

What Does Money Buy? Money Buys Health!

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Background

The Province of B.C. has one of the highest rates of poverty in Canada and is one of the wealthiest province's. However, B.C. is the only province that lacks a poverty reduction strategy. As students we worked to raise awareness among Selkirk College Students and community members surrounding the health implications of increasing minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

Methods

- Assessed the current minimum wage in B.C. and the impacts on health.
- Information was to was provided to Selkirk College students encouraging them to engage in the political process:
 - A letter was written to Premier Christie Clark and Selkirk Students Signed it
 - A campaign was held with information tables at Castlegar and Nelson Selkirk Campuses and at Selkirk Saints Hockey game.
 - Connection with local MLA Katrine Conroy was made.
 - Dinner Basket Conversation was hosted at Selkirk College

Impact of low-wages

- Full-time workers earning minimum wage earn \$5000 below the poverty line.
- Students working for minimum wage fall behind.
- 1:4 children in B.C. are living in poverty.
- Seniors can't afford to retire and continue to work in low-wage jobs.
- Poverty costs the province of B.C. \$8-9 billion per year in health care, education, policing and criminal justice costs.
- Top 1% of employed residents earned 31 times the earnings of a minimum wage worker.

Evaluation

Evaluative methods were based on the number of collected signatures on the BC Federation Labour campaign petition along with the number of signed letters collected. Additionally we reflected on meaningful conversation with students and community members and on feedback received from dinner basket conversation evaluation process. Common theme of conversations were: impact on small business, economy, concerns on impact of higher paying jobs, questions about the need for high school aged works to earn an increased minimum wage, and the cost of living on current minimum wage.

Recommendations for nurses

Nurses should individually and collectively work towards decreasing social inequities. One way to address this is by recognizing the significance of the social determinants of health and advocating for policies and programs that address these determinants, such as the Fight for \$15 Campaign.

References

BC Federation of Labour (2015). Minimum Wage: time to increase the minimum wage. Retrieved from <http://bcted.ca/issues/minimum-wage>
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