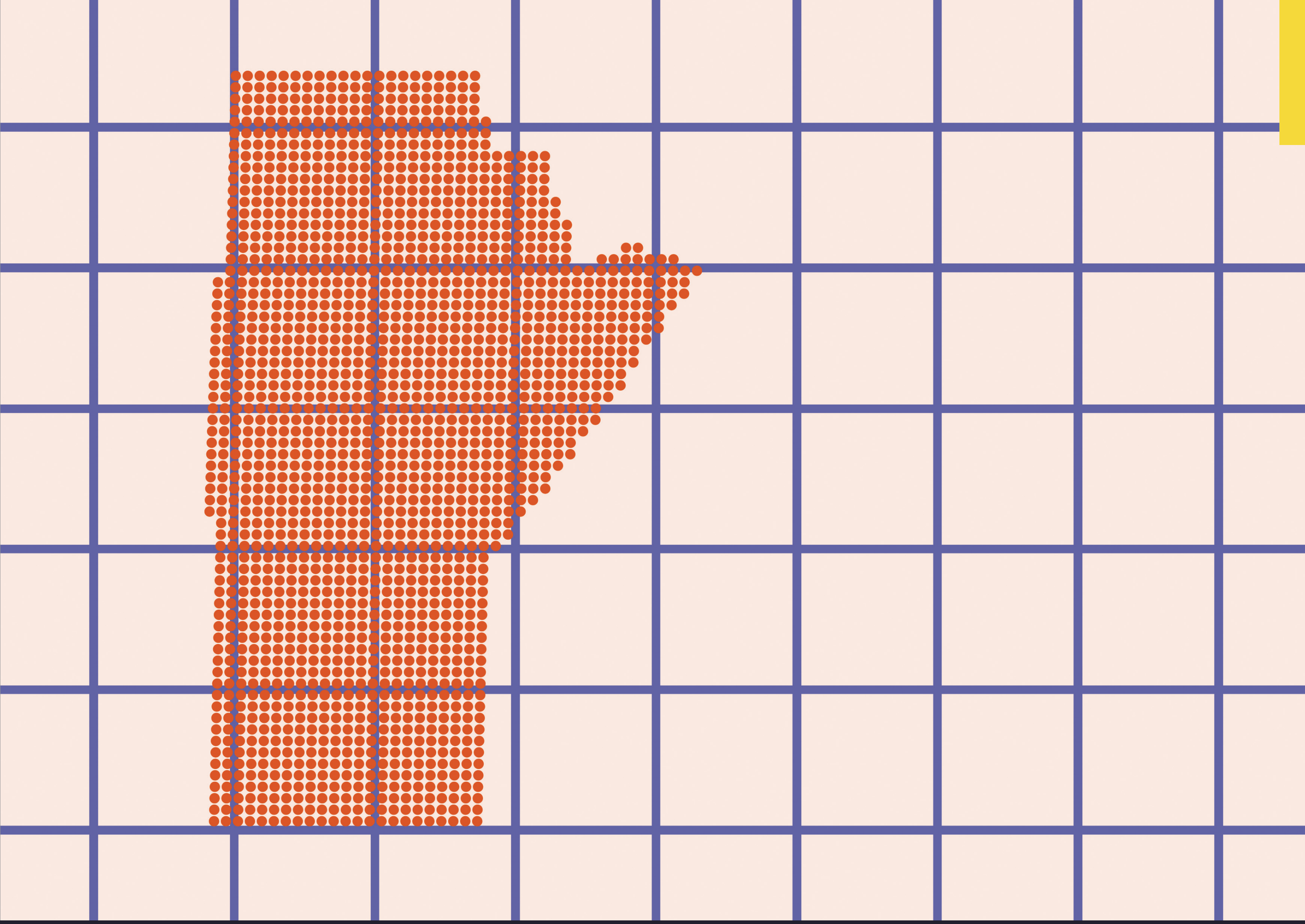

SEPTEMBER 2026

MANITOBA LIVING WAGE UPDATE 2026

Jesse Hajer

CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
MANITOBA OFFICE

This report is available free of charge from the CCPA website at **www.policyalternatives.ca**. Printed copies may be ordered through the Manitoba Office for a $10 fee.

Help us continue to offer our publications free online.

We make most of our publications available free on our website. Making a donation or taking out a membership will help us continue to provide people with access to our ideas and research free of charge. You can make a donation or become a supporter on-line at www.policyalternatives.ca. Or you can contact the Manitoba office at 204-927-3200 for more information. Suggested donation for this publication: $10 or what you can afford.

