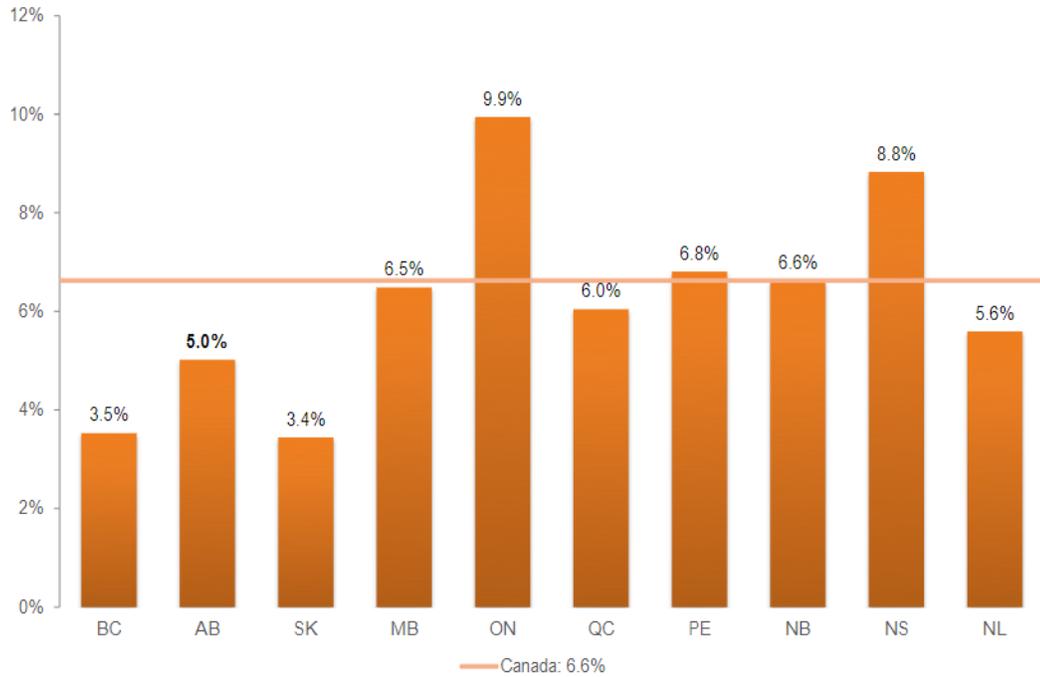


Figure 4. Total reported percentage of workers earning minimum wages by province compared to Canadian average. Adapted from Alberta Labour (2017). Retrieved from: <https://work.alberta.ca/documents/alberta-minimum-wage-profile.pdf>

Locating peer-reviewed academic research into this provincial disparity’s related to minimum, or living wages proved difficult. Research into provincial initiatives therefore relied on people-serving, or policy focused organisations, the majority of which are non-profit organisations for current information (Living Wage Canada, 2017; Vibrant Communities, 2017; Enough for All Calgary, n.d.). Research shows that many communities in Alberta have wage initiatives underway to address identified earnings gaps.

Calculations completed by living wage groups are represented, and given the lack of empirical data this report presents these calculations with some caution. Noting at the time of this report, no reported jurisdiction in Alberta is known to have enacted a formal policy or bylaw that resembles that of New Westminister, BC, or Vancouver, BC whereby all municipal employees, contractors, or service providers be paid, at minimum, a calculated living wage (City of New Westminister, 2011; City of Vancouver, 2016).

As such, municipal living wage calculations in Alberta are completed by organisations that seek to further the wage movement including Vibrant Communities, Living Wage Canada, and local groups such as the Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance. These groups have presented calculations for their respective municipalities and Living Wage Canada (2017) then compiled

these respective wage calculations as defined calculations or “emerging communities” with calculations being developed.

Community	Wage Calculation or Emerging	Population (Statistics Canada, 2016)	Source
Calgary	\$18.15 per hour	1,239,220	Vibrant Calgary (2017)
Canmore	Emerging	13,992	Living Wage Canada (2017)
Chestermere	Emerging	19,887	Living Wage Canada (2017)
Edmonton	\$17.36 per hour	932,546	Edmonton Social Planning Council (2016)
Grande Prairie	\$17.35 per hour	63,166	City of Grande Prairie (2015)
Lethbridge	Emerging	92,729	Living Wage Canada (2017)
Medicine Hat	\$13.00 per hour	63,260	Living Wage Canada (2017)
Red Deer	\$14.55 per hour	100,418	Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance (2016)
Wood Buffalo (Fort McMurray)	Emerging	71,589	Living Wage Canada (2017)

Table 3

Comparison of Living Wage Calculations by community

Note. Adapted from Living Wage Canada (2017). Cities selected based on reported and available calculations through multiple agencies without exclusion criteria applied. Retrieved from: <http://livingwagecanada.ca/index.php/living-wage-communities/alberta/>

Of the five jurisdictions that reported calculated living wages, there was no available information to indicate that these calculations have become policy. In other words, they appear to be part of the movement and have not yet translated into civic or regional policy.

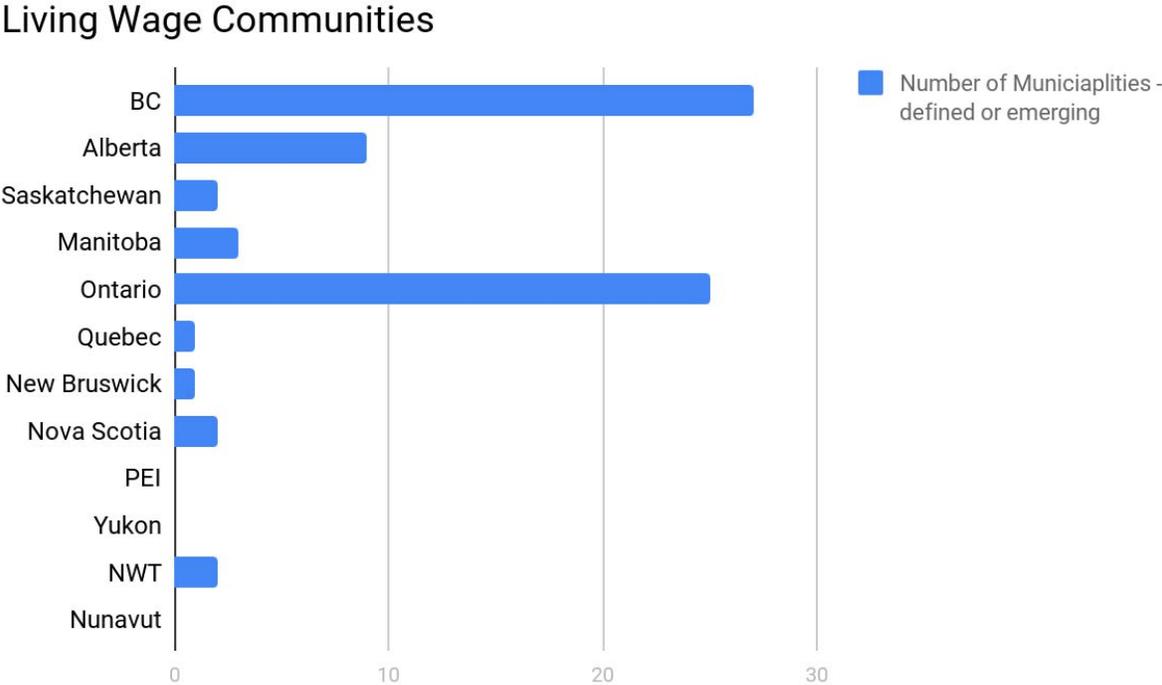
There is a discernable difference when researching communities across the country. British Columbia and Ontario report the highest number of communities having either adopted living wage policy, or to be described as emerging communities (Living Wage Canada, 2017).

