

4

Media (Mis)Representations and the Living Wage Movement

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As key shapers of public opinion, newspapers play an important societal role not only in disseminating information but also in convincing their readers of the merits and/or shortcomings of hotly contested public policy debates. In few places is this clearer than in the editorial pages of Canadian major daily newspapers and the views expressed in regard to emerging living wage movements across the country. Are editorial boards supportive of, indifferent toward, or opposed to the policy goals of living wage movements? Do they challenge and/or reinforce mainstream neoliberal economic policies and ideological arguments? In this chapter, we seek to answer these and related questions through a content analysis of editorials on the relationship between minimum and living wages.

In the first section, we outline a political economy of communication (PEC) approach to examining the editorial positions taken by Canada's largest English-language major dailies. In the second and third sections, we draw on fifty-two editorials published between 2007 and 2017 across fourteen newspapers. First we illustrate the dominant narratives used by editorial boards to sustain an anti-living wage case, and then we analyze and critique this view with the aid of scholarly writing and information contained in editorials supportive of living wages. In both sections, we discuss the extent to which these perspectives reveal broader pro-business and/or anti-labour views. To conclude, we show how a growing body of empirical data challenges many of the unsubstantiated assumptions used to sustain the anti-living wage case. In this regard, this chapter contributes to this volume on living wages, precarious work, and public policy by identifying the rhetorical strategies, economic claims, and political motivations used by editorial boards to undermine living wage demands as a guide to better inform ongoing public debate.

The Political Economy of Communication

This chapter is broadly informed by a PEC approach to media studies. That approach is not a monolith but a general framework of analysis (Wasko

2005, 2014). Although there are variations, at its core a PEC approach emphasizes the role of communication, culture, information, and media in the processes of capital accumulation, class relations, domination, ideology, struggles against the dominant social order, and demands for a democratic society (Fuchs 2014). As Vincent Mosco (1996, 20–21) has argued,

the political economy of communication covers a wide intellectual expanse including diverse standpoints, emphases, and interests ... The approach brings together an international collection of scholars who share not so much a singular theoretical perspective or even sense of community, but an approach to intellectual activity and a conception of the relationship between the scholarly imagination and social intervention.

The notion that the more concentrated the news media become the more homogeneous the ideology of the articles written by journalists and published by news media has been around for some time now, and there is evidence both for and against this assertion (Ampuja 2011; Curran 2002; McNair 2011; Mosco 1996; Ryan 2014). Historically, a key focus of the PEC approach has been to examine how media and communications serve to sustain the interests of the wealthy and powerful (Hardy 2014). Certainly, the notion that the media are simply a means of circulating/upholding ruling class ideology is far too simplistic. Nicholas Garnham (1979, 136), a significant PEC scholar, argued that “because capital owns the means of cultural production ... it does not follow that these cultural commodities will necessarily support, whether in their explicit content or in their mode of cultural appropriation, the dominant ideology.” And Graham Murdock and Peter Golding (1973, 200–1) rejected the base/superstructure position, saying that it was reductionist to take the news media only to be tools of capitalist rule and media products “as a more or less unproblematic relay system for capitalist interests and ideologies.” Of course, none of this is to say that the media do not work to serve capitalist interests and ideology (all too often they do), but this is something that should be demonstrated as opposed to asserted.¹

Social scientists have long been concerned with the hermeneutics of text – that is, how ordinary people make sense of dominant discourses and ideologies in everyday life – and the corresponding influence that such ideologies have on social and political orders. Karl Marx (Marx and Engels 1932, 21) noted how “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.” Here Marx draws attention to the historiography of ideology as a set of doctrines, beliefs, and worldviews central to reinforcing existing unequal power relations in society. Understood this way, ideology acts as an ongoing campaign to secure the support of the oppressed to accept their subordination and to legitimate the capitalist social order.

Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony extended Marx's views showing how dominant groups maintain their power not only through relations of domination but also through a combination of consent and coercion. Although force, or the threat of force, can maintain social order, for Gramsci (1972) class relations are maintained in the spheres of culture and everyday life. Hegemony is a process whereby dominant classes use their power and influence to convince less powerful people to willingly accept their social subordination as being in their best interests.

Robert McChesney (2000, 441) has argued that "the notion of public service – that there should be some motive for media other than profit – is in rapid retreat if not total collapse." Likewise, Kim Kierans (cited in Hurtig 2008) notes that the concentration of Canada's media brings into question their role as purveyors of democracy in the lives of Canadians. The result, for Kierans, is that there are fewer diverse sources of information and public dialogue since only a handful of locally owned and independent media remain. Empirical questions about the relationship between ownership structures and media content have been a point of contention for some time now.² Central to debates about the concentration and centralization of media ownership is the extent to which corporate boards of directors, or family empires, owning multiple media platforms can infuse ideology into news in such a way as to shape public policy in their favour. Can a single owner with overlapping control of multiple communication relays (e.g., online, print, radio, television) speak with a single voice? The concern historically has been that such concentration could narrow the range of viewpoints in an effort to influence both public opinion and public policy, promoting profit-making interests over public interests.

In one of the largest empirical studies exploring media concentration in Canada between 1984 and 2014, Dwayne Winseck (2015) notes that Canadian newspapers are moderately concentrated, less so than highly concentrated platform media but more so than magazines, internet news, and radio, which tend to have lower levels of concentration. Winseck notes that media concentration is problematic for a number of reasons, including the ability of large players to exercise market control; the use of tactics that entrench inherited media dominance; the control of pricing; and the ability of large media forces to strengthen their own business interests to the detriment of citizens and society. "Ultimately," Winseck observes, "talk about media concentration is a proxy for larger conversations about the shape of the mediated technological environments through which we communicate, consumer choice, freedom of the press, citizens' communication rights and democracy."

