

# Promoting Living Wage in Hamilton: A Comparative Case Study of Faith-Based Activism

by

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We accept the thesis as conforming to the required standard

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### **Abstract**

A living wage has become crucial to strive for because minimum wages are set below the poverty line causing hardships for families and increasing dependency on government assistance. Through a comparative case study and interviews, this paper examines the lessons that can be learned from comparing the City of Hamilton living wage campaign to other successfully documented campaigns around the world. My research was conducted with particular attention to the role of faith-based organizations, which presented itself as an obvious scope of investigation when considering that although the living wage is calculated based on the local cost of living, it is promoted by placing emphasis on values and morals. Currently the existing literature on living wage is not yet expansive enough to sufficiently encompass faith activism, yet successful campaigns suggest that faith activism has the capacity to amplify the living wage debate and influence public policy. My research is the first that focuses entirely on understanding faith's capacity in the living wage debate, is guided by Max Weber's claim that religious ideology can influence the economic social structure, and draws upon Habermas's communicative action for a fair discourse (Habermas, 2012, p. 5; Weber, 2009, p. 99). My findings establish that faith continues to play a significant, if under-reported, role in the public sphere, and faith organizations gathers people from across class lines in a moral struggle to address the root causes of poverty. Many secular people, however, fail to appreciate organized religion's potential positive contribution to building an increasingly equal and fair society. I believe my study will contribute to the literature, lend support to the larger total effort of the living wage, and will provide groundwork for future scholars to conduct possible new areas of research concerning the relationship between economic justice and faith-based activism.

**Keywords**

Living Wage, In-Work Poverty, Faith Activism, Christian Social Ethics, Communicative Action, Grassroots Political Power, Sustainable Coalitions, Moral Economy

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## Chapter 1: Background

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Charities USA, we write to express our concern with the ongoing decent jobs crisis as well as the resulting inequality in our communities and country. We urge you to consider closely any legislation that begins to heal our broken economy by promoting decent work and ensuring fair and just compensation for all workers. We write not as economists or labor market experts, but rather as pastors and teachers who every day, in our ministries and churches, see the pain and struggles caused by an economy that simply does not produce enough jobs with just wages. So many of our families find it increasingly difficult to afford basic needs, forcing some to take multiple jobs or, in desperation, even seek out predatory loans. (Wenski & Snyder, 2014)

Many people believe that all one needs to stay out of poverty is a full-time job. For those who work for minimum wage, however, that is not necessarily the case. Since the most recent North American recession, the living wage movement has taken on greater importance. The 2008 recession led to the loss of 8 million jobs in the United States and 400,000 in Canada (Economic Policy Institute, n.d.; Statistics Canada, 2010). Despite best efforts to create jobs, growth has been slow in both countries. This has caused governments at all levels to engage in job creation activities, and these pressures are leading to the relaxation of safety standards, employment standards, and environmental standards in some cases (Bernhardt, Boushey, Dresser, & Tilly, 2009, pp. 2–12; Lewchuk, Clarke, & de Wolff, 2011, p. 19). In the soft recovery period, the greatest job growth was in jobs paying poverty salaries.

My journey helping welfare participants towards financial independence has given me a window into local poverty issues. Some of these participants are impoverished as a result of an addiction or mental illness, but most are working poor who keep returning to the safety net of the government program, Ontario Works. I see single parents with young children working for minimum wages, sometimes at two jobs, which leaves little time or energy for family or for sharing with their children. Children sometimes develop behavioural issues and drop out of school due to the ongoing parental absence caused by working multiple jobs. In addition, as

poverty increases, crime rates increase. According to Segal (2011), “Seventy per cent of offenders entering prisons have unstable job histories.” Individuals working at minimum wage jobs continue to sink deeper into debt and poverty—with all the accompanying personal and family stresses. I grow frustrated as I witness participants starting employment for minimum wage with high expectations, only to return to the welfare system in less than three months.

Employers, in general, fear that raising wages reduces the business profit of a company or sometimes makes it uncompetitive, thus creating an existentialist threat to the company’s continued existence. On the contrary, if more employers adopt living wage policies and practices, higher wages can result in increased demand for local goods and services due to the increased spending capacity of people who enjoy a minimum standard of living, which in turn can help boost Hamilton’s economy.

The living wage movements in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom are working to solve this low-wage problem because of the number of people working full time who still cannot make ends meet. Living wage advocates have had significant success in the past two decades in these and other countries. Robert Kuttner (as cited in Brooks, 2007) claimed, “The living wage movement is the most interesting and (under-reported) grassroots enterprise to emerge since the civil rights movement . . . signalling a resurgence of local activism around pocketbook issues” (p. 437). Living wage movement has gained momentum, sparked local activism, and is essentially building strong ties with faith-based organizations who are uniquely positioned to promote social inclusion among their flock. Nevertheless, this role has been under-represented in academic discussions. Similar momentum is surely needed in Ontario; in 2002, Ontario had the lowest proportion of jobs paying under \$10 an hour but, by 2007, Ontario’s proportion had gone up while other provinces had seen a decline (Mackenzie & Stanford, 2008,

p. 8). Ontario is continuing to fall behind other provinces and minimum-wage workers continue to struggle to live below the poverty line and to suffer the health consequences and family stress that go along with it (Mackenzie & Stanford, 2008, p. 8). Several cities in Ontario have calculated a living wage, including Hamilton, but so far have not had much success. The living wage movement calculated the wage needed to stay out of poverty in Hamilton, for example, at \$14.95 an hour in 2011 (Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton, 2011), whereas minimum wage in Ontario was stuck at \$10.25 an hour for the last 3 years until it was raised by .75cents in June 2014.

Although legislation is not the only route to a living minimum wage, Canadian businesses have been slow to adopt it as a payment practice. In contrast, a group in London, England, called London Citizens, successfully mobilized a coalition of unions, faith organizations, businesses, and politicians to pass a living wage policy in London (Littman, Donne, & Wakefield, 2010). Their model was supported by cost-benefit analyses and promoted the moral, practical, and financial benefits of paying a living wage. Their model demonstrates best practices that can be adopted worldwide and is explored in Chapter 4.

Despite the fact that strong evidence exists to support the local economic angle in the living wage debate, my study is not an economic one. My research hones in specifically on the role of faith-based activism in the living wage movement, avoids taking a general overview of the movement, and also does not include every aspect of it. To understand the living wage concept in its entirety, however, I have touched upon other areas that are significantly connected to the living wage debate and to the lens I use to examine the debate. My research is a study undertaken from within the campaign, for the purpose of understanding the potential that

dedicated faith-based organizations have and for insight into the ways that these organizations might significantly contribute to the struggle for a living wage for the working poor.

My literature review emphasized the rise of faith-based activism in the living wage movement, and my research explored the following question: What lessons can be learned from comparing the living wage campaign in Hamilton to others in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, with special emphasis on the role of faith organizations?

According to Statistics Canada (n.d.), the mainstream religions are predominantly Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism; thus, I have focussed on these in my study. The role of faith-based organizations in the living wage movement has been underdiscussed in academia perhaps due to scholars such as Edward Said, who produced the secularization theories that strongly rejected faith organizations in the public sphere (Robbins, 2006). Toft, Philpott, and Shah (2011) rejected the idea that secularization has segregated religion into an insulated realm where it operates privately; these authors believe that religion has more ability to influence the political sphere than perhaps ever before (p. 49).

The overall design of my project used qualitative data collection tools, as it is rooted in a qualitative epistemological position that recognizes the importance of locating the research within a particular social, cultural, and historical context. I used formal, objective, and systematic processes to limit bias in the analysis of the data gathered to test the following research questions:

1. How does the inclusion of faith organizations enhance the success of living wage campaigns?
2. What causes in-work poverty to grow?
3. How do you engage the community?

4. What are the best practices used internationally?
5. How would you make a case for living wage among businesses, politicians, and the general population?

I interviewed living wage policy experts and champions including faith leaders, economists, employers, and lead organizers. The interviews were conducted through Skype, face to face, and through telephone to understand the experts' motives for getting involved in the living wage movement and the tactics that led to their success. I compared data from three living wage campaigns: one in the United States, one in the United Kingdom, and one in British Columbia (BC). I compared and contrasted those campaigns with the Hamilton campaign—Living Wage Hamilton—which helped me understand, the operational concepts of campaigns such as this one. I highlighted elements of faith-based organizations that can be leveraged, noted history of successes faith-based organizations have had in motivating people to advocate for change, both for good and for ill, and noted the relative lack of longevity that secular movements have achieved. I believe this study will contribute to the body of literature on living wage and will provide groundwork for future scholars to conduct possible new areas of research concerning the relationship between economic justice and faith-based activism.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review features the work of scholars and practitioners who share my passions and concerns—that of reducing in-work poverty through living wage—and who claim faith-based activism is crucial in living wage campaigns. For example, The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, London Citizen, Jobs with Justice, U.S. Catholic Bishops anti-poverty program, and Industry Areas Foundation have all collaborated with labour, faith-based, and other groups to promote living wage resulting in success. Faith organizations have political power; they have numbers, money and, therefore, influence. Whether one is secular or religious, one cannot discount the contribution on social justice work through faith-based activism but, rather, be open to working together; it only benefits our society, especially living wage campaigns. From the literature, I reviewed the following topics:

1. the history of living wage,
2. the impact of living wage policies and ordinances,
3. Christian social economic thought and living wage,
4. faith organizations and living wage activism,
5. community unionism and communicating for economic justice, and
6. sustainable coalitions to tackle in-work poverty.

These topics interrelate with each other as they all focus on tackling inequality faced by workers around the world. Coalitions that mix faith-based, labour, and civil society organizations appear to be critical to the successes and sustainability of living wage campaigns. My literature review demonstrated that the united effort of these organizations has enhanced the strength and power of social movements to achieve their goals.

**Topic 1: History of Living Wage**

This section traces the historical evolution of living wage in the United States, the United Kingdom, and in Canada. Two principal themes emerged from the literature. The first was the efficacy and the legitimacy of faith organizations in originating the living wage debate. The second can be classified under the theme of movement culture of the working class formed with Christian practice.

In the United Kingdom, the history of the living wage goes back to the 1870s in Britain (Wills, 2013). Mark Oldroyd—a Liberal politician, a textile factory owner, and a nonconformist Christian, offered the first public commentary in support of living wage (Wills, 2013). For ethical and economic reasons, he stated, “A living wage must be sufficient to maintain the worker in the highest state of industrial efficiency, with decent surroundings and sufficient leisure” (Oldroyd, as cited in Wills, 2013).

In the 20th century, another industrialist—Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, son of Joseph Rowntree, a Quaker—did the meticulous work of calculating how much an average family of five would need to spend on necessities, and he called this the “human costs of labour” (Wills & Linneker, 2012, p. 42). His approach was that wages would be fixed and reforms would take place within industry to cover the costs (Wills & Linneker, 2012, p. 42). His interest in the living wage was moral and economic as well; he believed that a living wage would translate into healthy workers who could then also have the ability to be a productive part of the greater community (Wills & Linneker, 2012, p. 42).

After 1925, living wage caught the interest of policy makers and was proposed as a bill in the House of Commons in 1931 (Wills & Linneker, 2012, p. 42). The angle that advocates within the government took was that of consumption; they argued that providing the poor with money

to purchase and use the necessities of life would stimulate the economy and increase the nation's prosperity in general; yet the bill did not pass (Wills & Linneker, 2012, p. 42). The living wage movement disappeared until this century, when it reappeared in 2001 as a campaign led by the faith-based organization, London Citizens (Wills & Linneker, 2012, p. 42). Before this point, the debate was removed from the lives of most citizens and disconnected from faith-based values. Once London Citizens picked up the torch, the movement gathered significant momentum, and its accomplishments were similarly remarkable. For example, London claimed the first living wage Olympics in 2012. Secular and faith-based living wage movements seem to be differentiated by longevity, which is supported by both pre-existing infrastructure and a high level of individual motivation.