The opinions and recommendations in this report, and any errors, are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publishers or funders of this report.

CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE for POLICY ALTERNATIVES MANITOBA OFFICE

Unit 301-583 Ellice Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1Z7
tel 204-927-3200

email ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

About the Author

Jesse Hajer is a faculty member in the Department of Economics and Labour Studies program at the University of Manitoba and a research associate with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba.

Acknowledgments

A special thanks to Natalie Dandenault for research assistance with the 2026 living wage calculations.

Table of Contents

Key Highlights

- The 2026 Winnipeg living wage is increasing by $0.54 to $20.31 an hour, while living wages in Brandon increased to $17.40 an hour (+$1.18) and Thompson to $18.73 (+$0.84) from 2025 rates.
- Manitoba's minimum wage is scheduled to rise to $16.40 on October 1, 2026. The minimum wage then will remain $3.91 below a living wage in Winnipeg, $1.00 below in Brandon and $2.33 below in Thompson.
- Rising food prices were a major driver of living wage increases in all three cities, with price increases of just under 4 percent. Higher transportation costs were also a contributing factor increasing at or near 3 percent.
- Brandon also saw a significant increase in the cost of rent (+5 percent), while the cost of a three-bedroom apartment increased at a lower rate in Winnipeg and Thompson (less than 2 percent).
- The end of the Canada Carbon Rebate led to a significant decline in benefit income for all living wage households, removing $600 from the Winnipeg family and $720 from the Brandon and Thompson family budgets.
- Families continued to benefit from the federal and provincial governments' $10-a-day child care rollout, with the $10 rate now applying to holiday and school in-service days, saving families $615 per year.

- Single-parent families in Manitoba saw increases in the living wage ranging from 1.6 percent in Brandon to 4.2 percent in Winnipeg. The continued large gap between the Winnipeg versus Brandon and Thompson living wages for single parents continues to illustrate how high claw back rates on Manitoba's Rent Assist and child care subsidies hold back some of Manitoba's most vulnerable households striving to support themselves through employment.
- In addition to a family living wage for couples and single parents, this year's Living Wage report, for the first time, includes an additional calculation of a weighted-average living wage that accounts for various household types, including single-parent families and single individuals. This method has been adopted in multiple other Canadian provinces and is being published to facilitate discussion among living wage stakeholders in Manitoba.

2026 Living Wage Update: The Big Picture

THE 2026 LIVING wage update for Winnipeg, Brandon, and Thompson once again provides an up-to-date monitor on working poverty in Manitoba, and what is required to ensure those working full-time can meet their basic needs. For 2026, the Winnipeg living wage is increasing by $0.54 to $20.31 an hour, while living wages for Brandon and Thompson are increasing by $1.18 and $0.84, to $17.40 and $18.73 an hour, respectively. That corresponds to increases of 2.7 percent in Winnipeg, 7.3 percent in Brandon, and 4.7 percent in Thompson.

A range of factors continues to drive Winnipeg's rising 2026 living wage. Overall expenses were up 1.6 percent between 2025 and 2026. Rising food prices were the most significant driver of increased costs, increasing by 3.8 percent between 2025 and 2026, while the median rent for a three-bedroom apartment increased by 1.6 percent. Together, these expenses account for approximately fifty per cent of the living wage family budget, leaving the living wage particularly sensitive to rising food and shelter costs. Living wage families in Brandon and Thompson saw the same increase in food costs but higher increases in shelter costs. The estimate for 3-bedroom apartment rent in Brandon was 5.1 percent higher than in 2025, while Thompson saw a 1.9 percent increase.

Living wage increases were moderated for all families by lower school-age child-care fees. The 2026 calculation now reflects Manitoba's extension of

$10-a-day child care to school in-service days and holidays, reducing annual child-care costs for the living wage family by $615. The loss of the Canada Carbon Rebate (formerly the Climate Action Incentive payment) this year, however, offset these savings, reducing annual benefit income by $600 from the Winnipeg family and $720 from Brandon and Thompson families.

The Winnipeg living wage family saved $125 from the reduction of the federal tax rate from 15 percent to 14.5 percent, while the Brandon and Thompson families saved around $75. These small savings compared to the loss of the carbon rebate and child care savings illustrate the fact that social program investments and flat rate benefits are generally much more impactful for working families with modest incomes relative to tax cuts.