Given this larger conversation, in this chapter we explore the range of viewpoints on increasing minimum wages to levels reflecting living wages across fifty-two editorials written in fourteen newspapers from 2007 to 2017. The

year 2007 is noteworthy because it is widely recognized as the start of the most significant global economic crisis since the 1970s (see McBride, Mitrea, and Ferdosi, Chapter 2, this volume). That year also coincided with an upsurge in protest movements against worker exploitation, general labour market precarity, and social inequality. An otherwise “permanent” era of austerity has emerged in the decade since (Albo and Fanelli 2014; Evans and Fanelli 2018). In this context, living wage movements emerged throughout North America and Europe, bringing renewed media attention to the perils of low-wage work and exploitative labour market conditions across much of the food, hospitality, and retail sectors (Coulter 2014; Doussard 2013; Kalleberg and Vallas 2018; Luce 2012; Milkman and Ott 2013). The Fight for \$15 brought renewed attention to the low pay, absence of benefits, insecurity, and low rates of unionization that have become hallmarks of the “new economy.” Led largely by women and historically racialized communities, with significant support from organized labour, workers withheld their labour, demanding enhanced working conditions and some measure of work-life balance (see Koenig and Woodly, Chapter 3, this volume). What started as a small protest by a group of fast-food workers in New York City in 2012 developed into an international movement led by low-wage workers in over 300 cities campaigning for improved wages and union rights (McBride and Muirhead 2016). In light of this renewed activism, a broader public policy debate has emerged about the merits of raising the minimum wage to reflect a living wage more accurately (McDowell, Sandbeck, and Evans, Chapter 13, this volume). In addition to business, labour groups, pundits, politicians, academics, and think tanks, much of this debate has been taken up in the editorial pages of newspapers.

We focus on editorials because they most closely reflect the official viewpoints of newspaper boards, senior staff, and publishers. In this regard, editorials most closely resemble the collective positions of newspapers, illustrating both explicit and implicit ideological views, on a range of socio-economic and public policy issues. As Brian McNair (2011, 70) has argued, “the most important ‘voice’ of a newspaper is its editorial, which embodies its political identity. It also ... seeks to articulate what the newspaper’s editors believe to be the collective voice of its readers.” The opinions espoused in editorials are reflective of consensus among senior editors, editorial writers, and/or editorial boards on issues that they consider important for the public. In this way, an editorial is not only the opinion of a single writer but also the authoritative voice of a newspaper or news organization more broadly.

Unlike broadcast media, whose reporting is moderated by an implied obligation to be impartial, editorials intentionally contribute to public debate, positioning themselves as articulators of particular viewpoints rather than reporters of objective facts. There is an important distinction between the everyday and alleged “impartial” reporting of a newspaper and the intentional

identification of key issues and concerns characteristic of editorials. Not only do editorials identify key issues at the exclusion of others, but also editorial content can be constructed to define an issue in a certain way. The process of framing involves “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality to make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the issue described” (Entman 1993, 52). Research on the relationship between framing and public opinion suggests that framing can influence the response of the public to issues in cases in which they are not informed or otherwise inactive (Iyengar 1991; Zaller 1992). Furthermore, in providing critical analysis and interpretation of political communications, editorials establish the political identity of a newspaper and, more broadly, contribute to discourse on an issue.

Newspaper editorials were identified using ProQuest News and Historical Newspapers, Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies, and Canadian Newsstream research databases, including searching individual newspapers’ archives. Search terms included “minimum wage,” “living wage,” “low wage,” “working poor,” and “Fight for \$15.” We identified fifty-two editorials published in fourteen major daily newspapers between 2007 and 2017 that took positions on proposed increases to minimum wages. Our analysis does not attempt an all-encompassing exploration of regional daily and weekly newspapers. Of the fourteen newspapers that we identified, ten (nine under Postmedia ownership and the *Globe and Mail*) consistently opined against increasing the minimum wage to a level approximating a living wage; four were in favour, including the *Toronto Star*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, and *Times-Colonist*.

Three newspaper outlets – Postmedia, Torstar Corporation, and *Globe and Mail* – are estimated to control 64 percent of all Canadian newspaper content.³ Postmedia is the single largest newspaper media company in the country, with a total of forty-five newspapers – roughly 44 percent of the total newspapers in the country (“Circulation Report” 2015, 4–7). Nine of ten Postmedia newspapers campaigned against increasing minimum wages to a level resembling living wages, the exception being the *Edmonton Journal*. Although Postmedia’s flagship newspaper, the *National Post*, registers lower in circulation relative to the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail*, as Table 4.1 shows, this number becomes much larger when one accounts for the circulation of all combined newspapers under Postmedia ownership.⁴ Given the truncated degree of newspaper ownership and control across much of English Canada, we sought to explore the extent to which it would be reflected in the framing of editorials for and against living wages. We were also interested in the degree to which editorial boards under common ownership spoke with “one voice” and the extent to which contrasting viewpoints might be expressed across major dailies.

Table 4.1

Canadian newspaper ownership, 2015

Ownership	Number of papers	Average daily circulation
Postmedia/Sun Media	45	>1.69 million
<i>National Post</i> *	<i>Daily Observer</i> (Pembroke)	
<i>Vancouver Sun</i> *	<i>Peterborough Examiner</i>	
<i>Province</i> (Vancouver)*	<i>Barrie Examiner</i>	
<i>Toronto Sun</i> *	<i>Intelligencer</i> (Belleville)	
<i>Windsor Star</i> *	<i>Expositor</i> (Brantford)	
<i>Gazette</i> (Montreal)*	<i>Brockville Recorder Times</i>	
<i>Calgary Herald</i> *	<i>Chatham Daily News</i>	
<i>Edmonton Journal</i> *	<i>Northumberland Today</i>	
<i>Leader-Post</i> (Regina)*	<i>Cornwall Standard-</i>	
<i>Ottawa Citizen</i> *	<i>Freeholder</i>	
<i>24 Hours Vancouver</i>	<i>Daily Miner and News</i>	
<i>Calgary Sun</i>	(Kenora)	
<i>Edmonton Sun</i>	<i>St. Catharines Standard</i>	
<i>Daily Herald-Tribune</i>	<i>St. Thomas Times-Journal</i>	
(Grande Prairie)	<i>Observer</i> (Sarnia)	
<i>Fort McMurray Today</i>	<i>Sault Star</i> (Sault Ste Marie)	
<i>StarPhoenix</i> (Saskatoon)	<i>Simcoe Reformer</i>	
<i>Winnipeg Sun</i>	<i>Beacon-Herald</i> (Stratford)	
<i>London Free Press</i>	<i>Sudbury Star</i>	
<i>Niagara Falls Review</i>	<i>Daily Press</i> (Timmins)	
<i>North Bay Nugget</i>	<i>24 Hours Toronto</i>	
<i>Packet and Times</i> (Orillia)	<i>Tribune</i> (Welland)	
<i>Ottawa Sun</i>	<i>Sentinel Review</i> (Woodstock)	
<i>Sun Times</i> (Owen Sound)	<i>Kingston Whig-Standard</i>	
Torstar Corporation	10	>900K
<i>Toronto Star</i> *		
<i>Hamilton Spectator</i>		
<i>Guelph Mercury</i>		
<i>Record</i> (Grand River Valley)		
<i>Metro Calgary</i> (with Metro International SA)		
<i>Metro Edmonton</i> (with Metro International SA)		
<i>Metro Vancouver</i> (with Metro International SA)		
<i>Metro Winnipeg</i> (with Metro International SA)		
<i>Metro Ottawa</i> (with Metro International SA)		
<i>Metro Toronto</i> (with Metro International SA)		
Globe and Mail Incorporated	1	336,487
<i>Globe and Mail</i> *		