The living wage movement in the United States began in the 1870s. In 1906, the movement was influenced by the publication of the book, *A Living Wage: Its Ethical and Economic Aspects*, by Msgr. John Augustine Ryan (Stabile, 2008, p. 1). Jerold Waltman (as cited in Stabile, 2008) later expanded upon Ryan's ideas in *The Case for the Living Wage*, focussing on political aspects and justifying it on moral grounds based on religion (p. 1). Religious groups have long been advocates of the living wage, along with labour unions and other community organizations. Religious proponents of the living wage support it from a moral, rather than economic, standpoint (Walterman, as cited in Stabile, 2008, p. 1).

The first living wage ordinance was passed in Baltimore, Maryland, as a result of successful organizing by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) affiliate, Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development, otherwise known as BUILD (Snarr, 2011, p. 2). BUILD was a coalition of forty-six Baltimore churches (Snarr, 2011, p. 2). The IAF was formed by Saul Alinsky, and his model of community organizing fosters everyday life by giving power to those

excluded from the decision-making process to organize to defend and pursue common good (Bretherton, 2013, p. 73). So far, the living wage movement has been successful in about 140 U.S. communities (Brooks, 2007, p. 437). Living wage is considered to be an issue of social and economic justice.

The emphasis for the Baltimore campaign started with the listening that happened inside the congregations where people were hearing stories about people who had been city employees and who were losing their jobs because the city was going to hire contractors instead. People who were working for these contractors were being paid far less in wages, without benefits. The idea for the campaign was grounded first in that listening and in a real appreciation for the differences people were experiencing in terms of their abilities to provide for their families.

Not all workers belong to a union; due to the free market economy, unions are losing their bargaining power. Also, although unions have interest in their members, faith organizations look out for their communities—people who cannot support themselves towards re-establishing their dignity and social inclusion. Faith organizations, rather than collective bargaining units, are the driver. If collective bargaining worked in tandem with faith-based organizations, they could amplify the efforts to improve the lives of all workers.

Canada has a strong labour history, and unions have been significant in ensuring fair wages for their members, but the living wage is fairly new to Canada. Due to this, Canada does not have a dynamic living wage campaign such as the United States and the United Kingdom.

Although several municipalities—Hamilton, London, Windsor, Kingston, and Toronto, being the first in 1893—across Ontario have instituted fair wage policies in order to ensure that contractors for the city paid their workers union rates and benefits (Schenk, 2001), when it came to implementing the fair wage policy to protect workers' rights, contracted workers owed much

to the power and influence of building trade unions (Schenk, 2001, pp. 13–14). Goldberg and Green (as cited in Schenk, 2001) claimed that during World War II, the notion of living wage was discussed in a series of reports on social security. Following that, rather than different wages being calculated for various family sizes, a family allowance was created to be distributed to families with children (Schenk, 2001). Provinces legislated employment standards at minimal levels (Schenk, 2001, p. 2). In 1918, BC and Manitoba passed minimum wage legislation, making them the first two provinces to do so; however, only women were covered. Only 2 years later, Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, and Saskatchewan followed suit (Schenk, 2001, pp. 1–2).

Even in union support of fair wage movements, Christian practice has played an important, if often hidden, role. In the late 18th century, Knights of Labour played a key role forming the movement culture—working class activism—through the use of Christian practice and scripture proclamations while confronting the mainstream Christian churches for supporting capitalists (Palmer, 1992, pp. 128–129). According to Marks (1991), religion played a significant role in shaping working class values, interests, and lifestyles that inadvertently translated into a workers’ movement culture—a culture of activism—in Ontario (p. 90). The Christian faith has played a significant role in the establishment of trade unions towards economic justice and social inclusion. In his paper, Marks (1991) argued that historians, due to their lack of interest, failed to examine the role of religion in Knights of Labour and Salvation Army (p. 90). I agree with Marks and further attribute this failure to examine and acknowledge the role of religion in labour unions to secularization. In Canada, the living wage movement is driven by secular top-down community groups and has been stop and go, just as public support for unions has been. Although public support for unions has waxed and waned, faith-based organizations have

continued to be community pillars that attract citizens from across the political and socio-economic spectrum.

## **Topic 2: Impact of Living Wage Policies and Ordinances**

Living wage provides the basis for workers and their families to become fully contributing members of the society while living with dignity. According to Lester and Jacobs (2010), implementation of living wage policies have direct effects (direct consequence to people involved), direct spillover effects (other low-wage employees), and indirect effects (overall level of economic development). Goldman Sachs (as cited in Flynn, 2012) claimed that increasing the income of low-wage earners has a significant stimulating effect on the economy because of their spending compared to increasing the income of high-income workers, which does not affect the economy to the same extent (p. 31).

Even outside of the realm of policy, private organizations have seen the benefits and have implemented their own living wage practices. Richards, Cohen, and Klein (2010) noted that, in the United Kingdom, a growing number of leading corporate, public, and nonprofit employers are joining the living wage community: HSBC Bank, KPMG, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Greater London Authority, London's Underground subway system, four East London Health Trusts, Queen Mary University, London School of Economics, the School of Oriental and African Studies, Westway Development Trust, and the first Olympics 2012 (p. 6). Just as in the U.K. campaign successes, living wage policies in the United States report similar successes. Caplan (as cited in Brooks, 2007) claimed that since 1994, when the mayor of Baltimore signed the living wage bill, 140 living wage laws were made in various U.S. communities (p. 437). The many organizations that have arisen to campaign for living wage have also gone on to address

other social justice issues—education, health care, and neighbourhood safety (Brooks, 2007, p. 440).

Reynolds and Kern (as cited in Brooks, 2007) claimed the cost to the public doubles because individuals who are not earning a living wage will often require government support, such as food stamps, housing vouchers, or health care for those without insurance (p. 440). In Canada, a national study about work-life conflict, conducted by Linda Duxbury and Chris Higgins (as cited in Richards, Cohen, & Klein, 2010), estimated that absenteeism costs \$6 billion a year, directly and indirectly; the study showed that an additional \$6 billion cost burdened the health care system (p. 6). Flynn's (2012) study looked at Simon Fraser University (SFU) becoming the first living wage university in Canada. Flynn demonstrated that 13 universities and four colleges in the United Kingdom have passed living wage policies to ensure all staff, including contracted staff, earn a living wage (pp. 37–41). Organizations from the public, private and not for profit sectors have seen reason to implement living wages, regardless of legislation.

Given the need for widespread living wage jobs, however, legislation seems the most effective route to alleviating poverty and bringing about the benefits that accompany greater financial health of citizens. The most common form of living wage law requires that any business that has city contracts must pay a living wage, usually defined as a wage that lifts employees above the poverty line. Wage increases have a beneficial effect on the business community as a whole because those who receive the living wage normally spend it in the local community. Local spending results in stimulating the local economies.

David Neumark and Scott Adams (2000), who opposed the living wage, claimed that living wages result in large wage gains and mass employment losses (p. 38); Chapman and Thompson (2006), however, determined that these conclusions were reached by using faulty

methodology, to indict the living wage effort (p. 3). Along with Chapman and Thompson, other researchers—including Bernste, Brenner, Wicks-Lim, and Pollin (as cited in Chapman & Thompson, 2006)—highly castigated the method of study employed by Neumark and Adams (2000), who used job loss to support their opposition (pp. 21–23).

Policies that offer direct benefits to living wage organizations have had some success in North America. Chapman and Thompson (2006) found that the turnover of homecare workers in San Francisco fell by 57% and that the San Francisco airport’s annual turnover among security screeners fell from 95% to 19%, as their hourly wage rose from \$6.45 to \$10.00 an hour (p. 3).

Business assistance living wage laws are promoted as a way to improve economic development by supporting the creation of family-supporting jobs and have proven results in a 15-city study—Ann Arbor, Berkeley, Cambridge, Cleveland, Duluth, Hartford, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Oakland, Philadelphia, Richmond, San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose, and Santa Fe (Lester & Jacobs, 2012, pp. 2–3). Business assistance living wage laws usually impact only firms that receive direct subsidies, only a few of which pay below the living wage (Lester & Jacobs, 2012, pp. 8–9). Even though opponents argue that paying living wages causes a reduction in the number of jobs, Lester and Jacobs (2012) showed in their report that this is not the case. Where faith-based tradition is stronger, in the United Kingdom, evidently there is higher uptake even with arguably less robust rebate program.

Despite the reluctance of market economists to support the living wage concept, it can and does fit with economic theory especially if profitability is expanded to include social benefits. London Economics (2009) conducted a study of both public and private sectors and analysed the cost and benefits of offering living wage; the study found that living wage provides significant benefits to the business, worker, and society—benefits that offset the costs of

implementation. London Economics highlighted the business benefits revealed through a quantitative and qualitative study. In the study, 80% of employers said the quality of the work of their staff increased and absenteeism decreased by approximately 25%; also, 70% of employers believed that they raised consumer awareness as an ethical employer (London Economics, 2009, pp. 17–37). From the employees' perspective, 75% agreed that their quality of work increased, and 50% of employees perceived that after implementing living wage, they willingly and quickly adapted to any change required by their employer (London Economics, 2009, pp. 17–37).

A living wage not only improves the living standard of low-income workers but also has the potential to address long-term societal implications. Esping Andersen (as cited Richards, Cohen, Klein, & Littman, 2008), an internationally recognized political economist stated:

If childhood poverty translates into less education, inferior cognitive skills, more criminality and inferior lives, the secondary effect is a mass of low-productivity workers, highly vulnerable to unemployment and low pay in the “new economy.” They will yield less revenue to tax authorities and probably require more public aid during their active years. (p. 22)

As described in the quote, childhood poverty has a wider social cost for generations to come. Poverty is a step in the perpetuating cycle of pitfalls that is leading to a weaker foundation in the economy; thus, to break this never ending pattern, living wage must be implemented so that people are able to sustain the economy, lest it collapse unto itself.

In the Economic Policy Institute study, Chandler (2009) presented *Working Hard Living Poor*, a wage study for Nevada as both a research and an organizing tool by social work faculty and students of University of Nevada (p. 170). Chandler claimed that the Nevada economy boomed over three decades while 80% of its families remained poor. The social work researchers, through their 4-year coalition efforts involving the community, influenced municipal strategy to address the inequality caused by economic development policies, which negatively

impacted Nevada; not only did the researchers establish a living wage rate for Nevada but also they were able to implement social policy (Chandler, 2009, pp. 174–175).

Chandler (2009) claimed that authors teamed up with the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada—a coalition that represents 43 groups, including workers, women, environmentalists, people of colour, gays and lesbians, people of faith, and social work professionals who brought the issue of inequality to the forefront of Nevada citizens—which received high profile media coverage (p. 178). Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN) paid much attention to the low-wage plight, and their efforts resulted in Nevada congress voting to raise minimum wage (Chandler, 2009). Nevada’s victory sparked political activity at the federal level, too; congress voted to raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 in three stages over 3 years (Chandler, 2009). Due to the University of Nevada’s social researchers and PLAN’s efforts, 23 states, including Nevada, continue to have higher standards than the federal government’s minimum wage and to enjoy improved living standard (Chandler, 2009, pp. 170–180). In a somewhat similar situation, social workers of the City of Terrace, BC, calculated and promoted the living wage for the Terrace in 2010, but the living wage idea was rejected (B. Bidgood, personal communication, April 29, 2014). In 2013, social workers signed a petition and forwarded it to the city (B. Bidgood, personal communication, April 29, 2014). These are excellent examples of the potential contribution of social work academics and their students to help resolve in-work poverty.

Nevada makes the case that social workers—driven by their ethical commitment to their profession—have great capacity to contribute to the living wage debate everywhere. Living wage activists lead with both ethical and religious arguments, yet the economic claim is quite compelling. It states that living wages are actually good for business because these wages lower

turnover and, therefore, the costs of training; living wages also increase productivity; expand the local tax base, thereby increasing consumer expenditures; and improve shareholder value (Snarr, 2011).