Again, it should be noted that peer-reviewed academic research was not located respecting national living wage communities in Canada beyond Vancouver and New Westminster, BC, and the data relied upon originates from wage advocates.

The national perspective for living wage communities, when considering defined calculations or emerging communities, is stated to be:

Table 4

Total numbers of living wage communities identified by province



Note. Adapted from municipal data collected by Living Wage Canada (2017). Retrieved from: <http://livingwagecanada.ca/index.php/living-wage-communities/living/>

Of note, neither Prince Edward Island nor the Yukon Territory presently report any communities with living wage initiatives, and are said to be benefiting from some form of provincial or territorial initiative (Living Wage Canada, 2017). Research into such claims could not substantiate this as verifiable data does not exist to support these statements, and neither provincial or territorial authority acknowledges this in any public release searched.

While conducting the national scan it was noted that Brandon, Manitoba displayed many similar statistical characteristics to Camrose when evaluating respective costs of living, community size,

proximity to a larger urban centre, and research into living wage calculations and policy. Fernandez (2017, pp.7-8) observes the current living wage for a “Brandon two-parent – two-child family is \$14.55/hour—an 8.5 per cent increase from \$13.41 in 2013”. These figures were noted to be akin to base calculations completed for the client when preparing this project.

Brandon’s calculations noted a 37 per cent increase in shelter costs, and that food costs were projected to be at or near the suggested amounts by Alberta Health Services for an average family of four in Alberta (Fernandez, 2017; AHS, 2017). Population sizes varied somewhat in that Brandon’s population is 48,320, however age demographics were similar, and median incomes for families fell within 3% when compared (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Most relevant from this analysis was the discovery of uncertainty related to living wage policy. For example, research into wage increases in Brandon found that a family receiving the living wage amount of \$14.55 per hour no longer qualified for provincial Rent-Assist programs or child care subsidies in Manitoba (CCPA, 2017). This is a significant finding and one in which the client will want to carefully review prior to initiating living wage policies in Camrose.

6.2 International Perspectives

Finland, is one of several countries exploring what is referred to as a Universal Basic Income (UBI), or a guaranteed income set by the state and guaranteed to all citizens (Kay, 2017). Presently, Finland is said to be studying this concept as an alternative to state-funded welfare programs to minimize income disparity, decrease social welfare costs, and offer social protections for all citizens (Koistinen & Perkio, 2015). It appears from the existing data that the efficacy of such programs is the subject of much debate.

Kangas, Simanainen, Honkanen (2017, p.91) found that an advantage of a basic income model is that it offers a regular, calculated minimum income for people with “uncertain or irregular market income flows”. Differing from living wages is the concept that a UBI if applied, *universally* as the name suggests, would follow a pattern similar to health care in Canada, and likely would not include additional calculations respecting location, family status, or family size. Kangas et al. (2017, p. 91) suggest benefits also include the ability to merge or “simplify” welfare benefit systems paid by the Finnish Social Insurance Institution, thus streamlining several social welfare agencies, and lowering overall costs of welfare programmes to governments.

There appears to be a top-down approach to this program given the research conducted. Suggestions are a program of this nature will make life easier for low-income individuals, and simplified welfare systems are economic and social improvements for Finland. Kangas et al. (2017, p. 92) suggest that low-income recipients, whose income composes different “income-tested basic security benefits”, would see immediate reductions in complexity respecting applications, bureaucratic interactions, fund delivery, and reductions in funding should they accept full-time positions. Kay (2017) disagrees, and notes that there is no empirical evidence to

suggest UBI's are sustainable long-term, and are merely another reincarnation of minimum wages.

Pereira (2017) observes that cost differences are often exaggerated by those suggesting UBI's are unsustainable, and when factoring costs to operate state-welfare systems (in Canada specifically) there are considerable arguments for reductions in cost and streamlining services without major tax increases.

Accordingly, the Finnish government has begun to study the impacts of such policy change. Kangas et al. (2017) have begun to research the possible benefits and limitations of this system. These researchers note a lack of established, defensible research, and stated the "goal of the Finnish experiment that started this year is to try to get some evidence on how a new social policy instrument mimicking a basic income would work, and what kind of behavioural consequences it would have" (p. 92).

Koistinen & Perkio (2015, pp. 30-31) suggest that the requisite studies have been completed and UBI's are nothing more than movements operating at the fringes of the political processes, and observe that initiators of UBI models present these models as a renewal of existing systems, rather than radical changes to gain legitimacy. Koistinen & Perkio (2015) further state concepts of social justice while necessary, are not pragmatic problem-solving approaches which address observable preconditions including employment levels, social activities, or access to education.

Applying this concept within this research project suggests national, top-down approaches may not be best suited for wage reforms for the reasons noted above. Koistinen & Perkio (2015) offer support as well, suggesting UBI debates have been ongoing for the past 25 years with little progress. This is not to discourage national interest in wage or income debate, as the UK example will soon illustrate; it is meant to demonstrate that "social ideas are not realized overnight: they may come true over time if the actors are strong and the ideas are mature" Koistinen & Perkio (2015, p.31). Such UBI research highlights institutional or structural constraints, the distribution of resources and power, as well as socio-economic considerations, and the research-implementation gap on a national stage (Kangas et al., 2017; Koistinen & Perkio, 2015).

The United Kingdom

Researching living wages in United Kingdom offers considerable information for the client respecting scaling-up wage reforms and movements as well. In the UK, the national living wage movement sought to minimize wage gaps, and introduce a living wage intended to increase wages for low-income earners (UK Government, 2017). National minimums are now deemed a living wage, where wages are both age and career dependent, and legislated to a maximum £7.20 per hour (\$11.96 per hour when converted to CAD) for persons 25 years of age and older,

notably below the present Alberta minimum of \$13.60 per hour for all workers (UK Government, 2017).

Heery, Hann & Nash (2017) note £7.20 is a considerable increase in wages in the UK, and credit the national living wage campaign for this change. Sellers (2017) provides some background, and observes the living wage campaign began in 2001, following the federal election which saw significant support and re-election the Labour Party in the UK. Sellers (2017) also noted that a campaign of wage fairness had begun in the UK as minimum wages ranged from £3.70 to £4.10 per hour nationally. According to Heery et al. (2017) the living wage campaign originated as a community movement, then involved a range of labor market actors, both “new” and “old” and was said to appeal to employers, trade unions, interest groups including wage councils. The result was the recruitment of over 3,000 employers, significant wage increases for thousands of workers nationally, improved government policies that recognize costs of living, employer and union corporate social responsibility contracts, and a near doubling of the national minimum wage (NMW) in 2015 (Seller, 2017; Heery et al., 2017).

Remarkably, this NMW measure was legislated in 2015 by a conservative government, without further consultation with trade unions, wage coalitions, and workers’ rights groups despite the gains made previously (Sellers, 2017). What is claimed to have occurred in the UK is that the NMW legislation stifled “real living wage” proponents, and focused wage increases more so for workers over the age of 25, rather than all workers in the UK (Sellers, 2017). As a result, local movements are said to have begun wage debates yet again, as there are suggestions that national wages do not accurately reflect local realities, and are feel-good political policies of the federal government (Heery et al. 2017).