Ownership	Number of papers	Average daily circulation
F.P. Canadian Newspapers LP	2	119, 806
<i>Winnipeg Free Press</i> *		
<i>Brandon Sun</i>		
Glacier Media	3	71, 511
<i>Times-Colonist</i> (Victoria)*		
<i>Alaska Highway News</i> (Fort St. John)		
<i>Citizen</i> (Prince George)		

Note: * indicates major daily under review.

Making the Anti-Living Wage Case

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of editorial opinion on minimum and living wages. Ten of the fourteen major dailies under review were opposed to increasing minimum wages generally and, in many cases, to demands raised by Fight for \$15 advocates specifically. Three overlapping claims lay at the core of anti-living wage arguments. The first maintained that raising minimum wages to a level approximating a living wage resulted in job losses, reduced business investment, and decreased hours worked. The second argued that, since the majority of minimum wage workers were presumably youth aged fifteen to twenty-four living at home and attending school, increasing the wage floor would only result in the consumption of more luxury items. The third purported that increases to the minimum wage do not significantly improve the lives of low-wage workers, nor are they an effective anti-poverty tool. Several editorials also claimed that measures to raise the wage floor decreased opportunities for employment and increased the costs of goods and services. Striking is how consistent these arguments were over this ten-year period despite a growing body of empirical research that raises doubts about many of these claims.

Postmedia

The editorials of Canada's largest newspaper chain, Postmedia, have made an outsized contribution when it comes to debates on whether the minimum wage should rise. Between 2007 and 2017, nine of ten Postmedia newspapers reviewed here were opposed to increases to the minimum wage. They include the *National Post*, *Toronto Sun*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Windsor Star*, *Calgary Herald*, *Leader-Post* (Regina), *Gazette* (Montreal), and *Province* (Vancouver). Postmedia editorials have been the most explicit in situating the debate about living wages in class terms: that is, as a right-versus-left issue. The *National Post* (2014), for instance, lambastes "the left's resolute blindness

Figure 4.1

Editorials by publication, 2007–17

Newspaper		Title of editorial	Date of publication
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	7	Second Thoughts Lacking	December 14, 2009
		Ineffective and Untimely	December 28, 2009
		CEO's Pay: Mistaken Comparison	January 6, 2010
		If It Rises, Will the Sky Fall?	February 1, 2014
		Supply, Demand and Citizens	April 26, 2014
		Making Out on the Minimum Wage	June 25, 2015
		Kathleen Wynne Is a Great NDP Premier	May 31, 2017
<i>National Post</i>	5	The <i>Toronto Star's</i> Poverty Scam	January 15, 2007
		The Minimum Wage Paradox	December 28, 2009
		Alberta's "Premier Mom"	November 5, 2011
		Minimum Thinking	January 29, 2014
		The Notley Government's Troubling Start: Higher Taxes, Higher Spending, Higher Labour Costs	June 30, 2015
<i>Toronto Star</i>	14	Mobilize Ontario to Fight Poverty	May 10, 2007
		Protect Ontario's Poorest Workers	June 2, 2007
		Successful Session for Ontario's Poor	June 7, 2007
		No Celebration for Working Poor	September 3, 2007
		Solid Liberal Plan to Combat Poverty	October 4, 2007
		Poverty Reduction Needs Firm Goals	October 22, 2007
		Support for Poor Should Be Priority	September 8, 2007
		Disturbing Trend in Poverty Rates	November 19, 2007
		Minimum Wage Scare	April 1, 2008
		Ontario's Working Poor Deserve Better	October 1, 2015
		Kathleen Wynne Shows There's Nothing Inevitable about Precarious Labour	May 30, 2017
		The Economic Case for a Higher Minimum Wage	July 29, 2017
		Ontario Is Right to Lean Against Growing Income Inequality	August 20, 2017
		A Good Year for Worker's Rights in Ontario	September 4, 2017
<i>Toronto Sun</i>	3	Higher Wage Means Fewer Jobs	September 28, 2017
		Nothing "Fair" about Wynne's Minimum Wage Hikes	October 7, 2017
		Wynne's Minimum Wage Hike Will Do Maximum Damage	October 28, 2017
<i>Gazette (Montreal)</i>	2	Quebec's Measures Do Little to Help the Economy	January 15, 2009
		Raising Minimum Wage Carries a Cost	December 17, 2009
<i>Ottawa Citizen</i>	1	Inequality Is Not the Problem	April 12, 2012

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Newspaper		Title of editorial	Date of publication
<i>Windsor Star</i>	1	Minimum Wage: A Full Discussion Is Needed	March 20, 2010
<i>Winnipeg Free Press</i>	2	Minimum Wage neither Hand Up nor Handout	January 3, 2017
		Premier Continues to Create Off-the-Cuff Controversy	June 9, 2017
<i>Calgary Herald</i>	3	Pay Day: Increasing the Minimum Wage Won't Help Alberta's Poor	September 10, 2012
		Keeping Her Promises	June 16, 2015
		Higher Wage Costs Jobs	September 30, 2017
<i>Edmonton Journal</i>	3	Minimum Wage beneath Alberta	November 6, 2011
		Lowball Minimum Wage Not Enough	May 29, 2015
		Moral Side to Debate on Wages	October 2, 2015
<i>Leader-Post (Regina)</i>	1	Fresh Thinking for Election: Housing, Minimum Wage Requires Tough Decisions	March 1, 2016
<i>Vancouver Sun</i>	3	Minimum Wage Should Be Raised to \$9.25 an Hour	November 18, 2010
		Slower Hikes to Minimum Wage Make More Sense	March 19, 2015
		Minimum Wage Hike Won't Make Lives Better	March 26, 2016
<i>Province (Vancouver)</i>	1	Proposed Minimum Wage Is Crazy Talk	November 27, 2014
<i>Times-Colonist (Victoria)</i>	5	Living Wage Idea Has Its Hazards	October 7, 2014
		Minimum Wage Isn't Enough	June 5, 2014
		Direct Outrage at Minimum Pay	November 26, 2014
		Don't Let Politics Set Wage Scale	March 1, 2015
		Minimum Wage Needs Scrutiny	October 12, 2017

Note: The total is fifty-two editorials published in fourteen major daily newspapers between 2007 and 2017.

to the law of economics, and its commitment to authoritarian collectivist morality." The editorial continues that "the minimum wage mentality implies that employers are underpaying and thus unfairly 'exploiting' their most vulnerable workers, which explains why it is so fondly embraced by those who love to condemn capitalism as the reign of heartless greed." Proposals for making minimum wages more "livable" are characterized as an unwarranted intervention by governments into what ought to be market-determined wages and working conditions.