These examples convey that living wage ordinances and policies have positive impact by giving citizens some stake, and also these ordinances and campaigns benefit the economy, employers, and taxpayers. Employers who choose to pay a living wage are making a critical investment in a sustainable economy that enables employers to foster a dedicated, skilled, and healthy workforce while raising their own reputation by showing corporate social responsibility. Hari Bapuji (personal communication, April 2, 2014), at the University of Manitoba, explained that employers are primarily focussed on profitability and bottom line but assured that most employers are keen to engage in helping their communities in the hope of reputation building. As was seen earlier, however, corporate change is happening at a slow pace and secular change from within the government has, so far, had a limited lifespan. Given the importance of the living wage movement, and the successes of faith-based organizations in effecting wage change (explored in Topic 3), it is important to shed light on what has been a largely hidden contribution and on the reasons for the unique impact these organizations have made. Topic 3 will also explore some of the negative impacts of religion but assures that theologically conscious actions towards economic justice have contributed to reducing in-work poverty.

### **Topic 3: Christian Social Economic Thought and Living Wage**

Christian religious teachings uncover part of the reason why so many key players in the living wage movement are faith-based organizations. Within the context of mobilizing structures, living wage campaigns grow out of existing community-based power organizations with deep roots among local churches. For centuries, Christianity has been active in and has believed in the

possibility of solving social and economic struggles through unity and solidarity. For example, Karol Wojtyla, who later became Pope John Paul II (as cited in Kwitny, 1997) and who was ordained in 1946, wrote in the 1953 *Catholic Social Ethics* in the first volume on politics, “The main task of the Catholic social ethic is to introduce the principles of justice and love into social life” (p. 136). This concept is not unique to the Catholic teachings but is surely seen as central in the living wage debate.

London Citizens—a broad-based community organization successfully influenced other leading organizations—such as the Greater London Authority, KPMG, Barclays, and the Olympic Delivery Authority—to be living wage employers and advocates. London Citizens ran successful campaigns guided by Catholic social teachings, having traced its own “roots to 1896 Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labour” (Schlesinger, 2013, p. 4). The encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on capital and labour stated,

They are reminded that, according to natural reason and Christian philosophy, working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood; but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers—that is truly shameful and inhuman . . . His great and principal duty is to give everyone what is just . . . the rich must religiously refrain from cutting down the workmen’s earnings, whether by force, by fraud, or by usurious dealing; and with all the greater reason because the laboring man is, as a rule, weak and unprotected, and because his slender means should in proportion to their scantiness be accounted sacred. (Pope Leo XIII, para. 20)

In her book, *All You That Labor: Religion and Ethics in the Living Wage Movement*, Snarr (2011)—while acknowledging the practice of combining religious political speech by successful religious activists such as Walter Rauschenbusch, John Ryan, and Martin Luther King Jr.—stipulated that when religious activists take the importance of our sociological and theological interdependencies into consideration, neoclassical ideals can be monitored and long-term economic political change will be supported. Snarr (2011) explored the ways religious

organizations do this work in concert with low-wage workers, the challenges religious activists face, and the manner in which people of faith might better nurture moral agency in relation to the political economy. For example, in the United Kingdom, the Catholic Church and Church of England are publicly backing the living wage. They are motivated to do it because of the Biblical and economic basis and because paying just wages is a measure of how righteous people can be. With religiously motivated morals, it is improper to fall short as righteous people.

In addition, Waltman (2004) offered examples of the U.S. Catholic health care system that outlines a statement with seven principles concerning the just wage, which was later adopted and implemented within the organization. As cited in Waltman (2004), due to John Paul II who pointed out the need for a just wage, the catechism of the Catholic Church contains a provision for fair wages as follows:

A just wage is a legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice. In determining fair pay, both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken into account. Remuneration for work should guarantee humans the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for themselves and their family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level, taking into account the role and the productivity of each, the state of the business, and the common good. Agreement between the parties is not sufficient to justify the amount to be received in wages. (p. 34)

The Catholic Church is one example of a faith organization that makes a provision for living wage, and later chapters explore the role of other religions' contributions in swaying the outcome of the living wage debate. Although specific religious teachings vary in nuance, common themes can be identified. In his essay, *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post Secular Age*, Habermas, Reder, Schmidt, Brieskorn, and Ricken (2012) investigated whether those in public political roles need to be "worldview-neutral" (p. 22) and then later stated that religiously justified stances could be given a place in the public sphere when the political community officially understands the role and contribution of religious utterances as

being able to clarify “controversial questions of principle” (p. 22). In their essay, Habermas et al. appealed for a fair discourse between reason and faith, as that is the communicative action; they also pled for the discourse to be reflective and to develop freely and justifiably, in order to achieve common goals (pp. 20–22). Habermas, a secular theorist, later changed his theory and acknowledged the continued existence of religious communities and promoted fair discourse for interrelationship among secular and religious persons.

As in everything, some use religion for self-interest, but one cannot disagree with the morals and supports religions have promoted for the good of societies. Although faith organizations have many moral and ethical foundations, the acts of the religious right and religious fundamentalism cannot be ignored.

In the United States, the legislative agenda is strongly influenced by the conservative religious community known as the Religious Right. These right-wing Christian fundamentalist groups campaign to pass laws that oppose the rights of women and of the gay and lesbian community, oppress minorities, favour guns and oppose gun control, weaken protection of the environment, block the formation of unions or seek to dissolve already existing unions and, most importantly for the scope of this research, ostracize poor people (TheocracyWatch, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e, 2006f). The Religious Right is opposed to the separation of church and state (TheocracyWatch, 2006c), which can raise concerns about the role of faith-based organizations in influencing secular government legislation. The Religious Right is funded by large corporations and wealthy people, including business owners who may see living wage policies as a potential threat to profitability and to investor interest (TheocracyWatch, 2006d). The use of religion to marginalize or to propel animosity, often resulting in violence, is fairly

common, yet despite this, most people of faith agree that their religions' value—rather than demean—diversity, nonviolence, and justice (Creamer & Hrynkow, 2014, p. 13).

Said (as cited in Robbins, 2006) was critical of religious and political fundamentalism; claimed that priestly fundamentalists occupied churches, mosques, and synagogues; and strongly argued the religious public sphere should be rejected at all costs, stating that secular criticism should always come before solidarity (p. 307). I disagree with Said's premise as he failed to appreciate the potential benefits that faith traditions bring to the civil society, especially in the case of the living wage debate and its recorded successes. Perhaps this is part of the reason why the academic conversation of living wage so far has been reluctant to highlight the positive role of faith-based organizations.

Despite religious violence in the world and nonprogressive acts of the religious right, Habermas (as cited in Finlayson, 2005) argued that the legacy of Judaeo-Christianity formed the model of "modern morality" (p. 68), which encompassed universality and unconditionality that continues to resolve disputes and help "maintain social order" (p. 68). Again, religious organizations are not the only path to promoting living wage, but campaigns backed by religious organizations have had the longest lasting successes so far; religious organizations in the living wage debate should be studied and leveraged, rather than underdiscussed due to the fact that faith-based organizations are also effective in promoting hate-based movements. Without a doubt, faith-based organizations have infrastructure, connection to morals that motivate people, and a steady group of highly engaged participants that is available to bring about justice.

Christian social teachings alone cannot influence a debate enough to ensure a living wage; other faith organizations, labour unions, and civil society must also collaborate in order to build political power for economic justice.

#### **Topic 4: Faith Organizations and Living Wage Activism**

In my interviews, promoters of faith and scholars asserted that every religion respects an equitable society and the dignity of every human being (A. Pearson, personal communication, April 30, 2014; G. Warner & J. Warner, personal communication, April 30, 2014). Religions have the capacity to join together to tackle struggles hands-on, with special strength. In their book, *Transcending Greedy Money*, authors Ulrich Duchrow and Franz Hinkelammert (2012) noted that religions and humans have become intertwined in a way that not only serves the paradigm of death but also pursues just relations across the planet and offers non-Western cultures and faiths of the Axial Age “a vision for a new culture in just relationships” (p. 5) with present-day examples.

Duchrow and Hinkelammert (2012) explained that starting from eighth century B.C.E., the growing division of labour led to money taking a central role; they claimed that’s when the “calculating individual came along” (p. 1) and solidarity relationships declined. Duchrow and Hinkelammert’s premise of the calculating system (individual or corporate) to increase accumulation of wealth and power is focussed on one’s own survival and takes precedence over human connection with nature and societal good (pp. 154–159). According to Duchrow and Hinkelammert, neoliberalism causes psychological problems among the different classes and mainly affects the middle class; for example, some members of the middle class perceive that they belong with elites and others are perplexed as to where they stand in the class segregation (p. 28). Duchrow and Hinkelammert are hopeful that knowledge of the world religions of the Axial Age (800 to 200 B.C.), focussing on the societal good, will help overcome inequities in Western societies at this time of global crisis created by the climax of money culture (p. 3). Duchrow and Hinkelammert dedicated one chapter to discussing the eighth-century Judeo-

Christian lineage, including Jesus and Paul; the life of Buddha in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C.; the life of Muhammad circa 560–632; and Greek philosophy as expressed in the teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (pp. 231–261). Because of the great value people put in their religion, religions can greatly influence and can help fight economic justice by advocating for a living wage.

Wills et al. (2009) speculated that, through London Citizens, religious organizations are ushering in a more American- or 19th-century-style of politics that connects workers to the politics through faith (p. 456). According to Wills et al. (2009), several faith organizations became members of London Citizens and supported the Living Wage campaign and Strangers into Citizens campaign not only by gathering masses for rallies but also by speaking alongside spokespeople from political parties. The authors claimed that London Citizens are filling the “political vacuum in low-waged labour markets in London” (Wills et al., 2009, p. 447).

Every faith has a central theme, such as the value of human life, and thus faith organizations have a moral vision for a just society. Wills et al. (2009) surmised that when faith organizations engage in political initiatives, they are not only serving the interests and needs of their congregation but also their core religious beliefs, which consequently results in regaining their legitimacy in the wider community (p. 448). The following proclamations are examples of moral philosophy of Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Sikh traditions addressing poverty. Quoting from the teachings of the Qu’ran, Vroom, and Gort (1997) stated,

Holy prophet aimed at creating a society in which the poor would eventually become self-reliant and move out of the category of poor altogether. It is now agreed that most degrading feature of charity is for someone who is otherwise able-bodied and healthy to be perpetually dependent upon someone’s generosity. It is a great tribute to our Holy Prophet who succeeded in creating a society in which the rich people were eager to give charity and there was no one willing to receive it. (p. 166)

Similarly, Judaism advocates for community responsibility for lifting people out of poverty. In Waltman's (2004) work advocating for living wage, he stated that Judaism is strong in its tenet that community should help each other to maintain dignity, emphasising that Judaism sees poverty as a curse (p. 42). Morris Adler (as cited in Waltman, 2004) expressed the need to preserve human dignity: "But helping a man was not exhausted by providing him recurrently with the elementary necessities. The responsibility of the community was to raise him out of the condition of dependence to the status of a self-supporting individual" (p. 43). Correspondingly, in Isaiah 65:17-8a (as cited in Park, 2006), the following words were written about the Beloved Community:

Their thoughts and actions are one in knowing self-interest is satisfied only when all people are valued and all have enough to live. In the Beloved Community, all participate in work that is significant and meaningful, work that builds up the community. In the Beloved Community, differences are not just tolerated but create a dynamic interaction between the poor and the affluent, the young and the old, the artist and the scientist, the farmer and the manufacturer, the wolf and the lamb. (p. 9)

Some antiprogressive churches have interpreted that Isaiah's Beloved Community does not include same-sex marriage from their perspective concerned with peace and justice in this world (Weaver, 2014, p. 12). The beloved community of Isaiah represents inclusivity, cohabitating, and a deep respect for the dignity of the human person in line with the principles of integral social justice (Children & Poverty: The Bishops Initiative, 2003, p. 2). Catholic social teachings quote St. Ambrose who shares the economic output by redistributing fairly: "You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his" (Waltman, 2004, p. 49).