6.3 Case Study Research

The initiation of a living wage policy in the City of New Westminster, British Columbia in 2011 provides a timely case study of community initiatives to reduce poverty. Evaluating the roles of community groups respecting wage increases as part of a larger poverty-reduction framework becomes clearer after reviewing this example. Looking at poverty reduction from a community perspective; the City of New Westminster with a municipal population of 65, 976, initiated a living wage policy to address poverty in 2010 as New Westminster was experiencing some of the highest cost of living conditions in Canada, while offering the lowest average wages of any municipality in the Greater Vancouver area (ACORN, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2010).

Living wage calculations in 2011 included costs of housing, food, as well as items like health care and social activities for families. When the living wage movement began in New Westminster, data obtained in 2010 revealed the minimum wage in British Columbia was \$8.00/hour, increasing for the first time in 10 years in 2011 to \$8.75/hour (ACORN, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2015). This \$8.75 per hour wage would result in a full-time workers salary (estimated at 40 hours per week) earning \$18,200 before tax, as an annual salary in 2011.

Ivanova & Klein (2012, p. 10) created a budget based on a 2011 cost of living analysis in B.C.'s Lower Mainland, and found that an annual living wage of nearly \$35,000 per person in a four-person household was required to make ends meet in New Westminster.

In response to this identifiable wage divergence, the community mobilized, and was steered by the local arm of the non-profit group ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) Canada. ACORN is described as “an independent national organization of low- and moderate-income families...with over 80,000 members”, who organized and petitioned local government to implement a living wage (ACORN, 2012). This movement aligned itself with local candidates seeking civic office, who then placed living wage policies as part of their political platforms (Lammam, 2014).

This raises two key issues. First, a recognition of the political influence and power theories related to community-based grassroots initiatives (which will be discussed in detail in following sections). And second, the recognition amongst those involved with living wage movements that policy, governance, and public support across multi-sectors are essential to moving this strategy forward.

Addressing change, New Westminster's living wage movement was first initiated by community groups working with those directly affected by low wages, who then influenced election platforms and elected officials (including those whom did not support this policy), and within several months of the election compelled the municipality to become the first in Canada to enact living wage legislation (City of New Westminster, 2011; Lammam, 2014)

New Westminster's living wage law applies to all full and part-time employees working for the city as well as employees contracted to perform “physical work” on city-owned premises (Lammam, 2014, p. 6). Following this enactment, the 2011 living wage (as calculated by the municipality) in New Westminster was over \$19.50/hour, a 143% increase above the 2010 minimum wage, and has risen steadily to \$20.64/hour in 2016 for recipients not receiving employer benefits (City of New Westminster, 2016).

The City of New Westminster (2016) reported living wages did not directly affect any full or part-time city staff, as these staff already earn more per hour, it did however affect some service contractors with hourly wages below the living wage threshold. This is a significant change for those affected by this policy, as it clearly demonstrated positive steps forward in reducing poverty within municipal borders.

Pei, Felthan, Ford, and Schwartz (2015, p.87) conducted wage policy research following the changes in New Westminster and made four primary recommendations of best practice when implementing a living wage policy:

- (a) develop a core group of individuals,
- (b) engage champions to extend buy-in,

- (c) establish a positive framework for the campaign, and
- (d) dedicate more resources to research and knowledge.

This research shows links between the community movement in New Westminster, and the best, or smart practices should communities choose to follow this example. ACORN (2012) reported that city councillors who voted for this change in policy described it as “the least they could do” for their community respecting poverty reduction. Undoubtedly it created positive changes, although the question remains whether the leadership of this initiative is in one view symbolic, humanistic, and emergent; or seen as simply adopting policy that fit the popular political framework of the time?

6.4 Summary

The research findings indicate that provincially living wage work has begun in several communities yet calculations remain at what could be described as an identification or awareness level in the majority of communities. Reviewing two timely international wage initiatives reveals much debate still exists respecting living wages, proposals for guaranteed basic incomes, and further opens this debate to the influences of political forces in both positive and negative ways.

By reviewing the case study of New Westminster, BC the research project sought to identify key variables or leverage points for change (Ferdig, 2007). It is observed that significant wage discrepancies existed, poverty reduction strategies included the need to close a 143% wage disparity between the government allocated minimum wage in BC and the calculated living wage, and the grassroots initiatives required the assistance of political influence to secure policy change. Proponents suggest policies such as this are game changing for communities seeking to address poverty. Critics of the New Westminster policy suggest that it does not address the greater community’s issues as it only impacts municipal employees and contractors, and that policies such as this are largely symbolic in nature (ACORN, 2012; Bolman and Deal, 2008).

In the following section a needs assessment and Gap analysis in Camrose are discussed to address potential policy implications, and identify the current state within the city to build on the lessons learned by communities and nations such as the UK respecting living wage policies. This analysis and discussion draws from both the literature review and the stakeholder survey.

7.0 Discussion and Analysis

The purpose of this section is to first discuss the rationale and objectives of a needs assessment and Gap analysis, and then assess these concepts by focusing on emerging themes of living wage movements genesis, and the defined need for advocacy and collaboration to create positive outcomes. This chapter begins with a discussion about the process of a needs assessment and the identifiable gaps in services or opportunities in a community, and then builds on this information to explore the origins of living wage movements and the need to ensure this process is an iterative journey.

7.1 Discussion: Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis

The purpose of the needs assessment was to establish whether the community was satisfied with current wages in the city, whether a living wage would benefit the city, and to determine what areas of opportunity exist within Camrose to reduce poverty. The needs assessment began with a current state analysis, acknowledgement of another key variable discovered in the research process, a reference to survey results, and jurisdictional scan. This tool is proposed as it best suits the needs of the client respecting evidence-based decision making, and identifies specific areas of opportunity in Camrose to focus the clients work.

Wright et al., (2016, p. 175) support this perspective and note that evidence-based management (EBM) has numerous potential benefits in the public administration sphere, as well as the private sector, as it creates a “more nuanced understanding for management educators of how EBM is enacted in practice through situated expertise.” It is the situational expertise that this needs assessment sought to explore. The process followed included:

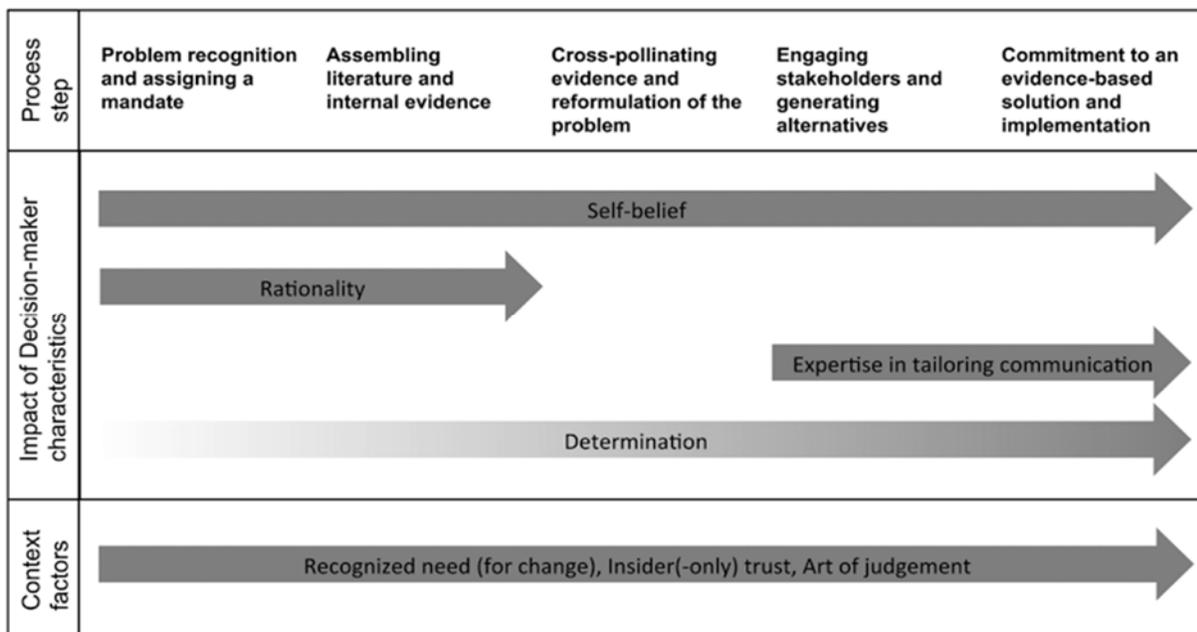


Figure 5. From “Evidence-based Management in Practice: Opening the Decision Process, Decision-maker and Context” by Wright, A. L., Zammuto, R. F., Liesch, P. W., Middleton, S., Hibbert, P., Burke, J., & Brazil, V. (2016). *British Journal of Management*, 27(1), p. 171.

The needs assessment process in this research project preferred this format. Roberts (2003) proposes this approach is effective when a community first identifies the respective problem, moves to then identify possible solutions, and consequently creates a plan to implement the changes if needed.

Adopting this process in this research project meant the problem of income disparity and poverty reduction flowed to the evaluation of a probable solution of living wage policy. Subsequently an evaluation of this solution and an evaluation of the current trends in the Province of Alberta, specifically the move to a \$15.00 per hour minimum wage, formed the recommendations to the client referencing possible outcomes of such change.

Problem recognition and identification

Based on the current state analysis, survey results, and literature reviewed there are discernible gaps identified respecting income levels as there exists significant disparity between the highest earners and the lowest. Based on the census and Statistics Canada (2017) data it is obvious that over 3000 households in Camrose could benefit from increased wages, and average or above average wages are more common in this community. The problem then is how to raise the wages for the city’s lowest earners, and to identify how can the client contribute to this increase.

There is a general optimism in the survey results that suggests a desire by most respondents to implement a policy respecting wages in Camrose. This desire is bolstered by statistical and census data, which demonstrates a significant income disparity challenge within the City Camrose. The survey results also demonstrate that residents surveyed are aware of living wage policies, and could, with accuracy, align their predictions of an appropriate living wage in the community. This wage amount resembles quite closely future provincial minimums set for October 2018 (Alberta Labour, 2017).

The needs assessment and gap analysis offer the client opportunities to contrast what presently is experienced in the community and the potential outcomes should one or more of the strategies be adopted. The findings in this project reflect both currently available statistical data for the City of Camrose, which demonstrates a significant disparity in incomes, and a view to the number of living wage movements in Canada along with two international jurisdictions. The major finding of the needs assessment is the significant gap in wages with the city, and the need for a wage strategy. The project findings further demonstrate a larger movement both nationally and internationally respecting living wages despite a lack of defined government policy, and survey

results show there is substantial grassroots support for change on a local level as well in jurisdictions where wages are low, and the respective cost of living is high.

Scanning jurisdictions demonstrated that many Canadian municipalities have explored or enacted living wage policies, particularly those in British Columbia, and Ontario. Looking to Finland and the UK provided examples of national level wage initiatives that have potential to reduce welfare costs, eliminate much of the bureaucracy in state welfare programs, and streamline service while reducing complexity of benefit programs for recipients.

Politics were also noted to be a part of this process internationally, and there were identified risks to removing regional influence, resident statistics, and local wage calculations. From the above noted findings, themes related to a needs assessment and gap analysis were extracted, and will now be discussed. Major themes include the need for a living wage movement in Camrose to initiate the process, cross-sectoral collaboration which highlight the importance of multiple strategies toward poverty reduction, and the need for advocacy and smart practices respecting poverty reduction. The following paragraphs will focus on each of these themes respectively.

7.2 Discussion: Genesis of a Movement

Reviewing the genesis of a living wage movement, as observed through the current state analysis and jurisdictional scans, suggests Camrose may be fertile ground for such a movement. Survey results identified three community service areas most concerning to stakeholders; availability of jobs (56.4%); public transportation (52.7%); and housing (29.1%).

Childcare was identified by an above average number of respondents as unsatisfactory, however not given an equivalent consideration as a result of the high number of not applicable answers received. This was done as a precaution to prevent any influence on the survey results. Camrose also operates a transportation network that offers transportation service currently four days per week with limited operational hours, and this is particularly important when reviewing survey data (City of Camrose, 2017). There is an obvious need to further study transportation services in the city, and this is a recommended practice going forward.

Recalling that Camrose has a mid-range cost of housing according to the CMHC (2016), there is obvious concern amongst respondents about multiple aspects of housing. Given the potential for differing views on housing definitions, it is a fair criticism of the project to suggest a firm definition may have been appropriate to include in the survey. Living wage movement data studied during the literature review noted sizable links between cost of living and housing. Links between the overall level of satisfaction related to housing (66.5%) may indicate to the client that additional clarity is required respecting the definition of housing.

The responses respecting the availability of jobs possibly indicates concerns about either the accessibility, or quality of jobs in the city. The current data indicates a high proportion of service based employment, and low proportion of manufacturing and production jobs offering possible explanations to the level of dissatisfaction in the responses. Sector specific studies are

noted to be areas of further research, as the Brandon, MB example illustrates there are potential unintended consequences of wage increases across all sectors.

A final consideration is wage, and age-related income disparity. Provincially, Alberta has moderate diversity amongst minimum wage earners in terms of age. As the following figure indicates, the largest single group of minimum wage earners is below the age of 19, yet a significant number of minimum wage earners, nearly 28% are between the ages of 20 and 29. This suggests that wage inequity is not simply a young person’s problem, and multiple age groups must be considered when evaluating wage increases. An area of further study derived from this evaluation would include the relationship between age demographics, and the role played in living wage movements.

	April 2015 - March 2016	April 2016 - March 2017
15-19	32.7%	32.6%
20-24	17.9%	20.1%
25-29	9.6%	10.0%
30-34	6.6%	7.4%
35-39	6.4%	5.2%
40-44	5.7%	5.5%
45-49	3.6%	3.4%
50-54	2.4%	4.4%
55+	15.1%	11.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 6. Proportion of minimum wage earners by age classification April 2015 – March 2017. Adapted from Alberta Labour (2017). Retrieved from: <https://work.alberta.ca/documents/alberta-minimum-wage-profile.pdf>

The genesis of a movement, as noted in the case study and jurisdictional scan shows another key variable observed; the disparity of wages and true costs of living in the community. This variable was observed as essential to the genesis of the wage movement in New Westminster, and is clearly present in Camrose today, albeit not to the same degree (ACORN, 2010). This issue is raised as census data in Alberta demonstrates that there are nearly 600,000 Albertans between the ages of 20 and 29, roughly 25% of the total population, and 240,000 people between the ages of 15 and 19 (Statistics Canada, 2016). This factor is suggested as an area of further study as the low-income earners now span two significant age categories, the youth of a community and province, and the generation of individuals with significant life experience.

Evidence based decision making

Focusing on outcomes, Wright et al. (2016) note three outcome-based processes for decision making relative to human benefit programmes; rational, political, and mixed, processes that if followed provide real, or perceived outcomes of needs assessments. The process for change based on a needs assessment is the focus of this section.