According to the editorial board of the *National Post*, though workers lucky enough to keep their jobs will benefit, the majority will lose their jobs since

higher wages will force businesses to hire fewer workers, reduce hours, or cut back on training as government-legislated higher wages artificially inflate the value of labour.⁵ In the view of *National Post* editors (2014), because living wage advocates have failed to develop an understanding of basic economics, as well as continued admiration for “discredited left-wing policies ... including an increased minimum wage, universal daycare, and expanded welfare programs,” they continue to believe that increasing the cost of labour will not result in job losses. The *Gazette* (Montreal; 2009a) echoes these views, arguing that an increase to the minimum wage “might keep the unions happy, but it kills the very jobs the most desperate people need.” A *Gazette* (2009b) editorial goes so far as to predict that high school students will have trouble lining up summer jobs, noting that, even though some 320,000 Quebecers earn the minimum wage, 91 percent of them in the service industries, only the unlucky few make so little in full-time jobs. “Minimum wage workers tend to be part-timers, often students, and their employers are often the smallest businesses, perhaps mom and pop operators in a franchise food chain ... What would such employers naturally do? They reduce staff, if they can. Once again, social engineering threatens to bring unwanted consequences.”

The *National Post* (2009) also argues that “none of these policies would do much to alleviate poverty ... [and] would actually hurt Canada’s poorest workers.” As the editors go on to note,

any competent economist might have pointed this out ... What bothers Canadian socialists about our prosperous knowledge economy isn’t so much absolute poverty, but the broader phenomenon of income stratification, by which hard-working, well-educated, entrepreneurial Canadians exhibit that nasty habit of generating wealth and raising their lot above the national average. The only antidote to such an evil ... is socialism, which reduces income disparities by impoverishing everyone.

The *Calgary Herald* (2012) builds upon many of the themes articulated by its Postmedia counterparts, noting that many owner-operated businesses cannot afford to pay artificially high wages: “The only employer that can ignore the bottom line and pay beyond what’s reasonable is the government, which doesn’t have to concern itself with niceties such as turning a profit.”⁶

With reference to Ontario increasing its minimum wage from \$9.50 to \$10.25 per hour in 2010, the *Windsor Star* (2010) wrote that “some will see the latest increase as another step toward a government-legislated ‘living wage’ that’s needed to address poverty concerns. However ... when minimum wages escalate, employers often reallocate their payroll budgets among fewer employees. Or they have to raise prices and face the possibility of losing business.” The *Windsor Star*, like other Postmedia newspapers thus far noted,

claims that increases to the minimum wage actually end up hurting the people whom they are designed to help: “Perhaps the real debate we should be having is if a minimum wage is necessary at all. Let supply and demand in the job market determine the rate.” In addition to advocating for a market-based approach to regulated wages and working conditions – meaning largely employer-based – living wage detractors also demonstrated a broader suspicion of efforts to reduce income inequality via changes to tax policy that increased its progressivity for high-income earners (*Ottawa Citizen* 2012).

In other editorials, *National Post* (2011, 2015) editors decry the “Liberal-like assumption that government knows better,” arguing that “the weight of scholarship remains clear: minimum wage hikes depress hiring, especially for the young and unskilled, as businesses operating on tight margins offset higher wages by laying off staff or cutting employee hours – or simply by not adding to them.” The *Calgary Herald* (2015) extends criticism levelled at the Alberta NDP government’s proposed living wage of fifteen dollars per hour: “While the government can enforce a \$15-an-hour wage, it can’t legislate employers to hire full-time staff. What good is a so-called living wage if it evaporates, or is paid on a handful of four-hour shifts?” A 2017 editorial in the same newspaper went further: “It’s no surprise that employers are trimming their payrolls, leaving less experienced workers especially vulnerable.” In more tactful language, the *Leader-Post* (Regina; 2016) adds that, though a higher minimum wage has its merits, “the motives for it must come from somewhere – ultimately the pockets of hard-pressed consumers and business owners. If it rises, then costs go up and some businesses could close, taking jobs with them.” The *Toronto Sun* (2017a, 2017b) likewise maintains that a “higher wage means fewer jobs” as well as “higher retail prices for consumers across a wide range of goods and services.” In another editorial, the *Toronto Sun* (2017c) contends that “minimum wage hikes are an extremely inefficient way to alleviate poverty because most minimum wage workers aren’t poor.” The editorial also calls for “Ontario to rid itself of these economically destructive policies by voting them [Ontario Liberals] out of office in the June, 2018 election.”

In a similar vein, the *Vancouver Sun* (2015) opines that

it has been difficult to understand Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson’s push for what would have been a nearly 50 percent hike to B.C.’s minimum wage to \$15 an hour. As business council policy chief Jock Finlayson warns, “there’s no free lunch in economics.” Those who would pay are less-educated entry-level workers who would be chasing fewer available jobs, and owners of small businesses that would have their fiscal viability put at risk.

By 2016, the newspaper was arguing that a minimum wage of fifteen dollars per hour would do more harm than good since “businesses could choose to

hire fewer workers, reduce benefits, cut back hours, trim training budgets or find other ways to compensate for the rapid increase in labour costs ... Government should be working on an effective anti-poverty strategy unrelated to the minimum wage" (*Vancouver Sun* 2016). These arguments build upon themes articulated by the Vancouver-based editors of the *Province* (2014), who reason that the BC Federation of Labour "must be out of their minds to think that anyone is going to take seriously" demands to raise the provincial minimum wage to fifteen dollars per hour:

Not only will some lower-income workers lose their jobs, the higher rates will translate into higher costs for goods and services for the rest of us, leading to inflation and, you guessed it, more demands for higher wages. It's simple economics. And what of the people who now earn \$15 an hour if the minimum wage is raised? Won't they want \$20 or more?