The above teachings exemplify the resistance of unjust economic, political, or social conditions. Clearly then, liberation theology is not only exclusive for Christianity but extends to other faiths as well. Duchrow and Hinkelammert (2012) advised that World Social Forum has

become the forum where faith-based organizations are able to share and network with social movements, NGOs, and Unions (p. 254). Duchrow and Hinkelammert offered that the Lutheran World Federation—at its 10th Assembly in 2003—decided to be “the Church in the Midst of Empire” (p. 254) and stated,

As a communion, we must engage the false ideology of neoliberal economic globalization by confronting, converting, and changing this reality and its effects. This false ideology is grounded on the assumption that the market, built on private property, unrestrained competition and the centrality of contracts, is the absolute law governing human life, society, and the natural environment. This is idolatry and leads to the systematic exclusion of those who own no property, the destruction of rural diversity, the dismantling of fragile democracies, and the destruction of the earth . . . As a Lutheran communion we call for the development of an economy that serves life . . . Therefore we commit ourselves and call on member churches too . . . build and strengthen ecumenical partnerships, multi-faith cooperation, and participate in civil society alliances (i.e., World Social Forum). (p. 254)

Although faith leaders who are involved in community organising justify putting faith into action, some also see it as a way to reinvigorate the role of faith in the wider community and to regain legitimacy as a result (Wills et al., 2009, p. 448). Nevertheless, all traditions claim that their obligation and moral philosophy are to lift the poor up and give them dignity rather than charity, which directly relates to the pursuits of living wage movements. Labour unions and civil society will benefit from building solidarity with faith-based organizations to tackle social injustice.

### **Topic 5: Community Unionism and Communicating for Economic Justice**

In *The Professional Radical: Conversations with Saul Alinsky*, Sanders (1970) highlighted the significance of the role of the church in community unionism. Alinsky, who was a winner of the Catholic Peace Award (Pacem in Terris Peace and Freedom Award) in 1969, stated that in the 1960s churches began promoting civil rights, thereby replacing the role of labour union played 10 years ago (Sanders, 1970, pp. 39–40). One of Alinsky’s many

accomplishments was the transformation of an area of Chicago into a model working-class community as a result of creating a coalition of workers, small merchants, union leaders, and local churches and of using various strategies to win concessions from city hall (Sanders, 1970, p. 8).

With regard to the civil rights movement, Alinsky's belief was that without the ministers, priests, rabbis, and nuns, the Selma March—a 5-day, 54-mile nonviolent demonstration march led by Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965—would not have been possible (Sanders, 1970, pp. 51–52). Alinsky did not shy away from taking an extreme position about the civil rights and stated that spokespeople self-deceptively believed they had organizations and power because of the gains they have made, but Alinsky claimed that because they were formed as a single issue movement, they were not able to sustain themselves (Sanders, 1970, pp. 50–51). IAF organizations start by listening to their communities through their listening campaign to identify the most important social justice issues; once identified, a call to action to community members is made in order to prioritise and tackle the issues.

In *Understanding Community Unionism*, Stewart et al. (2009) broadly discussed the high profile London living wage campaign and analyzed The East London Community Organization (TELCO), the first living wage movement in the United Kingdom now operating as London Citizens. This living wage movement expanded into other areas, including the 2012 Olympic projects, which led to the construction of affordable homes in East London and to the calculation of an annual living wage for London by the Greater London Authority. Trade unionists were not interested in working with London Citizens, as the organization was deemed as religious. The United Kingdom unionists did not want to work alongside faith-based organizations, whereas in the United States trade unionists worked with Black churches in the civil rights movement, and

these coalitions still exist in the United States to help immigrants' workers' centres and to assist in campaigns such as Jobs with Justice (Stewart et al., 2009, p. 61). London Citizens was able to change that; the unions are not only working with faith organizations through London Citizens by paying dues to London Citizens but also unions are now convinced of the political power of faith-based organizations.

Alinsky (1971), the father of community organizing understood the importance of collaborating with faith-based organizations. Stewart et al. (2009) revealed that despite the London trade unions' reservations to work with faith-based groups, the London Citizens not only joined with faith groups but also with groups who lacked economic power. These connections to faith organizations helped people acquire the funds they required, and the perceived moral credibility was instrumental in organizations success (Stewart et al., 2009, pp. 62–63).

Stewart et al. (2009) quoted from an interview with a trade unionist and stated, “There’s obviously an hostility to faith organizations because a large proportion of (union) activists, including fulltime officials, are fairly militantly atheists” (p. 62). Despite the bulk of the membership consisting of mainstream faith-based organizations—Christian, Buddhist, Islamic, and Jewish—London Citizens claimed they are not in fact a religious organization, as the operational practices ensure that “any ideals run counter to social justice, are not allowed to influence the work that it does and they explained how ‘controversial’ issues are ‘left at the door’” (Stewart et al., 2009, p. 62). Despite the views of Alinsky (as cited in Sanders, 1970), an atheist Jew who was hostile to religious doctrine, both Michael Byrd and Mark Warren (as cited in Stewart et al., 2009) argued that Alinsky was interested in the church’s political capacity to “giving people a stake in civil society” (Byrd, as cited in Stewart et al., 2009, p. 57) and saw them as “repositories of money and power” (p. 57). Cranford (2003) offered several present-day

examples of Canadian community unionism including one example involving faith activist volunteers, namely the Justicia 4 Migrant Workers “planning to outreach to migrant farm workers” (p. 48). Leah (as cited in Cranford, 2003) asserted,

There has been less written in Canada about community unionism as the practices of community-based labour groups who are not participating in a particular union organising drive or union community campaign but are nevertheless organising nonunionized workers in precarious employment. (p. 48)

Cranford (2003) pointed out that crisis situations have made community unionism re-emerge. Cranford observed community unionism as a solution to the growing precarious employment; contributing to building a stronger labour movement (p. 55).

People’s initiatives to join hands with faith-based organizations can be seen as unwise to some; nevertheless, the people, money, and strong ethos of social justice within faith-based organizations can help build sustainable coalitions to tackle in-work poverty and other social justice causes.

### **Topic 6: Sustainable Coalitions to Tackle In-Work Poverty**

Political power can be built and be enabled to grow by developing lasting community coalitions among diverse groups and by fostering strong morals and ethics in organizations and their activities. In *The Professional Radical*, Sanders (2009) stated that under Alinsky’s guidance a community organization named FIGHT (Freedom, Integration, God, Honor, Today) used stock proxies to successfully challenge the corporate power of Eastman Kodak (p. 63). Alinsky claimed that organizers have to be “highly trained, and politically sophisticated and creative” (Sanders, 1970, p. 68) to build successful campaigns. He also added that a national power organization is needed to provide support for local organizers because the issues that these organizers face are both regional and national. Alinsky knew all too well that building organizations on many different issues—housing and jobs, which effect the welfare of local

people—and that working together with churches was crucial to an organization’s success and sustainability. Habermas (as cited in Finlayson, 2005) claimed that communicative action is both instrumental and strategic: instrumental action is when one achieves a goal through one’s own actions, and strategic action is when one governs others’ actions to bring about a desired goal (pp. 47–48).

Alinsky has been thus far the most successful—radical but nonviolent—organizer who built alliances, organized masses, and challenged neoliberal policies through direct action. For example, Mayo (2004) described, “The first [United Kingdom] initiative—to build more effective people’s organizations in deprived areas—was launched in Bristol in 1990” (p. 414) after community workers, charitable fund administrators, and church leaders travelled to the United States and trained at IAF. Since 1990, other cities in the United Kingdom adopted broad-based community organizing “often with the support of churches and other faith-based organizations, taking up economic issues as well as social problems” (Mayo, 2004, p. 414). Bretherton (2013) proposed that a deep rapport may have existed between Alinsky’s work and Christian theology (p. 81).

Habermas (2008) referred to Martin Luther King and the American civil rights movement when he argued that political movements, working to include disadvantaged groups with deep religious roots in the United States and Europe, have been both inspiring and successful (p. 124). Alinsky’s communicative action was nonviolent and direct; he treated people’s organization as a political party—populism, which is a political concept based on the perceived interests of ordinary people (Alinsky, 1971).

In his book *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky (1946) started by explaining that the book offers readers the following:

How to create mass organizations to seize power and give it to the people; to realize the democratic dream of equality, justice, peace, co-operation, equal and full opportunities for education, full and useful employment, health, and the creation of those circumstances in which man can have the chance to live by values that give meaning to life. (p. 1)

Alinsky (1971) divided the population into classes—the haves, have-nots and have-a-littles—and he claims that terms such as justice, morality, and law and order are pronounced as “mere words” (p. 19) used by the Haves “to justify and secure the status quo” (p. 19). In the chapter “Of Means and Ends,” Alinsky (1971) gave 11 rules of ethics to achieve ends with moral rationalization to justify the selection of those means:

1. one’s concern with the ethics of means and ends varies inversely with one’s personal interest in the issue;
2. the judgment of the ethics of means is dependent upon the political position of those sitting in judgment;
3. in war the ends justify almost any means;
4. judgment must be made in the context of the times in which the action occurred and not from any other chronological vantage point;
5. concern with ethics increases with the number of means available and vice versa;
6. the less important the end to be desired, the more one can afford to engage in ethical evaluations of means;
7. generally success or failure is a might determinant of ethics;
8. morality of a means depends upon whether the means is being employed at a time of imminent defeat or imminent victory;
9. any effective means is automatically judged by the opposition as being unethical;
10. you do what you can with what you have and clothe it with moral garments;

11. goals must be phrased in general terms like “liberty, equality, fraternity,” “of the common welfare,” “pursuit of happiness,” or “bread and peace” (pp. 26–45).

Alinsky (1971) offered that Churchill, Gandhi, Lincoln, and Jefferson, who are considered great leaders, “always invoked ‘moral principles’ to cover naked self-interest in the clothing of ‘freedom’ ‘equality of mankind’ ‘a law higher than the manmade law’ and so on” (pp. 43–44) that he attributes to a necessary passport of morality (p. 44). Alinsky did not seem to promote a grassroots movement or a campaign for a single issue; rather, he promoted broad-based organizations with the deepest roots sustainable. Alinsky offers his tactics in terms of target audiences and messaging. Alinsky (1971) recommended that organizers seek middle-class support, rather than support from the poor. Alinsky (1971) believed the key skill of an organizer is knowing the art of communication and understanding that people grasp things in terms of their experience, so by paying attention to their experiences he or she is able to customise his messaging and share organizers ideas to get them on board (p. 81). Alinsky’s model organizations can widely impact economic and social justice locally, regionally, and globally.

Thus far, I have been able to observe that community coalitions across sectors, including mainstream faith organizations, are crucial for sustainable organizations in order to deal with challenges posed by neoliberalism policies. Living wage has the ability to build a society in which people can become stakeholders in the country’s economy.

### **Literature Review Summary**

Many authors considered that living wage successes were amplified by building coalitions with mainstream faith organizations, such as London Citizens, BUILD, and Austin Interfaith. A significant amount of literature has been generated in the United Kingdom and the United States to assess the social impacts and economic impacts of living wage policies and

ordinances. Increased dependency on public assistance programs by workers who earn less than a living wage was observed. Benefits of living wage policies included improved quality of jobs, reduced absenteeism of employees, increased employee loyalty, improved value for taxpayer money, and enhanced service quality. I found that a vast number of living wage economic opponents' reports were published in comparison to the numbers in these proponent reports.

Two central themes emerged from the literature: (a) the efficacy and the legitimacy of faith organizations in originating the living wage debate, and (b) the influence of Christian practice in the formation of a movement culture of the working class. The literature showed that religions other than Christianity stand behind the idea of living wage, as seen through their activist movements to maintain the dignity of all humans.