After completing this research, it appears all three processes are intertwined in decision making progressions respecting wage policies, and support the need for a living wage movement in addition to civic or state-level policy. There are elements of rational thought noted such as the reliance on evidence-based, statistical data to determine wage floors and discrepancies, the availability and prevalence of jobs by sector, and links to what Moser (1998) describes as the tangible factors in poverty evaluation and subsequent responses. Survey results and jurisdictional scans support the desire for significant bodies of data when evaluating wage policies, with several respondents sought a review of any proposed policy prior to its implementation.

Political considerations respecting power and decision making were also noted in the survey data, jurisdictional scans, and the literature review as essential to the success of such policies. An obvious theme emerged, as government bodies have historically been responsible for the determination of minimum wages determines wage laws (Lammam, 2014; Luce, 2017). Living wage policies can be described as top-down in their implementation, and grassroots in their origin as demonstrated in the New Westminster, Finnish, and UK examples. These are important considerations for the client as the origins of the movement are local, and the potential impacts extending to regional, provincial or even national levels. Any policy created then should have the relevant considerations for such perspectives and influence in the authors view. Another sub theme identified is the need for a consistent definition of living wage across sectors and levels of government. Survey respondents preferred two possible definitions, and the literature available suggests that additional definitions exist indicating the need for a relevant and consistent definition of what is a living wage.

There is also an identified importance of multiple strategies toward poverty reduction as this is an obviously complex topic. For example, wage determinations reported in the survey suggest experience, qualifications, seniority, education, and job-related competencies are significant factors in determining wages in this community. Yet most likely to receive identified as youth, unskilled, challenges such as mental health, elderly. Information respecting who earns what wage and why living wages improve conditions for those in a community. Half of respondents report a moderate awareness and concerns raised about job losses. The ‘movement’ for living wages as demonstrated in the UK, Finland and New Westminster requires ‘champions’ to initiate, advocate and maintain wage changes, and living wage policy alone appears insufficient (Pei, et al., 2015, p.87; City of Vancouver, 2017). Survey results indicate a lack of knowledge of

other jurisdictions that have implemented living wage policies yet most respondents agreed with the statement they have improved local economies.

The literature review also revealed that risk taking is required and the need for belief in the less tangible outcomes such as social capital, community relationship building and empowerment among low-wage earners which require separation from rational processes. Mixed processes, or the Garbage Can as Wright et al. (2016) describe, is likely the best way to describe living wage decision making processes studied, and why the need for a movement exists. Political processes suggest the creation of power relationships, and the desire to control outcomes (Wright et al., 2016). Power relationships have obvious impacts on living wage movements as illustrated in New Westminster and other jurisdictions, and require organisational capacity to navigate such relationships and power imbalances (Pei et al., 2015). Survey responses alluded to political influences; despite the intentional avoidance of direct political questions to the survey group. Multiple references to the governing New Democratic Party in Alberta were noted by respondents, indicating political processes are engaged in the living wage forum as well, and the literature reviewed supports this noting rationales for living wage implementation span economic, political, and social influences.

7.3 Discussion: Advocacy and Collaboration

Given the client's role as an advocacy and advisory group for the City of Camrose, regional advocacy and championing the cause as Pei et al. (2015) describe, perhaps positions the committee to be both the coordinator of a movement, and an advocate for policy in the city. Advocacy considerations were observed in the survey results, jurisdictional reviews and literature to this policy end.

Respondents were identified and selected as their role in the community invariably suggests they hold considerable stake in the research outcomes, and will be impacted by the decision to implement a living wage policy in Camrose. Some respondents expressed concerns regarding the ability of a living wage policy to be more than symbolic if implemented, and identified the need for multiple solutions and regional approaches to address poverty in the Camrose area. This same theme was observed in the literature review and jurisdictional scan where state-level policies failed to account for regional differences and demographic challenges (Sellers, 2017). This is a timely concern as the provincial government is raising the provincial minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour in twelve months.

The theme of advocacy was illustrated in the New Westminster example, and partnerships amongst regions were found to be essential during the review of wage differences between jurisdictions in Alberta, and highlights the need for greater advocacy and influence over regional decision-making abilities. The question could be raised that \$15.00 per hour minimum wages do not address the wage gaps in Edmonton or Calgary based on their respective wage projections, and fail to address regional disparity (Sellers, 2017).

Luce (2017) suggests the most common initiator of living wage movements is a response to low minimum wages, and viewing wage movements with a collaborative lens may improve sustainability, and effective policy implementation as responsibilities are then shared between trade unions and employers for example (Sellers, 2017). Regional participation was a theme extracted from the survey results, and the need to partner with organisations such as the Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance, or like organizations was also noted in the literature review. Collaborative processes were observed in the New Westminster example, the European reviews, and in the numerous survey responses.

It is clear from the project research that living wage policy is not implemented in a vacuum, or independent of other stakeholders, as outcomes are felt across sectors. As job creation, or job reductions were identified by both the literature and the respondents, collaboration could potentially offer solutions. Survey respondents stated the creation of jobs was most related to enhancing the local economy, and as was illustrated in UK example of living wage advocacy, the success of passing the country's first living wage policy was done in conjunction with some 3000 employers (Sellers, 2017).

Collaboration when paired with the previously discussed information theme, may ease some of the survey respondents concerns regarding higher wages leading to a decrease in the overall numbers of available positions, and a potential lack of competitiveness in the region. Luce (2017) found significant job losses have not been recorded in living wage communities studied following her meta-analysis, despite claims by opponents of living wages, and it would serve the client well to be aware similar concerns exist in Camrose. Notably, given the short time frame of living wage policies in Canada, the same analysis of time and communities with legislated policies is not available.

Collaboration may also offer solutions to systemic barriers to change within welfare systems such as multiple applications for funding, and offer opportunities to mitigate any unintended consequences such as wage increases preventing low income earners from qualifying for social assistance as was suggested in Brandon, MB (Fernandez, 2016).

Following the analysis, the following solutions emerge:

1. Advocate for a living wage policy unique to Camrose.
2. Consider whether resources exist to lobby the Federal and Provincial governments to create regional strategies to improve wages, such as guaranteed basic incomes or national minimums.
3. Support provincial increases to fifteen dollars per hour in 2018.
4. Support a healthy city campaign that addresses a multitude of community issues such as housing, employment and transportation.

These solutions will next be discussed in the recommendations section.

8.0 Recommendations

The following are general recommendations emerging from the research conducted, including literature reviews, stakeholder surveys and the results of the needs assessment. It is proposed the recommendations follow a systematic process of implementation (1 – 4) where the information gathered from recommendation one informs the succeeding recommendations. This process is suggested as it allows for political suitability, fits within the client’s mandate, offers methodological fit, is contextual for the client and transparent in its approach (Baba & HeakemZadeh, 2012)

Recommendations two and three are seen as most achievable in the short-term, and require the fewest resources to implement. Recommendation one is suggested to be the highest priority given the clients desire for evidence-based processes, however is likely to present the highest financial costs, and require the largest expenditure of resources.

Recommendation 1. Conduct an independent wage analysis for the City of Camrose.

Given the complexity of the calculations respecting wages discovered in this project including tax adjustments, the array of government subsidies both federally and provincially, and the inclusion or exclusion of employer specific benefits; further information is required by the committee to accurately reflect a living wage in Camrose, and the City of Camrose as a possible living wage employer.

