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# MANITOBA LIVING WAGE UPDATE 2025

Niall Harney and Jesse Hajer



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# Key Highlights

- The 2025 Winnipeg living wage is increasing by \$1.02 to \$19.77 an hour, while living wages for Brandon and Thompson are essentially holding steady at \$16.22 and \$17.89, respectively.
- The living wage increase in Winnipeg is being driven by rising food prices, the higher cost of renting a three-bedroom apartment in Winnipeg, and higher transportation costs. These cost increases are a reflection of both inflationary pressures as well as Statistics Canada's updating of how food and transportation costs are measured, using improved data on prices and household consumption in Manitoba.
- Despite the higher living wage, the Canada Child Benefit for the Winnipeg living wage family increased by 5 percent, although this increase was mostly offset by the elimination of the Canada Carbon Rebate.
- Brandon and Thompson families saw similar increases in the cost of food and vehicle ownership, but did not see the same large increase in rents. Both these families also saw large inflation-related increases to federal benefit programs, such as the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), the Canada Worker Benefit (CWB), and the GST Credit, leading to minimal changes in the living wage for families in these cities.
- 2025 Living Wages:
  - Winnipeg: \$19.77/hour
  - Brandon: \$16.22/hour
  - Thompson: \$17.89/hour

# 2025 Living Wage Update: The Big Picture

THE 2025 LIVING wage for Winnipeg, Brandon, and Thompson once again provides an up-to-date monitor on working poverty in Manitoba, and what is required to ensure no one working full-time is going hungry. For 2025, the Winnipeg living wage is increasing by \$1.02 to \$19.77 an hour, while living wages for Brandon and Thompson are effectively holding steady at \$16.22 and \$17.89, respectively.

A range of factors continue to drive Winnipeg's rising 2025 living wage, both on the expenses and the income side of our calculation. Overall expenses were up 4.6 percent between 2024 and 2025. Rising rents and food prices stand out: Food costs for the Winnipeg two-child, two-parent household increased by 8 percent between 2024 and 2025, while the median rent for a three-bedroom apartment increased by 5.7 per cent. Together, these expenses account for over fifty per cent of the living wage family budget, leaving the living wage particularly sensitive to rising food and shelter costs. These cost increases are a reflection of both inflationary pressures as well as Statistics Canada's updating of food and transportation cost measures in the Market Basket Measure, using improved data on prices and household consumption in Manitoba. The 2025 Voices Report from Foodbank Harvest Manitoba further underlines the extent of food insecurity in Winnipeg: the report cites a 150 per cent increase in foodbank usage since 2020, with families supporting

children and adults with post-secondary education increasingly accessing Harvest Manitoba's foodbank.<sup>1</sup>

Tamping down living wage increases in Brandon and Thompson was the continued rise in federal benefits catching up with inflation, as well as rental market stability. Income from federal benefits increased by between eleven and thirteen per cent for two-parent, two-child living wage families in Brandon and Thompson, with the Canada Child Benefit, Canada Worker Benefit, and GST Credit all rising in response to 2023 inflation. This is likely to be the last year we see significant increases in these federal benefits, as inflation has slowed down over the last two years. The 2025 benefit increases, alongside those in 2024, again show the powerful effect targeted benefits can deliver to low-wage workers and the importance of indexing these benefits to the cost of living.

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<sup>1</sup> Harvest Manitoba, "Voices 2025", December 1, 2025. <https://www.harvestmanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/harvest-voices-2025.pdf>

# What is a Living Wage?

THE LIVING WAGE is the hourly rate at which a household can meet its basic needs once government transfers have been added to the family's income (such as the Canada Child Benefit and Rent Assist) and deductions have been subtracted (such as income taxes and Employment Insurance premiums). The full details of the calculation methodology are spelled out in CCPA MB's Living Wage calculation guide, available at [www.policyalternatives.ca/manitoba](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/manitoba).

The living wage is based on:

- A family of two parents with two children aged four and seven. According to the 2021 census, couples head 71.6 percent of families with children in Manitoba, and 28.4 percent are single-parent families.<sup>2</sup>
- Both parents working full-time, at 35 hours per week.
- Estimated family expenses in 10 categories (listed on the following page), reflecting cost at the end of 2024.
- The cost of government deductions (provincial and federal taxes, Employment Insurance premiums and Canada Pension Plan contributions).

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, "Census Profile: 2021 Census of Population Profile table", December 10, 2025, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Manitoba&DGUIDlist=2021A000246&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1,4&HEADERlist=0>

- The value of government transfers, like the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), Canada Worker Benefit (CWB), GST Credits, Manitoba Rent Assist, and the Manitoba Child Care Subsidy.
- Employers providing minimal paid vacation and sick time.