The literature also highlighted the remarkable role social workers played in the Nevada campaign when social workers' efforts resulted in the implementation of an award winning policy to raise wages (Chandler, 2009). Chandler (2009) considered this act as an opportunity in which social workers contribute and reclaim the profession's essence to enhancing the lives of the poor.

Alinsky's radical organizing model is relevant to combat neoliberalism and to work towards economic justice. Alinsky's IAF has trained organizers for decades to build strong, lasting relationships with diverse groups, to build political power, and to tackle issues that are hurting communities. Literature validates the work these trained organizers have done for decades in many countries, including the US, Canada, the UK, Germany and Australia mobilising for social good with the support of mainstream faith-based organizations. The living wage argument fits well with religion, as some Christian social economic thought is similar to

the idea of living wage. The living wage increases the connectivity in a community because the entire community pulls together to communicate for economic justice.

Building grassroots community coalitions is crucial for the success of living wage campaigns. Many authors have made the case for sustainable coalitions to mobilize in order to tackle poverty of the working class. Furthermore, implementing coalitions with labour unions, faith organizations, and civil society will increase the overall political power of the community and strengthen collective consciousness for common good. Thus labour unions can maximise their potential by coming together for social solidarity—whether they are bound by a faith or with a transformed consciousness for economic justice for low-paid workers—through broad-based community organizing, they can regain their political power.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Research Design

The research was designed as a qualitative research project and used a critical paradigm to conduct a comparative case study. The overall design of my project utilized qualitative data collection tools as it is rooted in a qualitative epistemological position that recognizes the importance of locating the research within a particular social, cultural, and historical context.

Various critical theories provided the framework for this study, especially Max Weber's (2009) claim that religious ideology can influence the economic social structure (p. 99) and Habermas's et al.'s (2012) communicative action for a fair discourse provided the framework for this study (p. 5). Habermas (2006), in recent years, evolved his theories to address the importance of religion which supported my study. The theory of communicative action is individual action designed to promote common understanding in a group and to promote cooperation. The two theories of lifeworld and of communicative action are related; lifeworld is essentially justified to the degree that it allows interactions that are guided by an understanding achieved through communicative action (Bolton, 2005). I also drew upon Tilly's (2004) contention theory to guide the literature review framework. Tilly (2004) claimed that people who already assemble as taxpayers or as members of religious congregations then use these meetings and gatherings as a way to formulate and express their demands (p. 55).

Also, Adam Smith's (as cited in Stabile, 2008) idea of moral economy is rooted in Greek philosophy—Aristotle's household management theory, for example—and Thomas Aquinas's (as cited in Stabile, 2008) just wage in a moral community were helpful in my study (p. 10). Both Smith's and Weber's theories helped me to clearly identify faith activism and the role moral economy played in all the three case studies: the United Kingdom, the United States living

wage campaigns, and the Canadian broad-based organization, Metro Vancouver Alliance (MVA).

### **Data and Data Gathering**

I conducted case studies of four living wage campaigns namely London Citizens, Austin Interfaith (AI), Living Wage for Families, and Living Wage Hamilton. In addition, I conducted a case study of MVA, for a total of five case studies. Of these, three are IAF affiliates: London Citizens in the United Kingdom; AI in Texas, United States; and MVA in BC, Canada.

I conducted 30 in-depth, face-to-face, and Skype interviews with experts in the field, faith leaders, economists, lead organizers and employers. I crafted questions to understand their motivation and the tactics that led to their success. Kvale (as cited in Opdenakker, 2006) defined the qualitative research interview as “an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (“Introduction,” para. 1). For example, Deborah Littman, a lead organizer for MVA—who was involved in both the London and New Zealand campaigns—was interviewed to understand her lifeworld leading to her communicative action. I have attached a sample list of questions in the appendices (see Appendix A).

According to Seale (2012), content analysis can provide clear empirical evidence in that it offers precise sampling methods, thereby being a highly valid and reliable form of analysis. Therefore, I primarily applied content analysis to examine the text for frequency and patterns or use of phrases. I coded the data to themes and wrote up clear narratives. I then used keyword analysis to identify words participants have communicated and to understand whether scriptures play a significant role in communicating during campaigns.

## **Data Analysis**

Kohlbacher (2006) argued that qualitative content analysis is an approach that is particularly suited to case study research. According to Kohlbacher, the analysis uses repetitious procedures—summary, explication, and step-by-step structuring—to reduce complexity and to filter out the main points for analysis. Berelson’s (as cited in Kohlbacher, 2006) definition of content analysis was that it is a research technique that can be used to describe “the manifest content of communication” (para. 36). For data analysis, I used Durkheim’s (as cited in Ritzer, 1998) notion of the collective conscience (p. 121). This theory helped seeing conceptual categories in the data and identifying specific themes.

## **Measurement Validity**

To achieve content validity, instruments were applied consistently to collect and analyse data from each case study. This ensures full richness of concepts and meanings are captured to draw accurate conclusions.

## **Limitations**

The case studies I use are geographically distanced and have varyingly different legislation and policies according to the country. My study will be limited in terms of the United States and the United Kingdom as I am not visiting in person. My proposed study may lack in statistical generalizability—the framework used to conceptualize, investigate, and design observations that are reliable (Cronbach, Rajaratnan, & Gleser, 1963). I hope, however, that the information I provided about the case studies has balanced the study.

## **Ethical Considerations**

My research was guided by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences, and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social

Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [TCPS], 2010) and its three principles: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice. Also, I abided by the rules of the Royal Roads Research Ethics Board.

## Chapter 4: Key Themes

In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of the case studies. I also present the central themes that emerged and set the scene for subsequent in-depth analysis of the cases in Chapter 5.

London Citizens, AI and MVA are broad-based grassroots community organizations that operate on an organizing model founded by Saul Alinsky. The model holds a central place for faith organizations and empowers individuals and families facing social, economic, and political injustices. IAF and Alinsky have positively impacted impoverished neighbourhoods in South Chicago, Detroit, Kansas, and Oakland. The commonality I see in these organizations is that they each have a lead organizer, have received seed funding from faith organizations, and have gathered families and impoverished people to discuss a wide variety of concerns before launching into their issue campaign—living wage.

Living Wage Hamilton in Ontario and Living Wage for Families in Vancouver, BC, are top-down organizations. Living Wage Hamilton emerged from the roundtable for poverty, and Living Wage for Families emerged from First Call, a BC child poverty initiative. Living Wage Hamilton does not have a dedicated organizer whereas BC's Living Wage for Families hired a lead organizer. This lead organizer, Michael McCarthy Flynn (personal communication, May 14, 2014), said that it would have been more effective if the living wage issue was campaigned after MVA was launched. He stated that Living Wage for Families have now joined hands with MVA but that Living Wage for Families could have had increased success if it had had the backing of an organization like MVA before the living wage campaign was launched:

The issue of the living wage was picked, and then we went out to build relationships rather than building relationships at the start and then letting the issue evolve from that . . . we partnered with MVA when we were giving presentations . . . I think people were a lot more comfortable with MVA, getting involved with a coalition and being part of building relationships. (M. McCarthy Flynn, personal communication, May 14, 2014)

## Emerging Themes

Four principal themes emerged from in-depth interviews and the comparative case study analysis. All themes support my argument about the unique role of faith-based organizations in supported living wage movements.

### **Theme 1: Faith-based organizations provide tenets that highly motivate people.**

Along with funding, faith-based organizations have provided gathering moral commonalities that engage people in unique ways. Neil Jameson, the lead organizer of London Citizens, described what makes a faith-based organization or coalition distinct from secular social movements:

You must respect who are different, which is very important and, therefore, you have to leave your prejudices about trade unions, or Muslims, or Christians, at the door. If you leave your prejudices, there's lots of things you can do. If you start with prejudices, there's so little you can do. So, the big plus about faith is, for me, the holy books. The holy books have more traditions so you have to act for the most vulnerable people in the community, and they also say you are judged by what you do not by what you say. There are no other books—history books, I suppose—that are so clear on that. So the secular world doesn't have a book. There's lots of books effectively, whereas Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs have a book. And the books are very similar, and they've all roughly got the same message. So it's much easier for them to organize and to use those books to persuade people to join, to pay, to work together, and act on things they can agree on. (N. Jameson, personal communication, February 13, 2014)

Jameson's core insights are valuable to understand the reason why living wage campaigns, which have had faith backing, have been successful compared to secular groups.

**Theme 2: Faith-based organizations have helped foster organizational models for economic and social justice activism.** Beyond moral tenets that draw citizens across mainstream faiths, faith-based organizations have provided models for bringing people together and for solving problems. Although scholarship has been slow to highlight the role of faith-based organizations, leaders of the living wage movement have not. In my interviews with Neil Jameson (personal communication, February 13, 2014) and Jane Wills (personal communication, March 17, 2014), they both expressed that ongoing success with lobbying for government and

that engaging employers to embrace paying living wages is mainly due to their learning and connection to Alinsky's IAF. The success of London Citizens is due to using the IAF model. Therefore, IAF has been the link between the campaign and faith-based organizations. According to Joe Chrastil (personal communication, March 26, 2014),

The role of faith organizations in our organizing model comes out of this disciplined process of doing that listening and having all of our campaigns start from the experiences of people in their homes and neighbourhoods and then trying to determine practical and pragmatic solutions to those problems.

Faith organizations are not only capable of providing funding, but they have the potential to provide a model for organizing. Alinsky (1971) acknowledged the power of these institutions, learned from them, and built a model that utilizes principles, purposes, and practices people commonly agree and act upon. AI organizers appreciate Alinsky's model of building an independent power base and developing a culture in which people can challenge and engage each other (C. Garcia, February 25, 2014).). Alinsky's model organizes institutions rather than individuals because he believed that institutions had the staying power (C. Garcia, February 25, 2014). AI's strategy team leader stated, "Every community will have schools, churches and other institutions, people come and go, but institutions stay" (C. Garcia, personal communication, February 25, 2014)

**Theme 3: Living wage coalitions build solidarity around social issues.** Successful coalitions working for social justice and living wage (London Citizens, AI, and MVA) have demonstrated solidarity around social issues with acceptance of each other's individual beliefs. For example, Archbishop of Vancouver Michael Miller (personal communication, April 22, 2014) explained how they come together and work with interreligious solidarity and described his experience working for the local common good:

We are starting to work very well now with them [non-Christian faith-based organizations]. From the social justice side that has never really been a problem in the Downtown East Side when people cooperate. People want to work together. The issues of poverty, unemployment, drug abuse, prostitution—there is widespread agreement on working together. If you branch into some life issues and so on, there would probably be some differences of opinion, but on so many key issues down there, people want to work together.

Some authors are cautious about religious pluralism; however, religions by contrast raise a strict claim for economic justice not only for their moral principles but also for theologically justified paths to salvation. Community is something some have argued is no longer woven throughout groups of people; nevertheless, it is a well-known fact that groups can accomplish their goals much more easily and efficiently than individuals can and faith organizations have successfully built interfaith communities to campaign for living wage along with their civil society counterparts.

**Theme 4: Faith organizations can achieve social policy goals because of their legitimacy.** Faith organizations have proven effectiveness in achieving social policy goals where governments have had little success. Austin, Texas is a great example of this. Between the years 2008 and 2012, members of Austin’s city council slowly aligned with the mission of AI, which was to address wages and set a living wage for the city. Eventually a living wage of \$11 an hour was settled on. This turn around in events was largely due to much pressure from members of AI and to public support from Catholic Bishop Joe Vasquez; as a result, city council adopted the organization’s language into their ordinance. AI was successful at driving the policy legislation, which required corporations receiving taxpayer incentives to pay the city’s living wage of \$11 per hour or prevailing wages, whichever was higher.