Globe and Mail

The *Globe and Mail* has also largely opposed increasing the minimum wage to a level approximating that of a living wage. In an editorial titled "Ineffective and Untimely," the editors argue that

the benefits of a living wage appear to be far too narrowly drawn to earn support as a broadly effective or efficient poverty-fighting tool. It may also lead to labour-market distortions ... Lacking any practical impact, a living wage's strongest suit appears to be in its symbolism ... Poverty continues to be a real problem in Canada and it requires practical solutions. A living wage does not meet the test. (*Globe and Mail* 2009a)

Most commonly, the arguments of the *Globe and Mail* against living wages rest on the contention that higher minimum wages do not alleviate poverty, presuming that most minimum wage workers are youth living with their parents and working part time while going to school:

But if raising the wage floor is supposed to be a poverty-reduction program, it looks like a very poorly targeted one. Given their youth, it's no surprise that most minimum wagers are dependent children, living with their parents. What's more, most minimum wagers work only part-time ... The overwhelming majority of them are also students, holding part-time jobs while attending university, college or high school. (*Globe and Mail* 2014a)

Another editorial applauds the Ontario Liberal government's "reasonable" decision to boost minimum wages moderately by just over 7 percent, nearly 30 percent less than what living wage advocates were arguing was necessary to redress more than a decade of real minimum wage erosion: "The uncertainty

over the economic impact of higher minimum wages, and more importantly the demographic makeup of minimum-wage workers, it's the right balance" (*Globe and Mail* 2014b).

In a related article titled "Maxing Out the Minimum Wage," the editors make it clear that, though increases in the range of twenty-five to seventy-five cents spread out over months and years are unlikely to affect employment levels, any increase beyond that range is likely to be detrimental to businesses and low-income workers (*Globe and Mail* 2015). The arguments here about capital flight and job loss parallel many of those articulated above by Postmedia newspapers. With reference to the Alberta NDP's decision to implement a living wage of fifteen dollars per hour, the editors write that "it's madness to believe that putting such a burden on businesses and non-profits won't have an impact ... No one else wants the work, especially in strong economies. Service industries, such as the fast-food business, just keep hiring and pass the expense on to customers. But what happens when the increases are arbitrarily massive and continuous?" (*Globe and Mail* 2015).

The *Globe and Mail* (2015) goes so far as to suggest that a potential impact of higher minimum wages is that youth will drop out of school: "Why study when you can make \$30,000 a year flipping burgers?" Rather, wages and working conditions are best determined by the laws of supply and demand. Although editorials in the newspaper are cautious in claiming that modest minimum wage hikes will imperil businesses, they are more pessimistic about – at times outright hostile toward – the then Ontario Liberal government's commitment to a living wage of fifteen dollars an hour in 2019:

It will jump from \$11.40 per hour to \$14 on January 1 [2018], and then to \$15 a year later ... Those are massive cost increases for businesses to swallow in a short amount of time. So, while there are economic and social arguments for raising minimum wages – especially in an era when the service sector and contract work are growing – the Wynne government should have provided an honest analysis of the impact of its last-minute announcements on Ontario's small and medium-sized companies. (*Globe and Mail* 2017)

Analysis and Critique: Making the Case for Living Wages

As outlined above, the bulwark of editorials written by Postmedia outlets between 2007 and 2017 were hostile to living wages. In many ways, the *Globe and Mail* pursued a similar strategy of anti-living wage animus, reinforcing the claims that anything beyond slight increases would place an unmanageable burden on businesses and distort supply and demand. In what follows, we illustrate how pro-living wage editorial boards sought to reframe the debate about living wages, extending these criticisms with reference to recent academic literature.

Job Losses

According to proponents of neoliberalism, the market and its alleged infallible laws of supply and demand are the best means of determining what the true value of labour ought to be. When governments become involved and influence either prices or the value of labour, neoliberals refer to this as a market impediment that artificially inflates the costs of labour, alleged to increase the costs of goods and services. This is presumed to have a negative impact on employment levels since businesses are forced either to lay off workers or to reduce working hours.⁷ However, a growing body of research increasingly questions these claims.

The *Edmonton Journal*, for instance, is critical of the view that minimum wage increases *ipso facto* result in job losses (2011) and posits that “a minimum wage is not merely a mathematical standard. It ought to be a reflection of a government’s empathy for the people it serves ... A minimum wage is an economic floor. Only a living wage adds a roof over the employee’s head, food on the family table, clothes on their back” (2015a). Unlike their Post-media colleagues discussed above, *Edmonton Journal* editors endorse a living wage as a political-economic and moral imperative (2015b): “A \$15 minimum wage is merely a step in the right direction ... A business that survives only because it pays employees a countrywide low wage might not be the brand of corporate citizen that deserves government-mandated protection for its bottom line.” Drawing on the work of French economist Thomas Piketty, *Times-Colonist* (Victoria; 2014b) editors observe that inequality is not accidental but central to capitalism and can only be reversed by state intervention. The *Times-Colonist* (2014c) also notes that living wages are an “attractive idea, especially as we hear about the growing gap between rich and poor in Canada. That disparity is unhealthy – a country’s prosperity is thwarted when a disproportionate share of its wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few.”

Although *Times-Colonist* (2014c) editors exhibit a degree of hesitation in calling for living wages, “not because the concept is a bad one, but because it is beyond the scope of one municipal council,” (2014a) they urge municipal governments to continue advocating for living wages both as a potential province-wide measure and as an example to employers. *Times-Colonist* (2015, 2017) editors also criticize the then Liberal government of British Columbia for its unwillingness to study the idea of living wages further, noting that the province must find new ways to assess the adequacy of minimum wages by tying them to a broader range of measures, such as the consumer price index and a basket of goods and services.