This methodology follows the model for living wage calculations used across the country, with communities across Canada calculating their local living wage based on this approach. The living wage helps families escape severe financial stress by lifting them out of poverty and providing a basic level of economic security. But it is also a conservative, bare-bones budget without the extras many of us take for granted.

## A Bare Bones Budget — Portrait of a Living Wage Family's Expenses in Winnipeg

At \$19.77 per hour in Winnipeg — or \$36,080 annually in employment income for each parent working full-time — here's what a family of four could afford:

- **FOOD:** \$1,195/month (based on Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure food component).
- **CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR:** \$257/month (based on Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure clothing and footwear component).
- **SHELTER:** \$1,913/month (includes the median rent estimate for a three-bedroom unit, utilities and contents insurance).
- **TRANSPORTATION:** \$688/month (includes the amortized cost of owning and operating a used car and one adult monthly bus pass).
- **CHILD CARE:** \$483/month (a four-year-old in full-time care year-round, save for weekends, a seven-year-old in before and after school care, and full-time care for summer break, in-service days and winter/spring break).
- **PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE:** \$228/month (the cost of basic extended health and dental plan from Manitoba Blue Cross).
- **PARENTS' EDUCATION:** \$177/month (estimated cost of two university courses per year for one parent).

### A LIVING WAGE IS:

Based on the principle that full-time work should provide families with a basic level of economic security, not keep them in poverty.

The living wage provides the income required for a family of four with two parents working full-time to pay for necessities, support the healthy development of their children, escape financial stress, and participate in their social, civic and cultural lives.

Winnipeg: \$19.77/hour

Brandon: \$16.22/hour

Thompson: \$17.89/hour



- CONTINGENCY FUND: \$231/month (the equivalent of two weeks wages for each parent to provide some cushion for unexpected expenses like a serious illness to a family member, transition time between jobs, etc.).
- COMMUNICATIONS: \$134/month (landline services, cell phone services and Internet access services).
- OTHER HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES: \$783/month (covers personal care, furniture, kitchen or household supplies, and minimal recreation).

The living wage does not cover:

- Credit card, loan, or other debt/interest payments;
- Saving 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;
- Much of a cushion for emergencies or tough times.

The living wage calculation is based on the needs of two-parent families with young children and reflects prices as of the end of 2024. It supports a mix of family types throughout the life cycle. The living wage is designed so that young adults are not discouraged from having children and older workers have some extra income as they age.

The living wage for a single parent with one child is generally higher. Single-parent families face obvious challenges. Shelter, transportation, and childcare expenses are inflexible, and having two incomes to cover them goes a long way. Higher income-tested government benefits for single parents however do help compensate and in jurisdictions with lower costs, the living wage for a single parent can be similar, or even lower than for a two-parent two-child family.. A discussion on single-parent families is included for each city in this report.

### **Note on 2024 Versus 2025 Manitoba Living Wage Calculations:**

In November 2025, Statistics Canada released the updated Market Basket Measure amounts for Manitoba communities using the new 2023 base. This update leads to a better reflection of actual costs in Manitoba communities through improved data collection and the use of more up-to-date consumption patterns. This update however makes the year-over-year comparison and interpretation of some expenditure categories more challenging. The new methodology has created a new separate communications expense that previously was included in the “other” category. It has also led to a significant increase in clothing and footwear costs, and a large decrease in the other category (even after accounting for the removal of communications expenses for this category). These changes are apparent across Canada but are larger for Manitoba.

We also have made some methodological changes this year separate from the MBM rebasing. Based on the improvements to the MBM and newer research on the cost differential between Winnipeg and Thompson, for Thompson, we are using the MBM category of “Manitoba, population under 30,000”, instead of our prior method of inflating Winnipeg prices based on survey data gathered as part of an early Manitoba living wage report. We have also updated childcare expenses to include payment for holidays, vacations and lunch time care, to be more consistent with standard practice. With respect to transportation, Thompson is allocated the cost of two full cars for the family due to lack of a public transit service, while Brandon is reset to one vehicle plus one bus pass, after being assigned two vehicles last year due to temporary transit cuts.

# The 2025 Living Wage Update in Detail

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## Winnipeg Family Living Wage

The 2025 family living wage for Winnipeg is \$19.77/hour, a \$1.02 or 5.4 percent increase from the \$18.75/hour 2024 living wage.

The 2025 increase to the Winnipeg living wage brings the living wage just over \$1 beyond last year's Winnipeg living wage, and 56 cents above the living wage figure from 2023. This year's living wage increase is therefore modest relative to the rapid increases between 2020 and 2022, when the living wage increased by over \$3 per hour. The primary drivers of this year's living wage increase are a continued increase in the price of rent (+ 6 percent), higher transportation costs (+11 percent), and rising food costs (+8 percent) in the Winnipeg area.