A secular organization would not have had the backing of a heavy hitter, such as a Catholic bishop, in the face of a lack of government support and, in fact, a government-driven

smear campaign. Thus, the international nature of religious organizations means that, in face of opposition to the living wage movement, organizations can leverage support to pressure their local governments. Also, faith organizations are good entry points to socially excluded groups because of their sensitive ways. These faith organizations have resources that can be useful, and they also have long-term commitment.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the implications of these themes for the future of living wage movements. I will also make recommendations based on my findings.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

As discussed in the previous chapter, I conducted five case studies from three countries and two Canadian provinces. I compared London Citizens from the United Kingdom, AI from the United States, Living Wage for Families, and MVA from BC with Living Wage Hamilton in order to see how successful living wage campaigns operate with an emphasis on faith activism. I will first give a brief review of the cases.

### London Citizens

London Citizens is part of Citizens UK (United Kingdom), which stems from the IAF. London Citizens spent close to 10 years building political power. The organization built a coalition, which included the labour movement, community, educational and religious organizations.

I interviewed Neil Jameson, the lead organizer of London Citizens; Guy Stallard, the Head of Facilities at KPMG; Mike Kelly, head of Corporate Responsibility at KPMG and chair of the Advisory Council of The Living Wage Foundation; Alan Freeman and Leticia Veruete-Mckay, the economists who calculated the first living wage in London through the Greater London Authority; and Jane Wills from the Queen Mary University who produced several cost-benefit analyses that supported the London Citizens' campaign. All of these living wage advocates—despite whether or not they have a faith conviction—agreed on the potential of faith activism for living wage success.

London Citizens has accredited 700 employers so far. Through persistent efforts, it was able to ensure that all 2012 Olympics jobs were living wage jobs. Employers who have embraced paying the living wage receive accreditation and pay a minimal annual fee to London Citizens annually. According to Jameson (personal communication, April 13, 2014), the original seed

funding for the organization came from the Barrow Cadbury Trust, who are members of the Christian group, Society of Friends (Quakers). Jameson (personal communication, April 13, 2014) emphasized, “[The Society of Friends] have been very generous to us”. Presently the main funding for London Citizens comes from faith organizations and labour unions.

Greater London Authority (GLA) is the body that governs greater London and was established in 2000. Alan Freeman (personal communication, March 21, 2014), the lead economist for the living wage unit of the GLA, explained the importance of calculations being robust and credible when he stated the following:

GLA established an independent economic unit. The reason they established an independent economic unit, what I would call an arm’s length unit, is that they knew if they simply said, “This is what we want the living wage to be,” there shouldn’t be a conflict of interest. It was not directly accountable to the mayor, so it is quite an unusual political structure that I don’t know if you would find in other cities. This gave it enormous credibility. People said “This is not just simply making this number up. These people are professionals. They are following a definite methodology, which they explain in lots of documentation. They carried out lots of research.”

Therefore, the success of the campaign hinges on a calculation methodology that is consistent, robust, and transparent. Explaining why living wage is calculated using a family budget, Freeman added:

We always used to argue this. People would say, “You are talking about the typical family. What is a typical family?” A typical family is what you want. You don’t pay a guy just enough so he can live, and you don’t pay a couple just enough so that they can live. You pay them enough so that they can make the choice to raise a family if they wish. It’s their future as well as their present. You see what I’m saying? The possibility of the future. The possibility to raise a family.

Guy Stallard (personal communication, February 5, 2014) explained the importance of having a campaign and the accreditation process, which go hand in hand to achieve a robust living wage model. When introducing the work of the Living Wage Foundation in the United Kingdom, he stated,

There were organizations who said they paid the living wage but didn't, or not everywhere, that's what led to the launch of the living wage foundation because the living wage foundation's accreditation scheme gives you the logo, etc. is a legal contract between you and the foundation, which requires you to pay the living wage to people who work on your premises for more than a 8-week period and more than one hour per week, are all paid the living wage . . . for an employer, you need to have certainty of when the rate is going to go up, you need to be confident that the rate is going to go up by an amount that is fair and equates to your knowledge, and you are also in a position that if you decide to become a living wage employer, you will know that people aren't doing what I call "free riding" I say they are doing it and aren't, which is why accreditation matters. (G. Stallard, personal communication, February 5, 2014)

The U.K. Living Wage Foundation not only monitors living wage payment practices but also recognises and celebrates contributing to enhancing the reputation of living wage employers in the UK. Mike Kelly (personal communication, April 23, 2014) the chair of the Advisory Council of The Living Wage Foundation stated that the council provide strategic advice, direction and oversight to the Foundation and he explained how to promote living wage to employers:

There are many different cases made for paying a living wage. There is the business case, in that it brings you more committed workers, more productive workers, lower turnover. All of those financial drivers which give rise to an economic business case. At the same time there is a moral argument around the moral business case and the dignity that work brings in terms of bringing people out of poverty. The faith-based groups talk very much about the origins of their faiths and the importance of treating individuals with dignity and equality. There is no single argument for why an employer should pay a living wage. It is a blend of the values of the organization, what they stand for, the type of organization—what they want to do, what they want to be—and ultimately the way the organization is organized. The organizational development. (M. Kelly, personal communication, April 23, 2014)

Jane Wills (personal communication, March 17, 2014), professor of Human Geography at Queen Mary University, explained that governments are interested in making sure that people are not living in poverty and also in reducing dependency on government assistance. She stated, however, that public pressure through organizing is a necessary means to reaching that goal as

governments cannot do this alone (J. Wills, personal communication, March 17, 2014). She added the following:

Well, the government is obviously concerned because they have to meet the cost of low wages, if the working people are in poverty, that's a social cost to the wider society, and it does affect government and likewise educational fees and cost of health. They are all things that have to be met by society. So there is an incentive for government to intervene, but you also need to put on pressure on the government by organizing. People pressure make them intervene, or help them intervene. You can't put all your eggs in the government basket. (J. Wills, personal communication, March 17, 2014)

### **Austin Interfaith**

AI, an affiliate of the West/Southwest IAF, is a multi-issue coalition that was founded in 1985 (Simon, Gold, & Brown, 2002, p. 8). The living wage movement in Austin began in 2008. As of early 2014, AI had 41 member organizations and its funding came from its member organizations, from faith organizations, and from business, individual, and public charity grants. I interviewed Carlota Gracia, the AI strategy team leader, and Barbara Buddie, AI member and the director of social concerns for the Catholic Diocese of Austin. Catholics are not the only members of AI; in fact, of the 30 member organizations, only five are Catholic groups. Other members include Protestants, Unitarians, members of the Jewish faith, and one recent event around immigration included a Muslim group.

Texas is a state dominated by Christians, however. AI tends to organize larger groups, and Carlota says the organization looks forward to integrating congregations of different faiths as the size grows. AI works only on issues that all member groups can agree on. The City of Austin passed the living wage ordinance in October 2013.

### **BC Living Wage**

In BC, the living wage campaign has evolved from several different angles, and it has experienced successes and fallbacks. To understand the full picture, I consulted many involved

stakeholders. I interviewed Adrienne Montani, the provincial coordinator for First Call, a child and youth advocacy coalition for BC; Michael McCarthy Flynn, Living Wage for Families organizer; Catherine Ludgate, manager at Vancity; Seth Klien, director for Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives who calculated the living wage; Marjorie Cohen, a political science professor at SFU involved in the university's Living Wage Campaign; Jamie McEvoy, city councillor in New Westminster; and Bruce Bidgood, city councillor in Terrace, BC.

In 2006, a province-wide coalition group, First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, was inspired by a national public education movement, Campaign 2000, to start researching the possibility of harnessing support from communities for living wage standards in the province (A. Montani, personal communication, March 19, 2014).

CCPA has been the architects of the original living-wage-for-families policy. Seth Klien (personal communication, April 15, 2014), director of CCPA BC, explained how the living-wage-for-families idea emerged in BC. Giving a historical account of the 2001 elected liberal government's actions, he explained how collective agreements were ripped off. Those agreements were affecting 8000 to 9000 hospital support workers, and they were mostly immigrant women who worked in janitorial services, food services, and some other sectors within the health care system; these jobs were contracted out instead and workers' wages were almost halved overnight. The wages dropped from almost \$18 or \$19 per hour to \$11 per hour (A. Montani, personal communication, March 19, 2014; S. Klien, personal communication, April 15, 2014). Research director, Marcy Cowan, of the hospital employees union, who was also involved in the economic security project, was inspired by London Citizens' living wage campaign. Cowan consulted Deborah Littman, a living wage expert from London Citizens. The start of a living wage campaign originated with the 2008 Living Wage for Families report

authored by Tim Richards, Marcy Cohen, Seth Klein, and Deborah Littmam. This report laid down the principles and methodology for the living wage that has now become the national trademark that is used (S. Klien, personal communication, April 15, 2014). Montani was involved since the beginning organizing focus groups and stated the following:

We had some little project funds back in 2006, quite a long time ago, to do some focus groups with families around the concept of a living wage. We were focus grouping with low-income parents. Our concern is because we do anti-poverty work as part of our work, and we knew that the statistics show that most poor children live with parents who work. The issue of low wages comes right to the top and is trending up...It was like building a budget backwards. What do you need? What does a living wage look like? We did some of that. What items do you need in a family budget? That's where we got some feedback with immigrant families in particular. "Give us some money in this budget for taking a course — an ESL course or some kind of training course, so we don't get stuck in low-wage jobs. Give us a little bit of an education budget." We built that into our calculations. A small amount, so you could take maybe two college courses in a year or something like that...We did all these focus groups with business groups and stuff and eventually partnered with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and put together a committee. That little project ended, but by this time it had grown a bit. We had held a number of living wage roundtables with faith groups and trade unions. First Call is a big organization, so lots of service organizations and trade unions and various groups are part of it. We just put out a kind of call. We had one or two different living wage roundtables over time. I think we had Deborah Littman come and speak in 2008. (A. Montani, personal communication, March 19, 2014)

Vancity Credit Union, the largest English-language credit union in Canada, has been a long-time supporter of the living wage campaign in BC. Originally founded to provide financial services to low-income working people and to those living in poverty who were not served by traditional banks and financial institutions, Vancity began its involvement in the living wage campaign by committing to pay the first six month salary for the Living Wage for Families campaign organizer in 2009. This enabled First Call to hire an organizer, Michael McCarthy Flynn, and they launched the Living Wage for Families Campaign in 2009 (A. Montani, personal communication, March 19, 2014). Living Wage for Families has presently accredited 36 employers including Vancity Credit Union and the City of New Westminster. Organizers and

advocates are working to establish SFU as the first living wage university (M. Cohen, personal communication, March 19, 2014; M. McCarthy Flynn, personal communication, May 14, 2014).

In 2011, Vancity made all of its in-house jobs living wage jobs and also included its 43 contractors. When Vancity uses the Italian Cultural Centre for events, it insists that all staff be paid living wage for those events. It works to promote the living wage to its suppliers as Vancity believes that the most vulnerable people are employed with its contractors. Catherine Ludgate (personal communication, March 18, 2014), Vancity's people manager, said that Vancity's biggest challenge is the complexity of modifying contractual agreements with their contractors. She also said that it is not about money; "for us, the money was the smallest part of it" (C. Ludgate, personal communication, March 18, 2014).

The SFU living wage campaign started in 2012 and strives to make SFU the first university in Canada to adopt payment of living wages. Marjorie Cohen (personal communication, March 19, 2014), professor of the Department of Political Science at SFU, is involved in the university's campaign and attributed SFU's campaign successes to two factors. The first of these is the report, *Simon Fraser University: Becoming the First Living Wage University in Canada*, which identified the working conditions of low wage contract workers at SFU and found that out of the 40 workers surveyed, 73% did not earn a living wage and 57% worked up to 12 extra hours weekly without pay (Flynn, 2012, p. 20). The second factor is the February 2014 event, *Creating a Living Wage University*, which hosted the living wage expert, Jane Wills of Queen Mary University in the UK; Wills has conducted publicly funded research on several living wage cost-benefit analyses and on the fostering effects of community organizing on political alliances and coalitions (M. Cohen, personal communication, March 18, 2014; J. Wills, personal communication, March 17, 2014). In addition, Wills has created a

Master of Arts program in community organizing at the university—the first of its kind in the world (J. Wills, personal communication, March 17, 2014).