The importance of, and challenges with, social benefits in Manitoba are highlighted in our single-parent living wage calculations. The single-parent living wage in Winnipeg is increasing by $1.06 to $26.56 an hour, while living wages for Brandon and Thompson are increasing by $0.25 and $0.27, to $15.56 and $15.21 an hour, respectively. The lower living wage for single parents compared to two-parent families in Brandon and Thompson shows that our social benefits systems are providing important support for these families who need it. The high Winnipeg single-parent living wage, however, exposes a benefit gap and is due to the very high claw back rates on Manitoba's Rent Assist and child care subsidies. Higher costs in Winnipeg push up the living wage, but this higher income reduces benefits drastically for single parents, leading to an even higher wage needed to cover costs. These high claw back rates hold back some of Manitoba's most vulnerable households striving to support themselves through employment.

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.

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.[1]
- 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 2025.
- The cost of government deductions (provincial and federal taxes, Employment Insurance premiums and Canada Pension Plan contributions).

1 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

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: $20.31/hour

Brandon: $17.40/hour

Thompson: $18.73/hour

- 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 general 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 $20.31 per hour in Winnipeg — or $37,065 annually in employment income for each parent working full-time — here's what a family of four could afford:

- FOOD: $1,241/month (based on Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure food component).
- CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR: $263/month (based on Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure clothing and footwear component).
- SHELTER: $1,944/month (includes the median rent estimate for a three-bedroom unit, utilities and contents insurance).
- TRANSPORTATION: $707/month (includes the amortized cost of owning and operating a used car and one adult monthly bus pass).
- CHILD CARE: $432/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: $237/month (the cost of basic extended health and dental plan from Manitoba Blue Cross).
- PARENTS' EDUCATION: $183/month (estimated cost of two university courses per year for one parent).

- CONTINGENCY FUND: $237/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: $804/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 2025. 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 in Winnipeg. 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, which has been the case recently for Brandon and Thompson single-parent families. The much higher living wage in Winnipeg and relatively lower living wages in Brandon and Thompson for single parents is driven by the high claw back rate on Manitoba Rent Assist and child care subsidies as income increases. A discussion on single-parent families is included for each city in this report.

Living Wage calculations in several other provinces have moved to publishing a single living wage for all household sizes based on a weighted average of two parent two child families, single-parent one child families, and single individuals. For the first time in Manitoba, this report calculates weighted-average living wages (see appendix) to support preliminary discussion and consultation regarding moving towards such a methodology in Manitoba.

The 2026 Living Wage Update in Detail

Winnipeg Family Living Wage

The 2026 family living wage for Winnipeg is $20.31/hour, a $0.54 or 2.7 percent increase from the $19.77/hour 2025 living wage. The primary expense pressures this year are higher food costs (+3.8 percent), transportation costs (+2.8 percent), other household costs (+2.7 percent), and shelter costs (+1.6 percent). These increases are partially offset by a 10.6 percent reduction in child-care costs for the two-parent, two-child family.

For the two-parent, two-child Winnipeg family, overall expenses increased by $94 per month, or 1.6 percent relative to last year. The largest increases were food (+$46/month), shelter (+$31/month), other household expenses (+$21/month), and transportation (+$19/month). Child-care costs fell by $51 per month, helping to moderate the overall increase.

Government transfers did not keep pace with the family's higher expenses. Canada Child Benefit payments increased by $15 per month; however, the loss of the Canada Carbon Rebate reduced income by $50 per month. Overall transfer income fell by $35 per month. The Winnipeg living wage continues to disqualify families for the GST credit, Canada Worker Benefit, Manitoba child-care subsidy, and Manitoba's Rent Assist program.

Taxes and payroll deductions for the Winnipeg two-parent, two-child family increased by $36 per month, despite a reduction in the bottom Federal tax bracket from 15 percent to 14.5 percent. Together, higher expenses, lower

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

Category	2025	2026	Percentage Change	Share of Total Expenses
Food	$1,195	$1,241	4%	20%
Clothing/footwear	$257	$263	2%	4%
Shelter	$1,913	$1,944	2%	31%
Transportation	$688	$707	3%	11%
Other	$783	$804	3%	13%
Communications	$134	$134	0%	2%
Childcare	$483	$432	-11%	7%
Private health insurance	$228	$237	4%	4%
Parent's education costs	$177	$183	4%	3%
Contingency fund (2 weeks' salary)	$231	$237	3%	4%
TOTALS	**$6,087**	**$6,182**	**2%**	**100%**

* Monthly amounts are rounded; calculations use unrounded values.

transfer income, and higher deductions account for the increase in the hourly wage required to balance the family budget.