For the two-parent, two-child family, overall expenses increased by \$268 per month, or 4.6% relative to last year. The most significant expense increases were shelter costs (+\$104/month) and food costs (+\$92/month). Shelter costs reflect the median rent for a three bedroom apartment in Winnipeg. Clothing (+\$84/month) and transportation (+\$68/month) also contributed to rising monthly expenses; however, these reflect both changing prices and data improvements to the MBM published by Statistics Canada. Childcare costs, meanwhile, increased by \$71/month, reflecting a more accurate picture of childcare fees a working family with two children would pay, to include vacation days and lunchtime care (this change was made for all family types).

**TABLE 1** Monthly Expenses for Winnipeg: 2 Parent – 2 Child Family

Category	2024	2025	Percentage Change	Share of Total Expenses
Food	\$1103	\$1195	8%	20%
Clothing/footwear	\$174	\$257	48%	4%
Shelter	\$1808	\$1913	6%	31%
Transportation	\$620	\$688	11%	11%
Other	\$1097	\$783	-29%	13%
Communications	N/A	\$134	N/A	2%
Childcare	\$411	\$483	17%	8%
Private health insurance	\$216	\$228	5%	4%
Parent's education costs	\$170	\$177	4%	3%
Contingency fund (2 weeks' salary)	\$219	\$231	5%	4%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$5819</b>	<b>\$6087</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Unlike in previous years, income from federal benefit programs did not keep pace with monthly expense increases for the Winnipeg living-wage family. Canada Child Benefit payments for the Winnipeg living wage family increased by \$41.56 per month; however, this increase was effectively cancelled out by the loss of carbon tax rebate payments (-\$38/month). Overall, federal benefit income for the Winnipeg living wage family remained relatively flat in 2025, increasing by just \$3.50/month. As in previous years, the Winnipeg living wage family does not qualify for the federal GST credit, Canada Worker Benefit, the Manitoba child care subsidy, or Manitoba Rent Assist.

Taxes owed for the Winnipeg two-parent, two-child family increased by \$19.30 per month relative to last year. This increase is due to the increase in employment income (+\$310/month) required to cover added expenses.

## Winnipeg Single Parent Living Wage

The living wage for a one-parent, one-child family in Winnipeg increased significantly from \$20.80 in 2024 to \$25.50 in 2025, an increase of \$4.70. This increase brings the Winnipeg single-parent living wage to almost exactly where it was in 2023. The Winnipeg single-parent family experienced similar expense increases to the two-parent, two-child family. Overall, costs for this family increased by \$195/month, or 4.7 percent. The median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Winnipeg increased by \$95/month, or roughly 7

percent. The cost of food (+\$48/month), clothing (+\$59/month), transportation (+\$64/month) and childcare (+\$18/month) also increased for this family.

The large fluctuations in living wages for the Winnipeg single-parent family over the last two years reflect the annual mismatches between living expenses and benefit eligibility. In 2024, this family was eligible for higher value provincial and federal benefits as these benefit thresholds were adjusted to catch up with the previous two years of price increases. In 2025, this family is losing \$331/month or 28% of their income from government benefits due to the higher income required to cover costs. The largest losses in benefits for this family were due to reductions in Manitoba Rent Assist (-\$192/month), the Canada Worker Benefit (-\$69/month), and the Manitoba Child Care Subsidy (-\$42/month). This large increase in the Winnipeg single-parent Living Wage reflects the relatively steep clawback rates faced by families accessing Manitoba's Rent Assist and childcare subsidy.

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## Brandon Family Living Wage

The 2025 living wage for a Brandon two-parent, two-child family is \$16.22/hour; a decrease of 7 cents per hour over 2024. While the Brandon two-parent, two-child family did face expense increases in 2025, particularly for food, cost increases were leveled out by increases to benefit income and a slight decrease in taxes owed. Overall, the Brandon living wage family saw expenses increase by \$169 per month in 2025. At the same time, benefit income from provincial and federal programs increased by \$127 per month and taxes owed decreased by \$63 per month.

Taking a closer look at expense increases, the median rent for a three-bedroom apartment in Brandon remained stable relative to 2024, increasing by just \$1 per month. This rent stability was decisive in keeping the living wage rate flat in Brandon. At the same time, food costs increased by \$201 per month and clothing expenses increased by \$84 per month. Both of these jumps are in large part due to changes in MBM calculations, which were adjusted to better reflect food costs and spending patterns in Brandon. The cost of transportation decreased (-\$92/month) due to the removal of a second car and its replacement with a bus pass. This reverses the one-time change made last year to add a second vehicle due to temporary transit service reductions. Provincial and federal benefits available to the Brandon living wage family increased by \$127 or 11 percent. This increase was made up of three federal programs: the Canada Child Benefit (+\$85/month), the

