

For Immediate Release:

**New minimum wage report by Human Resources Management Association
calls for public consultation and multi-stakeholder advisory panel**

VANCOUVER, BC (February 17, 2016) - A new report on the minimum wage, released today by the Human Resources Management Association (HRMA), is calling for the establishment of a public advisory panel that can bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including government, business, and labour, to objectively review research and oversee public consultation in hopes of arriving at evidence-based recommendations that best address the needs and interests of the BC economy and its workers.

Minimum Wage-Should British Columbia Adapt? was co-authored by HRMA Chief Regulatory Officer Rock Lefebvre, who says the public discussion about the minimum wage is made challenging by virtue of conflicting philosophy, opinion and conjecture in the absence of agreed upon scientific evidence and quality research.

“While advocates point to the positive effects of raising the minimum wage and opponents stress the possible negative repercussions, what we’re missing is a holistic approach that objectively considers the cumulative effects of any changes to the minimum wage,” said Lefebvre. “Unfortunately, the debate about the minimum wage suffers from the absence of an economic theory to guide us, the maturity of much of the Canadian literature on the subject, and the narrowness of some of this dated research. We need to consider more meaningful economic indicators.

“For instance, while British Columbia’s minimum wage ranks 9th in Canada, that in and of itself is a poor justification for raising it. What is more meaningful is that, while real average hourly earnings in BC have increased by 16.1 per cent between 2001 and 2015, the real minimum wage rate has only increased by 7.3 per cent over the same period. As a result, BC’s minimum wage to average hourly earnings ratio has declined from 48.2 per cent to 44.3 per cent during that time, making it one of the lowest of all Canadian provinces. Moreover, if we allow for geographical variations in costs of typical household expenditure items employing the Market Basket Measure, we find that British Columbia is the only province in which the minimum wage does not satisfy the set of living necessities to maintain the basic standard of living.”

The HRMA report suggests that, with British Columbia’s statutory minimum wage rate having been raised 28 per cent between 2011 and 2012, now would be an ideal time to undertake a thorough assessment of that minimum wage increase in terms of employment and other affects. Such an assessment would also benefit from the increased predictability now possible due to adoption of consumer price indexing in 2015.

“It’s time to benefit from the research and debate that has emerged over the years and to debunk any myths that prevent BC from setting its optimal minimum wage level,” added Anthony Ariganello, President and Chief Executive Officer, HRMA. “At the very least, we might agree that it’s time to assess patterns of increasing wage inequality and to endorse a model that best responds to the needs and opportunities within British Columbia.”

To review the full *Minimum Wage-Should British Columbia Adapt?* report, please visit:

<http://www.hrma.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Issue-in-Focus-Minimum-Wage.pdf>.

The Human Resources Management Association (HRMA), representing HR professionals in British Columbia and the Yukon, works to keep people first in the decisions of leaders by promoting and enhancing the profession. HRMA offers professional development and networking opportunities to its members, and it is the sole grantor of the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation in British Columbia and the Yukon. For additional information, please visit: HRMA.ca

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