

A Fair Minimum Wage for Manitoba – Voter’s Guide

Manitoba’s Minimum Wage Today

28,000 Manitobans earn the minimum wage. A majority of them are adults. 1,400 of them are single parents. Almost half work full time. 4 in 10 work for big companies with more than 500 employees.

Making just \$9.50 per hour, Manitoba’s minimum wage earners need and spend every dollar they earn. They spend almost all of it right here in Manitoba, helping to create jobs and support the local economy.

Even though the minimum wage has been raised every year for the past 11 years in Manitoba, the current rate is only the 4th highest in Canada. When it increases to \$10/hour on October 1st, 2011, it will be the second highest in Canada but will fall well short of a living wage. A single mother working full time on minimum wage earns \$8,000/year less than the poverty line (Statistics Canada Low Income Cutoff).

A Fair Minimum Wage Policy for Manitoba

Manitoba was the first province in Canada to bring in a minimum wage. The Working Families Manitoba campaign believes Manitoba should continue to show leadership with a **Fair Minimum Wage** policy:

- A fair minimum wage requires **regular increases** so that families can keep up with rising prices.
- A fair minimum wage would be a **living wage** – enough to cover basic costs of living. We believe that means a minimum wage that’s at least 60% of the average wage in Manitoba. Currently, this would result in a minimum wage of \$11.80/hr (in 2010 the average wage in Manitoba was \$19.66/hr).
- A fair minimum wage **pays the same rate to all workers**. There should be no “two tier” minimum wage rates that discriminate against some groups of workers.

With a provincial election coming soon (October 4th), Working Families Manitoba has pulled together the facts about where Manitoba’s political leaders and parties stand on a Fair Minimum Wage.

Summary - Where the political parties stand on a Fair Minimum Wage:

| | Regular Increases to the Minimum Wage | Raising the Minimum Wage to a Living Wage | Two-Tier Minimum Wage |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| A Fair Minimum Wage (The Working Families Manitoba Position) | Support | Support | Oppose |
| Progressive Conservative Party (PC Manitoba) | Oppose | Oppose | Support |
| New Democratic Party (NDP) | Support | Partially support | Oppose |
| Manitoba Liberal Party | No Position | No Position | No Position |

Details - Where the political parties stand on a Fair Minimum Wage:

Hugh McFadyen and the Progressive Conservative Party

Oppose regular increases to the minimum wage:

- Opposed and criticized minimum wage increases in the Legislature (*Manitoba Legislature Debates: Sept. 22/09, Nov. 28/08, April 8/10, June 14/10*)
- Leader Hugh McFadyen criticized minimum wage increases as “political candy” (*Red River Valley Echo, Nov. 23/09*)
- During the last election campaign leaders’ debate, McFadyen was asked if he would raise the minimum wage. He refused to support raising the minimum wage (*CBC Leaders’ Debate, May 17/07: http://www.cbc.ca/manitobavotes2007/media/video/debate_economy.aspx*)
- When they last formed government in Manitoba, the Conservatives did not increase the minimum wage in 7 of 11 years in office.

Oppose raising the minimum wage to a living wage:

- Conservative MLAs acknowledge “you cannot live on minimum wage,” but oppose raising it. Instead, McFadyen’s Conservatives support reducing income taxes for minimum wage earners. (*Manitoba Legislature Debates: April 27/09, May 5/09, Sept. 22/09, June 8/10, June 14/10; and CBC Leaders’ Debate, May 17/07: http://www.cbc.ca/manitobavotes2007/media/video/debate_economy.aspx*)
- When they last formed government in Manitoba, Conservative increases to the minimum wage did not keep pace with rising prices. Prices rose by 34% while the minimum wage rose by 28%.

Support a “Two Tier” Minimum Wage that pays different rates to different groups of workers:

- In the most recent sessions of the Manitoba Legislature, Conservative MLAs have called for a two tier minimum wage (*Manitoba Legislature Debates: June 14/10, Dec. 9/09*)

Greg Selinger and the New Democratic Party

Support regular increases to the minimum wage:

- Increased the minimum wage every year for the past 11 years.
- Announced the minimum wage will increase to \$10/hour on October 1, 2011.

Support raising the minimum wage a bit closer to, but not all the way, to a living wage:

- Although under the NDP, the minimum wage has risen to 47% of the average wage in 2010, up from 38% in 1994, it remains well below the 60% threshold that we believe is a living wage (*Data from Restoring Minimum Wages in Canada, by Ken Battle, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, April 2011*)
- Since the NDP formed government in 1999, it has improved the purchasing power of the minimum wage by raising it twice as much as prices have risen.

Adjusting for inflation, the real value of the minimum wage rose from \$7.37/hour in 1999 to \$9.50/hour in 2010 (in constant 2010 dollars).

Oppose a “Two Tier” Minimum Wage that pays different rates to different groups of workers:

- The NDP government rejected a recommendation from the Minimum Wage Review Board in 2001 to implement a two tier minimum wage.

Jon Gerrard and the Manitoba Liberal Party

Silent on regular increases to the minimum wage:

- During the last election campaign leaders’ debate, Leader Jon Gerrard was asked if he would raise the minimum wage. He refused to support raising the minimum wage (*CBC Leaders’ Debate, May 17/07*: http://www.cbc.ca/manitobavotes2007/media/video/debate_economy.asx)
- Beyond that, the Manitoba Liberals have largely been silent on increasing the minimum wage.

Silent on raising the minimum wage to a living wage:

- Manitoba Liberals have been silent on raising the minimum wage. When Leader John Gerrard introduced his Social Inclusion and Anti-Poverty Act, he did not mention increasing the minimum wage as a way to reduce poverty (*Manitoba Legislature Debates: May 22/08*)

Silent on a “Two Tier” Minimum Wage that pays different rates to different groups of workers:

- Manitoba Liberals have been silent on a two tier minimum wage.