Looking to other communities in the region who have already calculated wages, this suggested starting point is drawn from the research as many of the communities have formed wage committees and relied on consulting firms to produce these somewhat complex calculations (CAPRA, 2016). The model employed by CAPRA (2016) was completed by a third-party consultant, and is comprehensive in that it also extends beyond two-income households to include single-parent and households without children. Partnerships with committees such as this allow the client the opportunity to collaborate with other organisations with similar mandates, and establish regional partnerships respecting poverty reduction which were concepts noted to contribute to success of living wage movements, and as essential findings in the participant survey.

Reliance on a third-party consultant would also provide the necessary independent viewpoints required for a calculation of this nature to ensure that the most current data is reviewed, and remove any suggestions of bias given this project authors affiliation with the client.

There are drawbacks to living wage policies when implemented as unforeseen costs are defined. For example, the City of Vancouver recently implemented a living wage and found that while no direct city employee’s wage was below the newly legislated living wage of \$20.64 per hour, a number of contractors wages fell below this level and the increased cost to the city was over \$450,000 at the time of implementation (City of Vancouver, 2016).

This stresses the importance of a fulsome wage analysis prior to implementation, and it is recommended that this step be the first priority for the client as it will inform all other discussions surrounding living wages in Camrose. There is an obvious financial cost to obtain such data, and it is further recommended that the client create a sub-committee to initiate the request for proposal process to determine if this is within the committee's budget presently, or if additional funds are required.

Recommendation 2. Support provincial initiatives to increase minimum wages.

In short, it is recommended the client advocate city council to position the City of Camrose as a supporter of the 2018 minimum wage increase. As a result of the research there is an obvious need for a community-specific wage calculation that considers all living wage factors. That being said, given the provincial government's commitment to raise minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour in the next 12 months, there is an opportunity to have wages paid to workers in the city that addresses the preliminary living wage findings of this project in Camrose.

The research project findings suggest a living wage in Camrose would be calculated in the range of \$13.53 to \$16.97 per hour depending on qualifying subsidies applied, potential employer health benefits, and varying income tax considerations for low-wage earners. The recommendation therefore is to publicly support the minimum wage increases citing the benefits to over half of Camrose residents, and the positive impacts discovered in the literature including tangible benefits such as social inclusion, and economic improvements for those receiving higher wages together with increases in spending power.

Publicly supporting minimum wage increases offers the client the ability to leverage the benefits of the provincial minimum wage increase further, in that it places wages on the agenda of provincial ministries prior to municipal council essentially shifting policy considerations to the provincial government.

Through continued advocacy, wage and cost of living awareness mature, and support for increased provincial minimums means meeting basic incomes required to live at a socially acceptable standard in Camrose. By focusing on public advocacy, a positive attribute of living wage calculations is realized through subsequent adjustments to wage policies according to changes in the community characteristics (Luce, 2017). An advocacy process such as this would prevent arbitrary wage calculations from being applied, such as in the "Fight for 15" in the United States, where proposed living wages lack defensible calculations, and ignore one of the many benefits to living wages in that it keeps financial calculations required to live at a socially acceptable standard reconsidered annually (Luce, 2017).

To accomplish this recommendation, it is proposed that the client advise council of the advocacy potential realized in communities such as New Westminster, whereby support for a living wage in Camrose is at present met by provincial initiatives, and that wage discussions must remain forefront. A media release, and letters to the applicable government ministries such as Alberta

Municipal Affairs and Alberta Labour would demonstrate a commitment to wage reviews with minimal resources engaged. Therefore; it is proposed the Committee consider a formal written request be sent to Council for a draft resolution in support of minimum wage increases and living wages in Alberta. This approach arguably will also narrow political implications for council respecting the creation of potentially unpopular civic policy as well.

Recommendation 3: Create an education strategy supporting increased wages.

One key finding in the research illustrates misinformation exists respecting living wages in Camrose and abroad, and a strategy is required to mitigate this. Reviewing statistical data does not situate present day Camrose in the same socio-economic situations researched in New Westminster, Vancouver, or the UK considering costs of living combined with low wage minimums. Given this, the strategy recommended would be for Council to endorse provincial minimum wage increases and to support an accompanying provincial or local education strategy to ensure community members and businesses are aware of the benefits given recent wage calculations.

Extending this education and awareness strategy to a provincial level with such advocacy groups as the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) is also suggested as beneficial. The AUMA describes its goals as effective advocacy across local, provincial, and federal government levels while collaborating with municipalities, both large and small, across the Province toward what is described as a betterment of social and economic factors in the province (AUMA, 2017).

Media releases and letter writing strategies are also suggested to address this recommendation, as these approaches are cost aware, and given the volunteer nature of the committee, align with the perceived capacity of the committee to commit resources to such activities.

Recommendation 4. Initiate a holistic city-wide strategy that includes living wage policy, and other poverty reduction strategies collaboratively to achieve measurable outcomes.

Several themes emerged from the research including the need for civic collaboration to address poverty, as well the need for multiple strategies with multiple to create sustainable change. Following the example of the City of Vancouver (2016), a city-wide strategy could include the following smart practice variables:

- Affordable childcare and education
- Housing strategies developed and implemented
- Food security strategies and healthy eating campaigns
- Available human services improvements
- Living wage and employment growth
- Public safety and inclusion strategies
- Community relationships and connections

- Active living and accessible activities
- Lifelong learning opportunities
- Cultural diversity and opportunities to express cultural differences
- Mobility opportunities
- Healthy environments and outdoor spaces
- Collaborative leadership regional partnerships

The variables suggested emerged from the survey and from the literature reviewed, and are proposed with the awareness that the City of Camrose is addressing many of the issues as part of the 2014-2018 strategic planning process. These specific variables are suggested to differ somewhat from the strategic plan in that they are more targeted to issues rather than being considered pillars such as environment, or social wellness (City of Camrose, 2014). The variables also offer opportunities for the client to collaborate with other city committees and take a leadership role to address the housing, wage, and transportation needs in the city derived from community stakeholders.

It is recommended that Council rely on the existing Social Development Committee to coordinate and forward this strategy, as the SDC appears best positioned to address the multitude of social factors such as housing, public safety, and community relationships given its composition. If so desired, existing city committees could contribute representatives to form a blended committee to ensure fair and suitable representation rather than forming a new committee to address the work of multiple committees. This approach is seen as cost effective as it relies on volunteers already engaged in the various public committees, and build on existing strategic planning.

Next Steps

These four recommendations lead to proposed next steps for the client including meeting with the committee members to examine this report and discuss the findings. It is encouraged that this discussion take place in the immediate to avoid loss of data, and to prevent dissipation of information prior to the 2018 minimum wage changes. Squires (2008, p. 203) argues this immediacy is necessary to change current distributive patterns, as well as to avoid “personal or institutional responsibility for pursuing any policies other than the status quo”.

This status quo avoidance could be accomplished through the creation of a sub-committee to explore the viability of funding a wage review in Camrose. This sub-committee could investigate whether the committee seeks to initiate the suggested media strategy in favour of living wages, as well as seek to establish agreement toward the collaboration and coordination an all-committee approach toward the creation of a holistic city-wide strategy rather than the six-pillar approach presently established.

This sub-committee approach offers inclusive opportunities to implement the four recommended changes, and would avoid what Squires (2008) refers to as the mobilization of individual bias.

This bias is argued to affect outcomes influenced by broad social forces that seek to perpetuate Human Capital Theories, theories that promote privilege and the rationale that human choice alone dictates social outcomes. Collaborative approaches such as all-committee working groups, and public consultation toward a holistic, and inclusive city-wide approach will avoid such biases, and serve to provide education opportunities identified as essential to promoting living wage benefits.