In Cohen's (personal communication, March 18, 2014) opinion, the more people involved in the campaign and the more support the campaign receives, the more likely SFU will realize its dream in becoming the first living wage university in Canada. She stated the following:

Basically, our successes are primarily around getting people to support us, which has been very good. I think our continued approach is to get more people to support us, because it's only going to be massive numbers of people at the university who are going to make impact. I think we have something like 100 faculty who have signed a letter . . . We've sort of slowed in the organization stage of this. We did have that February event. Next will be the summer when things will happen. We hope to speak to the board of governors in the fall . . . As far as our successes go, we had a successful report written . . . We had a meeting to publicize that in which we had a reasonable turnout. I wouldn't say it was excellent, but it's always hard to get people out at universities for anything . . . We've been able to involve students in a surprising way, which has been a strength. Almost all the unions at the university are involved. The faculty association is not. They're in the process of becoming a union. If they become one, we might have more success in getting them to back it, which would be important. So far I would say our successes have been more procedural than they have been in finding any solutions to this very serious problem. (M. Cohen, personal communication, March 19, 2014)

City councillor, Jamie McEvoy (personal communication, March 18, 2014), was central to New Westminster passing the first living wage bylaw in Canada. McEvoy, who introduced the living wage motion, was also the director of the Hospitality Project, a centre for those who needed food, shelter, and a helping hand. For over 6 months, McEvoy spent a lot of time with city councillors explaining the concept of living wage. The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now supported the campaign (J. McEvoy, personal communication, March 18, 2014). McEvoy used various strategies to engage communities. He engaged the council of churches and senior groups; in addition, he used humour to make a point and to get

other councillors on board (J. McEvoy, personal communication, March 18, 2014). In the following quote, he explained how he answered challenging questions from a fellow councillor:

“Jamie, if this affected only one person, will you still be doing this, all this trouble and research and staff time?” And I said, “Hmmm, who would be an employer who would worry about just one poor staff person who doesn’t have a liveable wage. Who would that be?” And I pulled out of my pocket a picture of Scrooge, I carried it everywhere I went until that came up and I said, “Scrooge. That’s the whole point of the story. Poor Bob Cratchit and his family is not getting paid in a way that he can afford his family.” (J. McEvoy, personal communication, March 18, 2014)

Although it is not always easy to figure out how to be humorous in a political campaign, McEvoy preferred using strategies that are diffusing than confrontational and he was successful. By contrast, the City of Terrace in BC attempted passing a living wage bill without success. Bruce Bidgood, a city councillor who pushed for the living wage in Terrace, is also a social work professor. He, along with others at the school, engaged students at the University of Northern British Columbia to work out the living wage; the living wage rate was calculated as \$17.65 an hour and presented to the city council (B. Bidgood, personal communication, April 29, 2014). Despite their efforts, the living wage bill did not pass, the council criticized the calculation (B. Bidgood, personal communication, April 29, 2014). Bidgood explained that their rate was calculated using the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) methodology and that the rate was higher because of the higher transportation and living costs (personal communication, April 29, 2014). He is passionate about making Terrace a living wage community and provided reasons why the city should pass a living wage by-law:

We have higher rates of child poverty, higher rates of people on welfare, higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of children with special needs, higher addictions rates, higher rates of mental illness . . . we are a feeder community. We are at the crossroads. We take in everybody from all the surrounding communities, particularly those people with special needs who need to seek services. (B. Bidgood, personal communication, April 29, 2014)

According to Michael McCarthy Flynn (personal communication, May 14, 2014), the timing was improper in the Terrace campaign. Flynn stated that he advised Terrace to take a slower approach and to involve the community first before going to the city and also stated that garnering local support and creating awareness through a campaign is crucial before engaging a big establishment like the city. This is a clear example of the absence of mobilizing moral authority. The Terrace campaign lacked the support of faith organizations; perhaps if they had mobilized faith organizations, they would have achieved success.

The director for CCPA emphasized the importance of faith-based organizations:

Faith organization involvement is part of the lesson from London, they played quite an instrumental role. And we do now have the MVA, which has a very large number of faith-based groups involved, which is probably the most exciting piece of it. (S. Klein, personal communication, April 15, 2014)

### **Metro Vancouver Alliance**

MVA, a member of the IAF Northwest, is a nonpartisan umbrella organization focussing on social and political change in Metro Vancouver and beyond. I interviewed Archbishop Michael Miller; Catholic Arch Diocese who funded organizer salary; Joe Chrastil, head of IAF NorthWest; and Deborah Littman, the lead organizer (a former campaigner with London Citizens). Deborah explained her work with the union in London, United Kingdom, and the efforts to raise the minimum wage to a living wage. She was introduced to the community organizing model through TELCO, and she found it attractive because it was much more effective than union work (D. Littman, personal communication, February 24, 2014). She stated,

In 2001, I got to understand the community organizing model, and how much more effective that was than a union doing it on its own, and that's how I got involved in London Citizens, and ultimately taking that methodology from London to here, to try to start a new work relations here. (D. Littman, personal communication, February 24, 2014)

According to Littman (personal communication, February 24, 2014), the MVA was the brain child of the late Sister Elizabeth Kelliher, a nun who worked in the Downtown East Side of Vancouver for many years, after having worked in Brooklyn, New York. Littman convinced people from the Downtown East Side and from many different faith communities, that they should be exploring the IAF model. Before her death in 2013, Kelliher had envisioned an IAF organization in Metro Vancouver with community groups to build an alliance that not only comes together around short-term campaign goals but also around relationship building, attentive listening, and sharing of values (D. Littman, personal communication, February 24, 2014). Advocates who wanted to tackle child poverty and living wage issues invited Deborah Littman to Vancouver to provide some assistance; she said,

I met this group of people that wanted to get this started with the living wage campaign. And they invited me to sip coffee with them, you know, help them out a little bit. They weren't getting very far, and when I did that I could see why they weren't getting very far. They didn't have an organizer here. (D. Littman, personal communication, February 24, 2014)

The IAF regional director for the northwest region came up to Vancouver to assist in the campaign. In 2010, Littman was hired as a full-time organizer to build MVA. That helped the campaign to finally start running. Littman (personal communication, February 24, 2014) stated,

It's really about people coming through, from the grass roots, seeing the value to them, seeing the value to their families, seeing the value to their institutions and getting engaged in it, and learning leadership skills as they doing that. You got to build up a lot of base for this to work. If it's only a couple of people and you lobby . . . it's not going to work.

Deborah Littman (personal communication, February 24, 2014) explained that she, along with other IAF leaders, trained many community people with leadership skills and empowered them. With new leaders, Littman conducted listening campaigns for 6 months with communities to come up with key issues to address. Four shared areas of action were identified and announced

at this meeting, which were housing, poverty, transit, and social isolation (D. Littman, personal communication, February 24, 2014). Overall, this organization represents more than 200,000 members and, on March 19, MVA officially launched a campaign with the goal of enhancing the nature of living in the Metro Vancouver region.

I attended this event to understand how IAF organizations operate. After understanding successes of both London Citizens and AI living wage campaigns, I wanted to further investigate the IAF model and its operating principles and concepts. The people I interviewed from across BC were also present at this event; they are all supporters of MVA because they are convinced of the power of IAF model. The audience was comprised of 600 plus people; the draw for these attendees was the alliance and its unique method for fostering engagement. I felt the solidarity, the passion, and the energy that reaffirmed to me that we are all in this together—we, the human race. The palpable power of people was more than I have felt or seen in other places. I felt fortunate to be there and to experience this event.

### **Living Wage Hamilton**

The idea for a living wage campaign in Hamilton came from students in the labour studies program at McMaster University, who were joined by the Hamilton Social Planning and Research Council in 2007 (T. Cooper, personal communication, March 10, 2014). Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction then decided to make living wage one of their priorities (T. Cooper, personal communication, March 10, 2014). In 2010, a working group was established to study the idea of living wage and brought together local experts to calculate Hamilton's living wage (T. Cooper, personal communication, March 10, 2014). In December 2011, the Social Planning Research Council, together with economist Hugh Mackenzie from the

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, established that the living wage for Hamilton was \$14.95 per hour (T. Cooper, personal communication, March 10, 2014).

I am a member of the present working group, which consists of two social planners from the Social Planning Research Council Hamilton, director of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty, executive director of Work Force Planning Hamilton, coordinator of the McMaster Community poverty initiative, the senior policy analyst from the City of Hamilton, and director of the McMaster University Labour Studies program (Living Wage Hamilton, n.d.).

I interviewed Tom Cooper, director of the Roundtable for Poverty; Judy Travis, executive director of Workforce Planning Hamilton; Mark Weingartner, senior policy analyst for the city; Fred Eiesenberger, former mayor of the city; Paul Takla, chief librarian for the Hamilton Public Library; and Paul Johnson, director for Neighbourhood Initiative who is also the living wage lead at the City of Hamilton. In my experience, the campaign has been mostly conversational and awareness has been created around the issue of living wage; however, operations are slow. This is due to members leading full-time jobs besides having to engage in the campaign. Cooper and Travis are cochairing the committee. Hamilton campaign does not have a full-time dedicated organizer. Cochairs are leading their organizations, which demand their time and energy—actually justifiably many other priorities take precedence over the campaign. They are, however, passionate people, but they seem to be having a difficult time trying to fit the living wage priorities into their schedules and finding time to meet when it suits every member. Hamilton has not completed any cost-benefit studies; therefore, no quantifiable information to promote the idea yet exists. Nevertheless, Hamilton living wage campaign has had some incremental successes. According to Cooper, 15 employers have embraced paying living wages since the launch of the campaign. The campaign has recently produced a few videos to promote the living

wage idea. Not only has this campaign influenced the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board to be the first living wage school board in Canada in 2013, Living Wage Hamilton has sparked conversation that led the City of Hamilton to investigate the establishment of living wage policies (procurement policy and student and part-time positions), which is currently underway. When the procurement policy has been passed, it would require all contractors who work for the city to pay their employees a living wage (M. Weingartner, personal communication, April 2, 2014). Paul Takla (personal communication, April 9, 2014), the chief librarian, stated that he will follow suit when the city implements these policies; however, at present, he would rather give opportunities to student part-timers than raise wages and reduce number of positions. Takla (personal communication, April 9, 2014) spoke to this when he said,

If we were to implement living wage for our student employees, it would mean we would hire less people, and so I would argue that we have a problem in our economy which is that young people have difficulty getting work experience. You know, we have a presence all over the city, and I see one of our roles is giving young people work experience and so we'd like to do that for as many as possible. So my concern about a living wage on a part-time student would be that we would end up giving less job opportunities.

Takla (personal communication, April 9, 2014) also has initiated conversations with staff and has developed strategies to pay wages for contracted staff (i.e., for security and cleaning staff). He stated,

We're going to be doing a new cleaning contract. We're putting in higher requirements for people and I think what happens is, from my perspective, there's two reasons. One is living wage is about justice but it's also about getting high quality service and so, if you pay people better, you get more reliable people. It's just a fact of life. So, the thing is I also have to be accountable for budget, so in the case of cleaning, what we've had to do, and we haven't released the contract yet, but we're looking at increasing the wage of the cleaners but in the process how do we manage that? So what we're going to be doing at the new contract is at offices like this, right now we are scheduled to get cleaned daily, they will get cleaned less frequently. We will be emptying our own garbage in offices into one place onto every floor. And these kinds of things we can do so they can focus on the public cleaning of the space so that the work is more reasonable. And we hope that will partly compensate for the, to be able to pay the cost. So ultimately there will

probably less hours but at the same time people will be making a decent wage for their work. (P. Takla, personal communication, April 9, 2014)

Paul Johnson (personal communication, April 19, 2014), who is the director of Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives, and who is also heading the living wage initiative at the City of Hamilton, remarked that legislation will help establish living wage in Hamilton.