**TABLE 2** Monthly Expenses for Brandon: 2 Parent – 2 Child Family

Category	2024	2025	Percentage Change	Share of total expenses
Food	\$1065	\$1266	19%	22%
Clothing/footwear	\$174	\$257	48%	5%
Shelter	\$1,476	\$1,478	0%	26%
Transportation	\$763	\$670	-12%	12%
Other	\$1,068	\$821	-23%	14%
Communications	N/A	\$134	N/A	2%
Childcare	\$411	\$483	17%	9%
Private health insurance	\$216	\$228	5%	4%
Parent's education costs	\$170	\$177	4%	3%
Contingency fund (2 weeks' salary)	\$189	\$189	0%	3%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$5,532</b>	<b>\$5,702</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Canada Worker Benefit (+\$61/month), and the GST credit (+\$17/month). The Brandon living wage family once again did not qualify for provincial Rent Assist or Child Care Subsidies. The phase out of the federal carbon tax rebate, meanwhile, reduced this family's income by \$37 per month.

### Brandon Single-Parent Living Wage

The 2025 living wage for a single-parent with one child living in Brandon is \$15.31 per hour, a \$2.33 increase from \$12.98 in 2024.

Cost increases for the single-parent household in Brandon were \$244 per month in 2025, an increase of nearly 7 per cent over 2024. Similar to the two-parent, two-child family in Brandon, living expenses increased across food, transportation, and clothing categories. The median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Brandon increased by \$53 per month in 2025, driving up shelter costs.

At the same time, income from provincial and federal benefits decreased due to the higher income required to cover costs. In total, the family's benefit income decreased by \$76 per month between 2024 and 2025. Federal benefits, including the Canada Child Benefit (+\$29/month), Canada Worker Benefit (+\$10/month), and GST credit (+\$3/month) all increased for this family. Income from the Manitoba Child Care Subsidy inched up (+11/month),

however, Manitoba Rent Assist (-\$103/month) rates declined alongside the Carbon Tax rebate (-\$28/month), cancelling out federal benefit increases.

## Thompson Family Living Wage

The 2025 living wage for Thompson’s two-parent, two-child family is \$17.89, falling just 2 cents below last year’s figure of \$17.90. While expenses did increase for the Thompson living wage family (+\$175/month), these cost increases were largely compensated for by increases to benefit income (+\$123/month) and a reduction in taxes owed (-\$59/month).

Living expense increases for the Thompson family were primarily found in the food (+\$164/month) and transportation (+\$382/month) categories. These increases reflect both inflationary pressures, Statistics Canada updates to MBM data and methods, and our adoption of the MBM’s cost estimates for food, clothing and footwear, and other goods for Thompson (using the Manitoba population under 30,000 category). Cost increases to own and maintain a used vehicle were important in Thompson since the elimination of Thompson’s public transit system necessitates the ownership of two cars. Median rent for a three-bedroom apartment in Thompson increased by \$46 per month between 2024 and 2025, while the cost of clothing (+\$20/month) and child care (+\$72/month) also increased.

**TABLE 3** Monthly Expenses for Thompson: 2 Parent – 2 Child Family

Category	2024	2025	Percentage Change	Share of total expenses
Food	\$1,064	\$1229	15%	21%
Clothing/footwear	\$237	\$257	8%	4%
Shelter	\$1,255	\$1303	4%	22%
Transportation	\$763	\$1145	50%	19%
Other	\$1,460	\$801	-45%	13%
Communications	N/A	\$134	N/A	2%
Childcare	\$411	\$483	17%	8%
Private health insurance	\$216	\$228	5%	4%
Parent’s education costs	\$170	\$177	4%	3%
Contingency fund (2 weeks’ salary)	\$209	\$209	0%	4%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$5,788</b>	<b>\$5964</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Benefit income from the Canada Child Benefit (+\$83/month), Canada Worker Benefit (+\$59/month), and the GST Credit (+\$16/month) increased for the Thompson living wage family, while Carbon Tax Rebate elimination reduced monthly income (-\$37/month). Taxes owed for the Thompson Living Wage family fell by \$58 per month.

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## Thompson Single Parent Living Wage

The 2025 living wage for the Thompson one-parent, one-child family registered the largest swing, falling 21% from \$18.68 to \$14.94 between 2024 and 2025. Living expenses for the Thompson single-parent family declined in 2025, including the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment (-\$72/month). Our rebasing of Thompson expenditures based on MBM data did lead to a significant downward adjustment for the single parent family. Since expenses were down for this family, less employment income was needed allowing the family to qualify for more generous benefits (driving down needed employment income further). In total, income from federal and provincial benefits increased by \$245 per month in 2025. All benefits increased in 2025, apart from the federal Carbon Tax Rebate.







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