

March 31, 2025

**Most Manitobans think that \$16 minimum wage is too low: poll**

Two dime/hr increase not enough for minimum wage earners during affordability crisis

(Winnipeg) – A new poll shows that a majority of Manitobans think that October’s small increase to the minimum wage falls short of what minimum wage earners need, announced Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) President Kevin Rebeck. According to recent polling conducted for the MFL by Probe Research, 72 per cent of Manitobans say that a minimum wage of \$16/hr is not enough for most workers to get by on. Only 14 per cent of Manitobans think that 16/hr is enough.

“No one should work full time and still live in poverty, but that is the harsh reality for many minimum wage earners in Manitoba,” said Rebeck. “This polling shows that a majority of Manitobans understand this small increase to the minimum wage is out of touch with what low-wage workers need to cover groceries, transportation and the other essential costs that only continue to rise during this affordability crisis.”

Rebeck encouraged the current NDP government to undo Brian Pallister’s restrictive minimum wage law that keeps minimum wage earners trapped below the poverty line, even with full-time hours. In its first year, the Pallister government froze Manitoba’s minimum wage and then it passed legislation to limit all minimum wage increases to the previous year’s inflation rate. Because of the one year freeze and the fact that starting point for the inflationary increases was below a poverty wage level, the law prevents minimum wage earners from ever getting above the poverty line.

October’s planned minimum wage increase is based on Manitoba’s annualized inflation rate for 2024, which was 1.1 per cent. But Rebeck noted that the overall inflation number represents an average of all kinds of price changes. According to Statistics Canada, Manitoba food prices and rent and housing costs increased by 3.3 and 4.4 per cent respectively in 2024. That means the two things that minimum wage earners spend most of their money on jumped by three and four times the overall inflation rate in 2024.

And October’s minimum wage increase will not factor in the inflationary pressures being experienced by workers so far in 2025. Under the Pallister-era minimum wage law, there is an up-to 22-month gap between the inflation experienced by workers and the following year’s increase to the minimum wage. So far in 2025, Manitobans have been saddled with the highest inflation rate in Canada and low-wage workers are feeling the squeeze of rising gas prices, bus fares, and MPI rates. But these increases will not be factored into the minimum wage until October 2026 at the earliest under Pallister’s law.

“Manitoba needs a better approach to minimum wage than the one left to us by Brian Pallister,” said Rebeck. “Working families in Manitoba have been facing the highest inflation in the country so far this year and minimum wage earners are feeling these price increases the hardest. This polling shows that Manitobans don’t think that a couple more dimes an hour will cut it.”

# Methodology

Probe Research surveyed a random and representative sampling of 1,000 adults residing in Manitoba between March 4 and 16, 2025.

With a sample of 1,000, one can say with 95 per cent certainty that the results are within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points of what they would have been if the entire adult population of Manitoba had been surveyed. The margin of error is higher within each of the survey's population sub-groups.

The sample consists of 497 Manitobans randomly recruited via live-agent operator; 313 randomly recruited via Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and 190 members of Probe Research's online panel. All respondents completed the survey on an online platform.

Modified random digit dialing, including both landline and wireless numbers, ensured all Manitoba adults had an equal opportunity to participate in this Probe Research survey.

Probe weighted the data by age, gender, region and educational attainment so that the sample properly reflects the province's population, based on Census data. Probe used SPSS software to do all statistical analysis.

## About the Probe Research Omnibus

For more than two decades, Probe Research has undertaken quarterly omnibus surveys of random and representative samples of Manitoba adults. These scientific telephone surveys have provided strategic and proprietary insights to hundreds of public, private and not-for-profit clients on a range of social, cultural and public policy topics. The Probe Research Omnibus Survey is the province's largest and most trusted general population survey.

## Survey Instrument

Probe designed the survey questionnaire in close consultation with the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

## Views on a \$16/hour Minimum Wage

### Three-quarters feel \$16 is not enough for most workers to get by on

MFL3. Manitoba's minimum wage is currently \$15.80 per hour. This fall, it is set to increase by 20 cents to \$16. Which statement best matches your views on this? (Base: All respondents, N=1,000)