Winnipeg Single-Parent Living Wage

The living wage for a one-parent, one-child family in Winnipeg increased from $25.50 in 2025 to $26.56 in 2026, an increase of $1.06 per hour or 4.2 percent. Overall expenses for the Winnipeg single-parent family increased by $162 per month, or 3.7 percent. Shelter was the largest source of the increase, rising by $85 per month or 5.4 percent, while food (+$24/month), transportation (+$15/month) and other household expenses (+$15/month) also increased. Government transfers rose modestly, supported by higher Rent Assist (+$28/month) and the GST credit (+$39/month, including the one-time GST/HST credit top-up payment), but the family also faced the loss of the Canada Carbon Rebate (-$38/month) and higher payroll deductions and taxes at the higher earned income (-$36/month), and does not qualify for a childcare subsidy. The resulting living wage remains substantially above the two-parent Winnipeg living wage with only one income to cover most of the household's costs.

Brandon Family Living Wage

The 2026 living wage for a Brandon two-parent, two-child family is $17.40/hour, an increase of $1.18 per hour, or 7.3 percent, over 2025.

The Brandon two-parent, two-child family faced higher cost increases in 2026, particularly for shelter and food. Overall expenses increased by $151 per month, or 2.6 percent. Shelter costs increased by $75 per month and food costs by $48 per month. Transportation (+$20/month) and other household expenses (+$22/month) also increased, while lower child-care fees reduced costs by $51 per month.

Unlike last year, increases in benefits did not offset these higher costs. Total government transfer income fell by $105 per month. The Canada Carbon Rebate is no longer available, and Canada Worker Benefit income fell by $39 per month as higher earnings reduced eligibility. The Canada Child Benefit also declined slightly, while the GST credit increased modestly. Taxes and payroll deductions increased by roughly $103 per month as employment income rose.

Brandon Single-Parent Living Wage

The 2026 living wage for a single parent with one child living in Brandon is $15.56 per hour, a $0.25 increase from $15.31 in 2025. Costs for the single-parent household in Brandon increased by $119 per month, or 3.1 percent, with shelter (+$44/month), food (+$25/month), transportation (+$15/month) and other household expenses (+$15/month) all rising. These increases were partly offset by higher income-tested government benefits, which are an especially significant income source for the Brandon single-parent family ($1,711 per month, compared to $892 for the Winnipeg single-parent family). Rent Assist increased by $66 per month and the GST credit rose substantially (+$464 annually, due primarily to the one-time top-up), while the Canada Child Benefit and Canada Worker Benefit also increased modestly. Due to lower costs in Brandon and the ability to qualify for much higher Rent Assist and a significant child care subsidy, the single-parent living wage remains below the two-parent, two-child rate in Brandon.

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

Category	2025	2026	Percentage Change	Share of total expenses
Food	$1,266	$1,314	4%	22%
Clothing/footwear	$257	$263	2%	5%
Shelter	$1,478	$1,553	5%	27%
Transportation	$670	$691	3%	12%
Other	$821	$843	3%	14%
Communications	$134	$134	0%	2%
Childcare	$483	$432	-11%	7%
Private health insurance	$228	$237	4%	4%
Parent's education costs	$177	$183	4%	3%
Contingency fund (2 weeks' salary)	$189	$203	7%	3%
TOTALS	**$5,702**	**$5,853**	**3%**	**100%**

* Monthly amounts are rounded; calculations use unrounded values.

Thompson Family Living Wage

The 2026 living wage for Thompson's two-parent, two-child family is $18.73, an increase of $0.84 per hour, or 4.7 percent, from $17.89 in 2025. Overall expenses for the Thompson living wage family increased by $105 per month, or 1.8 percent. The largest increases were food (+$47/month), transportation (+$31/month), shelter (+$25/month), and other household expenses (+$22/month). Lower child-care fees reduced monthly costs by $51. Transportation remains a particularly important cost in Thompson because the lack of regular public transit requires the family to maintain two vehicles.

Government transfer income fell by $81 per month compared to 2025. The Canada Carbon Rebate is no longer available and the Canada Worker Benefit declined by $24 per month at the higher earned income, while the Canada Child Benefit and GST credit increased only slightly. Taxes and payroll deductions also increased by roughly $69 per month as employment income rose. As in Brandon, these income-side changes mean that the living wage increases more rapidly than underlying family expenses.