The views of the *Edmonton Journal* and *Times-Colonist* are reflected in research findings by Jordan Brennan and Jim Stanford (2014) that debunk the relationship between higher minimum wages and job losses. Their study found almost no evidence of a connection between increased wages and

employment levels. Their findings were based on an empirical examination of labour market data from the ten Canadian provinces. The authors conducted a series of seventy regressions – seven regressions for each province – over a twenty-year period to test whether changes to the minimum wage had any discernible impact on levels of employment and unemployment in the province. They found that, in 90 percent of tests performed, there was no statistically significant relationship between higher minimum wages and job losses. In the 10 percent of tests in which a statistically significant relationship was found to exist between minimum wage increases and changes to employment levels, the effects were just as likely to be positive as negative. With the benefit of hindsight, similar findings are reflected in recent Statistics Canada (2018) data, which show that, contrary to business think tanks and economists, which predicted 50,000–150,000 job losses in light of Ontario's move to a minimum wage of fourteen dollars per hour in 2018 (Cohn 2019), the province added 78,000 jobs during the year, including a sharp rise in full-time work, contributing to the second lowest rate of unemployment across the country.⁸ However, in June 2018, a majority Conservative government was elected and repealed the planned increase to fifteen dollars per hour in January 2019 and many other progressive reforms in Bill 148, also freezing the minimum wage until 2022 and repealing paid sick days, equal-pay-for-equal-work regulations, and rules that made it easier to join a union (Mojtehdzadeh 2018).

Empirical research conducted in the United States also contradicts the claims that higher minimum wages inevitably lead to job losses (Devinatz 2013; Lester 2011; Pollin et al. 2008). For example, Mark Brenner and Stephanie Luce (2005) have examined the experiences of Boston, New Haven, and Hartford with living wages. Their review of the effects of living wages found no evidence that firms responded to higher wages by reducing the number of employees, cutting hours, reducing training, or shifting to part-time work.⁹ Other research has also found that the implementation of living wages had a negligible effect on job losses, with many local and regional labour markets benefiting from expanded economic demand (Bernstein 2005; Grant and Trautner 2004). Studies conducted in Baltimore, Los Angeles, and elsewhere found that firms experienced lower business costs associated with employee turnover, absenteeism, and training (Fairris and Reich 2005; Thompson and Chapman 2006).

Recent findings across a range of American cities have reinforced previous findings (Allegretto et al. 2018), including the shocking reversal by an influential group of business school researchers from the University of Washington and New York University as well as Amazon, which originally claimed that Seattle's minimum wage increase had decreased take-home pay for workers by 6 percent because of cuts to work hours; rather, they found that raising the minimum wage generated major increases for most workers,

dealing a major blow to living wage detractors (Jardim et al. 2018). In other words, as *Bloomberg* columnist Barry Ritholtz (2019) has written, “predictions of job losses and slower economic growth haven’t panned out.”

This finding mirrors those in the United Kingdom, where living wages encouraged businesses to re-evaluate their hiring and staffing procedures, leading to more effective and efficient working patterns in the long term as well as increased skill development, staff performance, job satisfaction, employee retention, and long-term reputational benefits for living wage employers (Coulson and Bonner 2015; Flint et al. 2013; Jenson and Wills 2013). In fact, the highest-paying supermarket in the United Kingdom, Aldi, found its previous increases above the minimum wage so successful that it is doing it again – citing record profits and growing demand, with plans to do the same at locations elsewhere in Europe (Barrie 2019).

The Young (and the Reckless?)

Detractors of living wages often contend that most minimum wage workers are youth in entry-level positions still living with their parents. It follows that there is no need for minimum wages to be “livable” since many low-wage jobs are stepping stones to better employment. Recent research, however, has shown that a growing proportion of low-wage workers do not fit traditional assumptions. Uniquely among the major dailies, the *Toronto Star* has raised a number of concerns related to the growing prevalence of precarious work and working poverty (2007b, 2007e). In addition to calling for enhancements to Ontario’s “outdated and unenforced labour laws,” *Toronto Star* (2007g) editors emphasize that “the majority of these workers are immigrants, women, youth, and visible minorities.” The *Toronto Star* (2007c) argues that a “fundamental tenet of our society is that a person working full-time should be able to earn a decent living” despite age and immigration status and connects this argument to demands for making it easier to form unions and expanding a range of social programs, including employment insurance, pensions, more affordable housing, child care, and social benefits (2007f, 2007d, 2007h, 2007a). With reference to the low-wage workforce in British Columbia, the *Times-Colonist* (2015) adds that “the common picture of such workers being teenagers who work for small local businesses is not entirely accurate. Nearly half of minimum wage workers are over 25, and 46 per cent of minimum wage workers are employed by businesses with more than 500 workers.” The *Winnipeg Free Press* (2017a) notably adds that “the bulk of minimum-wage earners [in Manitoba] are not teenagers – they are women, often immigrant women, working several jobs. What’s also interesting is the bulk of the minimum-wage jobs are found in multinational corporations – companies that routinely make millions in profits, paying their CEOs handsomely.”

Data from across the country show considerable gaps in traditional assumptions about minimum wage earners.¹⁰ A recent study by Statistics Canada (Morissette and Dionne-Simard 2018) found that the composition of minimum wage earners has moved away from individuals under twenty-five years of age and toward older workers. Across Canada, the proportion of minimum wage workers under the age of twenty-five stood at 43 percent in the first quarter of 2018, while among those aged thirty-five to sixty-four it increased to 31 percent. Roughly two-thirds of minimum wage workers over the age of twenty-five worked full time. Working parents or spouses in single-earner couples represented 17 percent of Canada's minimum wage workforce, with total employment income, after adjusting for family size, less than half of that of minimum wage workers who are spouses/partners in dual-earner couples. Low-wage work is also notably gendered and racialized, and more prevalent among older workers (Block and Galabuzi 2011, 2018), facts ignored nearly entirely by Postmedia and *Globe and Mail* editorialists. Taken as a whole, then, minimum wage workers are not the “kids ... flipping burgers” whom living wage detractors would have readers think.

An Ineffective Anti-Poverty Tool

Both pro- and anti-living wage editorialists agree that living wages marginally improve poverty levels; however, where living wage advocates call for expanding labour rights and social welfare entitlements, living wage detractors contend that issues of low wages and poverty are best dealt with through the laws of supply and demand. Although an argument can be made that living wages are not a panacea for poverty, mounting empirical evidence indicates that living wages increase financial security, improve health outcomes, and enhance work-life balance.

The *Toronto Star* (2015) rightly argues that

Ontario's minimum wage hike won't stretch that far – it might cover a weekly bag of milk, a loaf of bread and a couple of apples ... If they are among the lucky few who work 35 hours per week, they make an annual salary of \$20,748. That's well below the poverty line and nowhere near what is required to live in a city like Toronto.

