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AN OPEN LETTER TO HAMILTON CITY COUNCILLORS

Thursday February 6th, 2020

Dear fellow Councillors,

I understand Hamilton City Council will be discussing two living wage motions this Friday. We commend you for furthering this important debate and for the City of Hamilton's long standing leadership in tackling poverty.

As you are keenly aware, municipalities across Ontario are facing significant financial challenges, yet we have found that paying employees the local living wage is an investment in our community's future. Paying a living wage to municipal workers sends a strong message about the need to reduce income inequality both within our organization – and outside of it.

Employees who benefit from earning a Living Wage are typically working-age adults in their 30s, 40s and 50s—often helping to support their own families. According to Statistics Canada, the number of low-wage workers has doubled in the last two decades. If municipalities can do their part to reduce that disparity, there can be significant returns: greater productivity, less sick time and far fewer turnovers. Workers who earn more feel valued and, as a result, help us achieve our goals as an organization.

In looking at certification, we found that, like most municipal employers, all of our full-time and most part-time employees were above the current living wage rate. With phased implementation, we will look at bringing the rest up to living wage levels as contracts come up for renewal.

But this is not the only way a city can take a leadership role in poverty reduction. As you are aware, municipalities are also significant purchasers of goods and services and can inspire the private sector to do their part to reduce working poverty. Later this year, the City of Kingston will be looking at **living wage procurement policies that will encourage contractors to pay at least a living wage to their workers.**

Great cities of the 21st century will themselves be good and fair employers. We hope to see the City of Hamilton join Kingston and other municipalities as leaders in this growing decent work movement.

Please reach out to the Ontario Living Wage Network or myself if you require additional resources, or have any questions.

Sincerely,

Bridget Doherty
Councillor, Councillor, City of Kingston, Portsmouth District