9.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to explore wage gaps that exist in the City of Camrose, and summarize findings related to living wage trends from other jurisdictions both within Alberta, across Canada and further abroad by examining literature and drawing on the experiences of community stakeholders. The research questions were evaluated against existing literature and stakeholder information, and findings indicate that a community based living calculation is an area of distinct study and should not be completed without consideration for all applicable variables including taxation, subsidies, and benefits.

This research project also identified key indicators for the implementation of living wage policy, examined arguments supporting and discouraging living wage policies, and provided four recommendations to the client including the need for a fulsome wage analysis by a third-party, to support and educate community respecting the benefits of pending provincial minimum wage increases, and create a holistic city strategy that includes living wages as part of poverty-reduction planning in the city.

These recommendations led to proposed next steps for the Social Development Committee with a focus on strategic planning and collaboration as these factors were discovered as essential to any living wage or community based strategy toward income focused poverty reduction strategies.

To summarize, a quote from Gregory Squires (2008, p. 211) seems appropriate; “Collective problems require collective responses.” This is arguably the greatest opportunity for living wage policies, particularly when combined with whole-community strategies that address multiple causes of social challenges and opportunities for change. This social change is more than engineering in this writers’ opinion; it is perhaps the most sustainable approach as it is quantifiable and avoids past mistakes of choice theories and human capital theories that disregard social influences, and view the individual as wholly responsible for their own outcomes. Living wages applied with the appropriate accounting, reduce both intangible and tangible effects of privilege, status, and access to any number of services and resources.

Living wage policy change, if enacted in Camrose, will allow the city to not only be a trailblazer in wage reforms, it will also allow the 18th largest city in Alberta to become the first to formally implement groundbreaking wage policy.

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11.0 Appendices

Appendix 1

Living Wage calculation

Camrose Calculation (2017/09/13)

FOOD:

\$1089.54/month. Based on estimates by the Alberta Health Services (2015) for a nutritious diet, which do not consider special dietary needs, cultural or other food preferences, and the cost of condiments or spices. <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/nutrition/if-nfs-the-cost-of-healthy-eating-in-alberta-.pdf>

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR: \$162/month. (Policy alternatives – BC Calculation)

SHELTER: \$1441.08 (1200 Rent + 241.08 utilities)

Avenue Living – 755-1050/month 2 bd – no 3 bd offered
<http://www.avenueliving.ca/apartments/cities/camrose>

Kijiji ad's (Sept 13, 2017): <https://www.kijiji.ca/b-house-rental/alberta/camrose/k0c43l9003>

Range \$1,200 – \$1,600 for an average 3-bedroom home + utilities

2-bedroom sample (from both rental companies and online ad's) 16 advertisements reviewed for 2-bedroom apartments (without utilities or furnishings)

Highest Price per month: \$1,250

Lowest price per month: \$710

Average price: \$880

CMHC Average \$9###

Utilities Source:

AB Government: Utilities The utilities industry in Alberta includes: electric power generation, transmission and distribution; natural gas distribution; and water, sewer and irrigation systems. Whether you rent or own, you will likely be responsible for paying for your utilities. The average Alberta yearly expenditure per household for water, fuel and electricity is **\$2,893**. Other monthly household costs may include: Basic digital cable TV \$26 Basic phone \$30 Basic high speed Internet \$42 Source: Survey of Household Spending 2010, *Statistics Canada*

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/3a993c93-4dea-4424-983d-650b2be5d998/resource/328fd726-0cd1-432b-ba12-6fe70016f78f/download/zz-2012-12-LivingAB-general-w.pdf>

CONNECTIVITY: \$249

Phone/tv/Internet: 119/month <https://www.eastlink.ca/bundles.aspx>

Cellular phones: 100/month – 2 phones (0\$ contracts with 2GB data/phone 49.99/month each)
http://www.pcmobile.ca/monthly_plans_features.jsp

Contents Insurance: \$50.00 (Canadian average \$40) <https://insureye.com/condo-insurance/>

“...a conservative rent estimate for a three-bedroom apartment, utilities, Internet, two basic cell phone plans, and insurance on home contents.”

TRANSPORTATION: \$220.33

Transit \$4/day (2 dollars each trip) only runs on T/T/F/Sat (\$16 x52) 69.33/Month

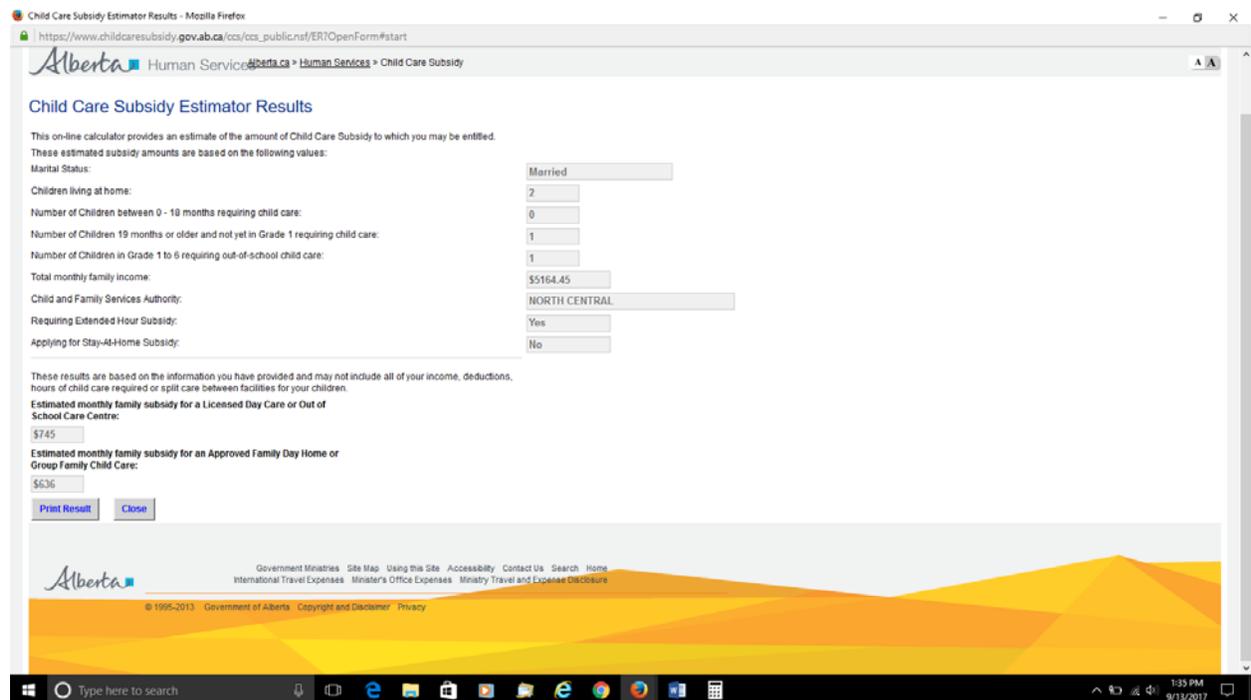
<http://camrose.maps.arcgis.com/apps/SimpleViewer/index.html?appid=2e53484910614af382f4797282bec1ff>

\$160/month payment - Vehicle at \$12,000.00 assuming a 5–6 % interest rate
<http://www.scotiabank.com/ca/en/0,,10536,00.html#monthly-payment>

CHILD CARE: \$1,425/month (no subsidy). <http://www.camrosechildrencentre.com/fees-subsidy>

Sample subsidy \$745/month - with provincial subsidy child care total: **\$680**

Assumes one “...four-year-old in full-time care; and a seven-year-old in before- and after-school care, full-time care during winter break (one week, the other assumed covered by statutory holidays and informal arrangements) and spring break (two weeks) and six weeks of full-time summer care. Child care is the second most expensive item in the living wage family budget after shelter.”