In this sense, though governments might not be omnipotent, they are not powerless: “While the factors radically transforming the workplace may be largely beyond the province's control, the government need not throw up its hands and accept job insecurity as an inevitable consequence. Queen's Park still has the power and the responsibility to protect the rights of workers” (*Toronto Star* 2017a). Curiously, however, *Toronto Star* (2017d) editorialists argue that then Liberal Premier of Ontario “Wynne was wise to maintain a

slightly lower minimum wage for certain categories, including for those 18 or younger,” as if younger workers and alcohol servers are immune to higher incidents of income insecurity and generalized labour precarity. Yet the *Toronto Star* (2017b) reminds readers that the “arguments against the \$15 minimum wage don’t hold up – and the choice between social and economic ends is a false one.” For the *Toronto Star*, then, living wages ought to be better understood as starting, not ending, points in the fight against poverty.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* (2017a, 2017b) pursues a similar tack, criticizing Conservative Premier of Manitoba Brian Pallister for dismissing the effectiveness of higher minimum wages in combating working poverty. “While throwing money at the problem doesn’t eradicate poverty, increasing minimum wages certainly makes living slightly easier. Giving people more money means they can manage to keep up at least a bit while facing the tsunami of annual increases, usually announced in the coldest and brokest month of the year – January” (*Winnipeg Free Press* 2017a). The editorial goes on to critique the Pallister government for breaking with the former NDP government’s tradition of annual increases to the minimum wage to keep up with inflation, instead opting to raise the basic personal income tax exemption:

Minimum wage legislation originally put in place to prevent greedy bosses from underpaying staff – particularly during periods of high unemployment – should be viewed as a way to ensure fairness. It is not a hand up or a handout, and it is certainly not welfare ... Mr. Pallister is correct: increasing [the] minimum wage won’t stop poverty. But he’s wrong to conclude that increasing wages will somehow inhibit economic recovery. It may just mean more money for the working poor to spend in order to maintain their status quo.¹¹

Contrary to the fear-mongering by living wage critics, boosting the minimum wage has been found, in fact, to be an effective anti-poverty tool increasing both individual earnings and hours worked (Jardim et al. 2018; Ritholtz 2019; Statistics Canada 2018).¹² For instance, following the implementation of living wages in Boston, New Haven, and Hartford, the percentage of workers living in severe poverty dropped from 34 percent to 13 percent between 1998 and 2001. Additionally, the number of families considered poor also decreased from 41 percent to 28 percent during the same period. Nearly all respondents indicated that they were able to contribute to their savings in addition to reducing their debt burdens (Brenner and Luce 2005). Victor Devinatz (2013) has argued that the implementation of living wage ordinances has also made it easier, theoretically, for unions to organize low-wage workers because of card check or neutrality provisions that apply to contractors or companies working on a development project contained in living wage ordinances.

Implementing living wages might also have positive effects on workers beyond those directly affected, for other workers might receive wage increases along with lower-wage workers. This upward pressure on wages can enhance labour's bargaining power in addition to redistributing wages across low- and median-wage workers. The fight for living wages has also deepened and extended labour-community coalitions, strengthening networks of resistance and their coordinated push for progressive political demands across diverse cities and communities. Finally, living wage campaigns have also raised awareness of the persistence of low-wage work and workplace precarity more generally, extending these conversations to the growing gap between rich and poor.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

The single-largest print media outlet in Canada, Postmedia, has a near-uniform antipathy to living wages, suggesting a tendency to speak with one voice across multiple outlets. This raises questions about the substantive capacity of Postmedia outlets to produce independently their editorials and to put forward a variety of independent views. More research is needed in this regard, especially on what accounts for the exceptionality of the *Edmonton Journal*. Nevertheless, over the past decade, a majority of Postmedia outlets under consideration here and the *Globe and Mail* have regularly asserted that statutory increases to minimum hourly rates of pay inevitably result in job losses and reduced hours of work, benefit only younger workers dependent on their parents, and do little to alleviate working poverty. However, there is little actual evidence to support such claims, with recent evidence suggesting contrary findings.

As discussed above, recent findings from Canada and abroad have concluded that higher minimum wages boost demand, improve productivity, and lower business costs related to employee turnover, training, and absenteeism. What is more, most minimum wage workers are adults well into their working lives and, more often than not, among the most vulnerable of populations. In this regard, the *Toronto Star*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, and *Victoria Times-Colonist*, to varying degrees, showed a greater willingness to support some measure of minimum wage increase. Rather than helpless bystanders in an era of global capitalism, governments are its chief architects. In this sense, the trend toward labour precarity and income inequality stems from political choices, not natural laws, as do countermeasures such as extending labour protections, rights to unionize, and wider social welfare entitlements.

Contemporary neoliberalism has championed the rollback of social policies designed to constrain the ill effects of unchecked capitalism following on the heels of three decades of deunionization, the individuation of economic risk, and falling standards of living. A new age of generalized labour

market insecurity underlies contemporary demands for living wages. This chapter opens up space for several questions that future research will need to address. For instance, what is the extent to which the newspapers considered here have been open or hostile to opposition editorials? How have alternative print, radio, television, and online media outlets challenged or reinforced dominant narratives about the presumed impacts of higher minimum wages on labour market performance? And how are living wage activists working to challenge many of these mainstream claims? In addressing these questions and others, living wage advocates might be able to better develop an effective strategy of communication that challenges many of the media (mis)representations discussed here, extending the plurality of public debates and potential policy options.