Thompson Single-Parent Living Wage

The 2026 living wage for the Thompson one-parent, one-child family is $15.21 per hour, up modestly from the 2025 rate of $14.94.

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

Category	2025	2026	Percentage Change	Share of total expenses
Food	$1,229	$1,276	4%	21%
Clothing/footwear	$257	$263	2%	4%
Shelter	$1,303	$1,328	2%	22%
Transportation	$1,145	$1,176	3%	19%
Other	$801	$822	3%	14%
Communications	$134	$134	0%	2%
Childcare	$483	$432	-11%	7%
Private health insurance	$228	$237	4%	4%
Parent's education costs	$177	$183	4%	3%
Contingency fund (2 weeks' salary)	$209	$219	5%	4%
TOTALS	**$5,964**	**$6,069**	**2%**	**100%**

* Monthly amounts are rounded; calculations use unrounded values.

Expenses for the Thompson single-parent family increased by 3.2 percent or $124 per month, with food (+$25/month) and shelter (+$50/month) seeing the largest increases. Like the Brandon single-parent family, the household continues to receive substantial income-tested support ($1,730/month), including the Canada Child Benefit, the Canada Worker Benefit, the GST credit, the Manitoba Child Care Subsidy and Rent Assist. These benefits increased by $80 per month compared to 2025, despite the loss of the Canada Carbon Rebate. These benefits help keep the required wage below the two-parent family rate despite higher food, shelter and transportation costs.

Appendix

Exploring a Broader Living Wage Measure: Preliminary Results for Discussion and Consultation

THE CALCULATIONS IN this appendix are exploratory and do not replace the traditional 2026 Manitoba living wage rates reported in the main report.

Manitoba living wage reports and other living wage reports in Canada have historically used a two-parent family with two children as the key reference household with a single parent with one child family living wage being reported separately. In recent years, some living wage reports in other provinces have moved to combining the living wages for two-parent two-child and other household types into a single living wage figure. This appendix tests preliminary living-wage estimates that include two additional household types: a single parent with one young child and a single working-age adult living alone; and combines those results with the traditional family-of-four rate in an illustrative weighted average.

Approaches Used Elsewhere in Canada

Ontario and Alberta calculate a community living wage by combining the wage requirements of a two-parent family, a single-parent family and a single adult. British Columbia adopted a similar revised approach after consultation and methodological refinement.

TABLE 4 Approaches Used Elsewhere in Canada

Jurisdiction	Households included	Weighting approach	Reference weights
Ontario	Two-parent family; single parent; single adult	Share of working-age adults in each family type (2021 Census)	58.1% / 8.1% / 33.8%
Alberta	Two-parent family; single parent; single adult	Provincial household-type shares (2021 Census)	56.5% / 9.6% / 33.9%
British Columbia	Two-parent family; single parent; single adult	Preliminary method published in 2024; consultation and refinement followed; adopted in 2025 using adult shares	2024 preliminary: 49.7% / 9.6% / 40.7%
Manitoba — 2026 preliminary	Two-parent family; single parent; single adult	Adult-equivalent proxy based on Manitoba household shares; presented for consultation, not adopted	58.95% / 9.68% / 31.37%

A Preliminary Manitoba Calculation

For this exploratory calculation, couple-family households with children are counted as two adults, while one-parent-family households and one-person households are counted as one adult. The three categories are then normalized across the modelled household types. This produces provisional weights of 58.95 percent for the two-parent family, 9.68 percent for the single-parent family and 31.37 percent for the single adult.

In Winnipeg, the preliminary weighted estimate is $21.39, above the traditional family rate of $20.31. The principal factor is the higher $26.56 single-parent estimate, together with a single-adult estimate of $21.83.

In Brandon, the preliminary weighted estimate is $16.96, below the traditional family rate of $17.40. Both the single-parent estimate ($15.56) and single-adult estimate ($16.56) are below the family-of-four rate.

In Thompson, the preliminary weighted estimate is $19.78, above the traditional family rate of $18.73. The single-adult estimate of $23.15 in Thompson pulls the weighted figure upward.

TABLE 5 A Preliminary Manitoba Calculation*

Community	Two-parent family 58.95%	Single parent 9.68%	Single adult 31.37%	Preliminary weighted average
Winnipeg	$20.31	$26.56	$21.83	$21.39
Brandon	$17.40	$15.56	$16.56	$16.96
Thompson	$18.73	$15.21	$23.15	$19.78

* Preliminary weighted averages use the exact normalized coefficients; displayed weights are rounded.

CCPA

CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
MANITOBA OFFICE