With subsidy and contingency fund:

$$5136.90 \times 12 = 61,642.80$$

61,642.80 + 2612.80/4160= \$14.87/hour with contingency fund and subsidy (Cont. fund of 13.33 hours @16.33 or \$217.73/month building to “two weeks’ wages for each parent in a calendar year, which provides for unexpected events like the serious illness of a family member, transition time between jobs, etc.”)

This living wage calculation does not cover:

- Credit card, loan, or other debt/interest payments;
- Savings for retirement;
- Owning a home;
- Savings for children’s future education;
- Anything beyond minimal recreation, entertainment, or holiday costs;
- Costs of caring for a disabled, seriously ill, or elderly family member; or

Appendix 2

Survey results: Final

Please indicate whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the following services in the Camrose area:

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Not Applicable	Total Responses
Schools	46 (83.6%)	2 (3.6%)	7 (12.7%)	55
Shopping and Dining	44 (80.0%)	11 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	55
Housing	36 (65.5%)	16 (29.1%)	3 (5.5%)	55
Cultural Activities	51 (92.7%)	4 (7.3%)	0 (0.0%)	55
Public Safety	52 (94.5%)	3 (5.5%)	0 (0.0%)	55
Public Transportation	21 (38.2%)	29 (52.7%)	5 (9.1%)	55
Health Services	47 (85.5%)	8 (14.5%)	0 (0.0%)	55
Sports and Recreation Facilities	47 (85.5%)	6 (10.9%)	2 (3.6%)	55
Social Services	49 (89.1%)	4 (7.3%)	2 (3.6%)	55
Infrastructure	42 (77.8%)	11 (20.4%)	1 (1.9%)	54
Availability of Jobs	22 (40.0%)	31 (56.4%)	2 (3.6%)	55
Childcare	20 (37.0%)	13 (24.1%)	21 (38.9%)	54

Please describe your role in your organisation:

Response	Chart	Count
Member of a Leadership Team (Any Sector)		34
Elected or Appointed Official		5
Board Member		4
Community Volunteer		5
Other		17
Prefer not to answer		0
Total Responses		55

How many employees (including volunteer positions if applicable) does your organization presently employ?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Less than 10		30.9%	17
10-25		12.7%	7
26-100		18.2%	10
Greater than 100		38.2%	21
		Total Responses	55

Please describe (to the best of your knowledge) how wages are determined in your organization

The 54 response(s) to this question can be found in the appendix.

What would you describe as the most important factor when organizations determine wages?

The 54 response(s) to this question can be found in the appendix.

What do you consider to be a minimum wage?

The 54 response(s) to this question can be found in the appendix.

Presently, Alberta's minimum wage is \$12.20 per hour. What percentage of employees in your organisation are paid a minimum wage?

The 54 response(s) to this question can be found in the appendix.

Wage policies are said to impact all workers across sectors. What age group would you believe is most likely to earn a minimum wage?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Younger than 18		54.5%	30
18 - 24		38.2%	21
25 - 34		0.0%	0
35 - 44		0.0%	0

45 - 54		0.0%	0
55 - 64		0.0%	0
65 or older		1.8%	1
Prefer not to answer		5.5%	3
		Total Responses	55

Please select what best describes your knowledge of, or awareness of, what is described as a “Living Wage” in place of a minimum wage?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very Aware		34.5%	19
Moderately Aware		49.1%	27
Low Awareness or Unaware		16.4%	9
Unaware		0.0%	0
		Total Responses	55

There are several available definitions of what is considered a living wage. Which definition would you prefer?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
An income sufficient to pay for the basic necessities of life, so they can live with dignity and participate as active citizens in our society		45.5%	25
A wage sufficient to provide the necessities and comforts essential to an acceptable standard of living		18.2%	10
A market-based approach that draws upon geographically specific expenditure data related to a family’s likely minimum costs of living		10.9%	6
An estimate of the income required to offset the cost of providing basic necessities, and it varies according to the location of the individual		21.8%	12
Amounts set so that a full-time worker with a family of four earns more than some measure of poverty (for example the Federal poverty line in Canada)		3.6%	2

Based on your chosen definition, what would you estimate a calculated Living Wage to be (in dollars per hour) for the Camrose region?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Less than \$10 per hour		0.0%	0
\$10-\$12 per hour		5.5%	3
\$13-\$15 per hour		23.6%	13
\$16-\$18 per hour		43.6%	24
\$19-\$21 per hour		10.9%	6
Greater than \$22 per hour		16.4%	9
		Total Responses	55

Are you aware of any other jurisdictions that have enacted living wage policies or laws? If so, could you describe where they are located?

The 30 response(s) to this question can be found in the appendix.

Do you believe that the Camrose area would benefit on a social basis from policy that advocates for Living Wages?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		75.9%	41
No		24.1%	13
		Total Responses	54

The Government of Canada recently committed to the creation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy to reduce poverty, and improve economic conditions for Canadian families. Do you believe living wage policies would be related to such poverty reduction strategies? Please explain.

The 38 response(s) to this question can be found in the appendix.

How would you rate other poverty reduction strategies in terms of effectiveness?

	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Least Effective	Unsure	Total Responses
Economic Development	5 (9.6%)	40 (76.9%)	4 (7.7%)	3 (5.8%)	52
Income Security	17 (32.7%)	24 (46.2%)	8 (15.4%)	3 (5.8%)	52
Food Security	15 (28.8%)	29 (55.8%)	5 (9.6%)	3 (5.8%)	52
Affordable\Accessible housing	28 (53.8%)	18 (34.6%)	4 (7.7%)	2 (3.8%)	52
Access to Financing or Reducing Predatory Lending	15 (28.8%)	22 (42.3%)	13 (25.0%)	2 (3.8%)	52
Ending Chronic Homelessness	19 (36.5%)	20 (38.5%)	8 (15.4%)	5 (9.6%)	52

What segment of society do you believe would benefit most from Living Wage policies?

The 44 response(s) to this question can be found in the appendix.

What is most important to you related to enhancing your local economy?

	1 - Most Important	2 - Somewhat Important	3 - Moderate Importance	4 - Somewhat Unimportant	5 - Least Important	Total Responses
Job Creation	28 (53.8%)	22 (42.3%)	2 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	52
Government Funding and Investment (i.e. infrastructure spending)	9 (17.3%)	26 (50.0%)	15 (28.8%)	2 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	52
Foreign Investment and Trade	0 (0.0%)	12 (23.1%)	21 (40.4%)	10 (19.2%)	9 (17.3%)	52

Decreases in Taxes	8 (15.4%)	11 (21.2%)	13 (25.0%)	12 (23.1%)	8 (15.4%)	52
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Living Wage policies are described as policies that encourage, or mandate the use of calculated wages based on an actual cost of living, in addition to prescribed minimum wages. Would you agree with findings in other jurisdictions that Living Wage policies may improve local economies?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Agree		75.0%	39
Disagree		3.8%	2
Unsure		21.2%	11
Total Responses			52

Would you support a Living Wage policy in Camrose? Why or why not?

The 44 response(s) to this question can be found in the appendix.

Is there any other information related to wage policies that you would like to add?

The 26 response(s) to this question can be found in the appendix.