Notes

- 1 As journalist Linda McQuaig has argued (1995, 12), “all media outlets are owned by rich, powerful members of the elite. To assume that this fact has no interference on the ideas they present would be equivalent to assuming that, should the entire media be owned by, say, labour unions, women’s groups or social workers, this would have no impact on the editorial content.”
- 2 For instance, in 2001, a media furor was set off when CanWest decided that its 11 major dailies and 120 smaller dailies and weeklies would be required to run corporate office-sanctioned editorials regardless of whether local publishers agreed with their positions or not, including the proviso that locally written material should not contradict the company line (Shade 2005; Winter 2007).
- 3 The *Toronto Star* is Canada’s largest daily newspaper. With an average daily circulation of 318,763 and a weekly average of 2,231,338, it has the highest weekly circulation of any newspaper in Canada (“Circulation Report” 2015, 5). The *Toronto Star* is owned by Torstar Corporation, the third largest newspaper media company in Canada. As Figure 4.1 shows, Torstar has an average daily circulation greater than 900,000 (“Circulation Report” 2015, 4–7). The *Globe and Mail* is the second largest daily newspaper in the country, with a daily average circulation of 336,487 and a weekly average circulation of 2,018,923. Although the *Toronto Star* generates a higher weekly average, the *Globe and Mail* ranks first in daily average circulation (“Circulation Report” 2015, 4). The *Globe and Mail* is owned by Globe and Mail Incorporated, a subsidiary of Woodbridge Company Limited, a private holding company based in Toronto that took over ownership of the *Globe and Mail* in August 2015. The *Winnipeg Free Press* has a daily average circulation of 106,473 and a weekly average of 638,839 and is owned by F.P. Canadian Newspapers LP. Finally, the *Times-Colonist*, operated out of Victoria, British Columbia, has a daily average circulation of 58,297, a weekly average of 349,784, and is owned by Glacier Media.
- 4 While we were revising this chapter, Postmedia and Torstar Corporation announced the exchange of forty-one newspapers, of which thirty-six were subsequently closed. The media giants claimed that the closures were a result of declining print advertising revenue. As of December 2018, the Competition Bureau was investigating whether Postmedia and Torstar Corporation were aware that each intended to close the newspapers that it acquired. If so, then the activity could be considered a violation of the Competition Act and carry significant penalties (Krashinsky Robertson 2017).
- 5 “The whole idea behind hiking the minimum wage is that you can raise the price of something without raising its value and not have people buy less of it. And you can’t. Whether it’s a car, a bowl of soup or an hour of labour, when the price goes up, demand falls. In the case of low-skilled labour, especially in industries where it’s a significant cost

like hospitality, people seek alternatives from outsourcing to automation, like the touch screens frequently used to order in European fast food restaurants, or they close their doors and lay off their staff" (*National Post* 2009).

- 6 The *Calgary Herald* (2012) also asserts that most minimum wage workers are young people entering the job market, students working to cover expenses, and seniors boosting their retirement incomes. "The minimum wage was never intended to provide a living wage for those who choose to work a full 40 hours a week. Indeed, a higher minimum wage could hurt the very people who are earning it. Increase it too much and employers will trim hours, cut jobs and hire better qualified candidates to fill entry-level positions. Much needs to be done to ease the plight of the poor, but hand-wringing over the minimum wage is simply a distraction."
- 7 For instance, the *Globe and Mail* (2014) writes that, "in a free labour market, employers and employees bargain over wages and working conditions. In tight labour markets with low unemployment, like much of Western Canada, that's to the advantage of employees – not necessarily a bad thing. It pushes wages up. But demand also spurs supply, as relatively high and rising wages in the West draw in those who are out of the labour force, along with the unemployed and undercompensated from other parts of the country. Growing demand leads to scarcity of labour; scarcity leads to rising wages; that leads to more supply moving to where the high demand and the high wages are."
- 8 In regard to historically low unemployment rates in Canada, as well as in the United States and United Kingdom, recent indications suggest that long-term unemployment and involuntary part-time work are contributing factors in artificially underestimating the real unemployment rate in addition to concerns about stagnant wages and labour underutilization (Edwards 2019; Fong 2018; Livingstone 2016).
- 9 Brenner and Luce (2005) also examined the impacts of higher wages on competitive bidding and contract costs. They found that in all three cities the impact on competitive bidding was insignificant. In Boston and Hartford, bidding either stayed consistent or increased marginally after implementation, whereas it decreased in three contracts in New Haven. Brenner and Luce also found that the cost of city contracts fell markedly, as in Boston, where total annual costs of city contracts fell by 17 percent.
- 10 These findings are reinforced by previous research. Iglia Ivanova (2016) found that more than half (53 percent) of British Columbia's low-wage workforce are between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-four, with 39 percent over the age of thirty-five. Likewise, nearly 60 percent of workers who earn less than fifteen dollars per hour are women, with another 60 percent of earners supporting households. It is important to note that many low-wage workers over the age of twenty-five face a real risk of getting stuck in their jobs, with few opportunities for career advances or higher earnings. Almost half (45 percent) of the BC workforce over the age of twenty-five earning less than fifteen dollars per hour have been in the same jobs for longer than three years, and more than half (51 percent) of them work for corporations with more than 100 employees. In Saskatchewan, nearly 23,000 people earn minimum wages, with roughly 50 percent of them over the age of twenty-five (Government of Saskatchewan 2016). In Regina, approximately 29 percent of families of two or more persons had annual incomes less than the city's estimated living wage yearly income of \$61,766 (Gingrich 2014). In Nova Scotia, 63 percent of minimum wage earners are women, with nearly 60 percent of them twenty years and older (Johnston and Saulnier 2016). Between 1997 and 2014, the percentage of minimum wage earners in Ontario increased from 2.4 percent of the workforce to nearly 12 percent (Block 2015, 9). Some 40 percent of minimum wage workers in the province are adults over the age of twenty-five and well into their working lives. A similar trend can be seen at the other end of the age spectrum. Between 2006 and 2011, the share of workers over the age of fifty-five who earned the minimum wage increased by 75 percent (Tiessen 2015). As with the growth of minimum wage earners, there has been a corresponding growth of low-wage work. In 2014, nearly 30 percent of workers in Ontario earned within four dollars of the minimum wage, a 48 percent increase since 1997 (Block 2015). It is also becoming more difficult to secure full-time employment in the province since the share of employees who work less than forty hours each week grew nearly 20 percent between 1997 and 2014.

- 11 In Ontario, Doug Ford followed suit with tax cuts for Ontario's lowest-paid workers in lieu of the planned minimum wage hike to fifteen dollars per hour in 2019. Taking both the tax system and the transfer system into account, Ontario's minimum wage workers would have been more than \$700 ahead with an increase in the minimum wage as opposed to the tax cut (Block 2018).
- 12 These findings are consistent with research over the past two decades. For instance, in 1999, San Francisco implemented a series of living wage policies at San Francisco International Airport. Arguably, the most important of these policies, the Quality Standards Program, applied to nearly one-third of the airport's 30,000 employees and established a minimum wage of \$9.00 per hour plus full health benefits or \$10.25 per hour without health benefits. The policy also required employers to provide workers with twelve days per year of paid time off (Reich, Hall, and Jacob 2004). The average pay for workers increased by nearly 22 percent, and the most significant gains were experienced by entry-level workers whose average wages increased by approximately 33 percent. In addition to the extension of health benefits, employees indicated that quality of life factors such as time spent with family, ability to contribute to personal savings, and health status improved as a result of the policy (Figart 2004; Levin-Waldman 2005; Reich, Hall, and Jacob 2004).

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