Johnson asserted that living wage policies are needed to encourage employers, and he added,

Moral persuasion is a good tool, but it only goes so far. If people just did everything for the right reasons, we wouldn't have laws. We wouldn't need them. Unfortunately, we do have to regulate. On occasion, we do have to say to people, "We're going to set a new floor." I think that about living wage.

Similarly, Alan Freeman (personal communication, March 21, 2014) argued that for employers to embrace paying living wages, an ethical space need to be created, and he added,

The pressure is dependent on the market. Once you create what I call an ethical space, then you create a market space . . . The government has to reward ethical behaviour. That is the crucial conclusion I draw. The government has to reward ethical behaviour and punish unethical behaviour. If it doesn't, it changes the playing field.

In addition to Johnson's role as the director of Neighbourhood Initiatives for the city, he serves as member of the board of United Church of Canada. In his opinion, faith organizations have the capacity to help with economic and social justice causes (P. Johnson, personal communication, April 19, 2014). He said,

The distribution of goods and wealth from a theological perspective underpins whatever faith you're talking about. It's not just a Christian concept. It falls across religions. There's lots of talk about how. It's not an "everybody makes the same," conversation, but it is about how we redistribute wealth. (P. Johnson, personal communication, April 19, 2014)

Johnson (personal communication, April 19, 2014) attributed Hamilton's conversation about living wage as an achievement and said that he is definitely in support of making the City of Hamilton a living wage employer and of getting the procurement policies off the ground gradually. Through my own experience, I have been able to observe that despite their best

efforts, the work of legislative authorities—such as municipality governments—will still be limited when embarking on a campaign to widely engage employers all across the board. Not only is pressure from local authorities needed but also public pressure is needed to fully realize a living wage campaign in a locality. Hamilton will benefit from a grassroots organization with large number of supports heavily backed by faith organizations.

Hamilton Living Wage campaigners, however, do not believe in protest; they are taking a different approach compared to the other three campaigns that I have studied. Theirs is a “no shame, no blame approach,” according to the cochairs of the campaign (T. Cooper, personal communication, March 10, 2014; J. Travis, personal communication, April 9, 2014).

By contrast, all the living wage experts and organizers who I interviewed stated that they do believe in protesting; in rewarding employers who embrace living wage, and in shaming those who do not (M. McCarthy Flynn, personal communication, May 14, 2014; C. Garcia, personal communication, February 25, 2014; N. Jameson, personal communication, February 13, 2014; S. Klien, personal communication, April 15, 2014; D. Littman, personal communication, February 24, 2014; J. Wills, personal communication, March 17, 2014).

In Hamilton, McMaster University has a living wage campaign primarily supported by the union to raise wages for cleaning staff; nevertheless, Living Wage Hamilton is not a part of that. According to a Hamilton Spectator article, the president of the Building Union of Canada stated, “Are we trying to embarrass the university? Absolutely” (Arnold, 2014).

**Neoliberalism and its effect on in-work poverty.** To claim high profits, capital owners and banks are putting the economy under pressure with disregard to the consequences of unemployment and other social and environment costs (Duchrow & Hinkeammert, 2012, p. 17). Many jobs were made redundant—not only in the private but also in the public sector—in

Canada. According to Lewchuk, Clarke, and de Wolff (2011), due to international pressures and unrestricted foreign competition, labour insecurity started to grow (p. 19). Many jobs were relocated or outsourced during the recession “putting yet another unit of distance between the worker and the employer” (Bernhardt et al., 2009, pp. 12–13; Christman, 2014). The ones that could not be sent offshore, mainly service jobs, started growing, but those jobs pay low wages—usually minimum wage—and have few to no benefits (Autor & Dorn, 2013, pp. 1555–1556). This has left families and communities struggling. Governments work hard convincing and compensating employers to attract jobs and investment to their area but, according to Christman (2014), those jobs often pay poverty-level wages (p. 6). Christman (2014) argued that cost of public social services rise because full-time workers depend on social safety net programs (p. 15). Stabile (2008) claimed that in the United States when low-wage workers fall ill, due to lack of medical insurance and failing to seek medical treatment result in spreading to others and prolonging their illness. On the other hand, if these workers obtain treatment without paying, “someone else must pick up the tab and his is a real cost to society that arguably qualifies as externality” (Stabile, 2008, p. 7).

**Faith-based organizations aim for fair distribution of wealth.** Faith-based organizations have access to church powers that can apply pressure to governments for change. In the AI situation, support from the Catholic Church, especially from Bishop Vasquez, was critical. He attended city council meetings and wrote letters to the council about the living wage, representing close to half a million people in Central Texas (C. Garcia, personal communication, February 25, 2014). When the ordinance was passed in October 2013, one council member mentioned the bishop’s letter as a reason to support it. Issues important to Bishop Vasquez include immigration and poverty, which are consistent with the church’s general concern with

issues of social justice, human rights, and dignity (C. Garcia, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

A member of AI and the director of social concerns for the Diocese of Austin, Barbara Buddie (personal communication, March 15, 2014), explained, “Originally the vote was close, and it looked as if the ordinance would not pass. Bishop Vasquez’s letter was read, and the vote emerged six to one in favour.” Buddie said it was gratifying to see that the bishop had the moral authority to influence the council to pass the ordinance instead of just giving tax breaks to corporations whose wages leave people in poverty. She cites his consistency in standing up for the rights of individuals, the rights of the poor, and the rights of families; it is this consistency that gives him moral authority (B. Buddie, personal communication, March 15, 2014).

Jameson (personal communication, February 13, 2014) emphasized that having a broad-based organization behind a living wage campaign is crucial for its success:

You need an organization like London Citizens because London Citizens’s job is to institute, campaign, and to demonstrate, and to stop people lying. So you need [the two]. I worry about what’s happening in New Zealand. They just have a living wage campaign, they don’t have a people’s organization behind it.

According to Jameson (personal communication, February 13, 2014), the lead organizer of London Citizens, a campaign and an organization with people power is essential. London Citizens, AI, and MVA are broad-based community organizations that are place-based and time-intensive and are engaged in political action that sustains and actualizes human dignity.

Alinsky’s IAF model has been influential in a wide variety of social movements in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Germany, and Australia (Metro IAF, 2012). IAF organizations contribute to humans flourishing, which directly flows from a commitment to Judeo-Christian and democratic values. For example, Simon et al. (2002) highlighted that with a focus on well-being of families, AI has been a catalyst in increasing public and private sector

investments to help neighbourhoods through a number of initiatives including the Alliance Schools, Capital IDEA workforce development, and living wages (p. 5).

IAF organizations have gathered and maintained highly motivated people to work together and act on behalf of the common good. The common denominator in secular and faith organizations is that with regards to social justice, both types of organizations have a similar drive, goal, and focus. I challenge this theory as a result of my findings. Faith-based organizations provide motivational tenets and a structure (i.e., the structure being powerful precisely because it relies so heavily on a cycle of attracting motivated people and motivating people through the use of tenets). Secular movements have attracted motivated people but have not necessarily had the ready-made means of keeping them motivated in the face of setbacks.

**Towards a moral economy.** Many economists oppose the living wage, and the reason for this can be understood by looking at historical phases. Clearly a close connection exists between money and political power. Marx (as cited in Duchrow et al., 2012) described the gathering of resource capital through robbery, slavery, and exploitation of working people as hegemony of Great Britain. In this capitalist economy, corporations and public policy makers need to be reminded of Adam Smith's (as cited in Stabile, 2008) theory of moral sentiments in the *Wealth of Nations* in its entirety. Smith was a moral economist, but arguably his theory of self-interest is misunderstood at present. Adam Smith (as cited in Stabile, 2008) has been praised for highlighting the benefits to society of having economic decisions based on one's self-interest and "on clear monetary incentives to follow" (p. 62). For example, self-interest could be seen as the motive for expanded production, but increased production also creates jobs and improves the quality of life for others. McDonald's is a great example of an organization that operates to increase profits for their shareholders rather than to improve the quality of their workers' lives.

On average, workers in the U.S. fast-food industry make \$9 per hour, which is actually 24% more than the federal minimum wage; however, some cities and states require more than \$9 per hour to sustain employees (Young, 2014). In some of the more expensive American cities, this wage is not enough, especially when considering that to avoid paying benefits, these companies cap hours at under 30 hours per week (Young, 2014). Evidently, community power has become necessary to instill moral consciousness in corporate owners who otherwise focus on profits while ignoring society's inequality.

Economics is a powerful profession, which has immense power over people's lives, yet it lacks a body of professional ethics to govern it. George DeMartino (2011), the author of *The Economist's Oath*, pointed out that the profession has refused to adopt or explore professional ethics (p. 6). Because of this, economists are unprepared for any ethical problems they come across in their work.

Not all economists oppose the living wage. The living wage experts I interviewed, including economists, were strong supporters of business assistance living wage policies within municipality governments. Also, in his book *The Living Wage: Lessons from the History of Economic Thought*, Donald Stabile (2008) named people such as Alfred Marshall, John Stuart Mill, and Adam Smith as economists who supported the living wage, along with the philosophers Plato, Aristotle, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. It is important to focus on what can be learned from these early thinkers (Stabile, 2008, pp. 2–3).

In a letter to shareholders from Robert Wilmers (2014), chairman and chief executive of M&T Bank in Buffalo, NY, he highlighted the excessive compensation for CEOs in comparison to average worker. Wilmers (2014) highlighted that in the last 30 years, the average income for all American workers has grown by 2.9 times whereas the average pay for a bank executive has

grown 15.4 times and for a nonbanking executive, 17.4 times. In fact, the banking executives make 208 times more than the average worker, and the nonbanking executives 224 times more (Wilmers, 2014). Similarly, Canada's average CEO salary "has grown from 25 times the average Canadian income in 1980 to 250 times the average income in 2011" (Ontario Common Front, 2012, p. 5).

Wilmers (2014) is making a case for reduction in these high wages by highlighting facts in the following claims. He stated that the divide between the wealthy and poor continues to grow at an increasing rate (Wilmers, 2014). The average citizen has seen little improvement since the economic crisis; the poverty rate in the United States has increased by nearly 3% since then and over 2 million homeowners are delinquent on their mortgages (Wilmers, 2014). As a result, public resentment is heightened by the contrasting exorbitance and excess in executive compensation (Wilmers, 2014). Lastly, he claimed that while attempting to strengthen the economy for safety and stability, both the taxpayers and the entrepreneurial dynamism must be protected while corporate compensation adopts increased self-restraint, which would be "a small price to pay" (Wilmers, 2014, para. 9).

Similar to Wilmers, there are other public and corporate policy influencers who act with moral authority. Senator Elizabeth Warren (2014), politician and the author of *A Fighting Chance*. She spent most of her career studying the decline of the U.S. middle class and claimed that the top five financial institutions have grown 38% bigger since the crisis happened in 2008, when they had to be bailed out. The reason for this, Warren (Sen. Warren takes on Washington to give working class Americans 'a fighting chance,' 2014) pointed out, is that Washington's policies do little for anyone but the rich and powerful, and Washington's politicians themselves are protecting the banks. Warren's belief, however, is that banks need to be less risky, not trading

in commodities and not making high-risk investments; that should be only for the Wall St. investment bankers. The financial system has not “calmed down and is [not] there to serve the American people” (Sen. Warren takes on Washington to give working class Americans ‘a fighting chance,’ 2014).

It is commendable that these corporate and political elites are coming forward with a moral conscience in the hope of solving obvious economic injustices for common good when most political elites use the public media to spread perversion of the truth in their own self-interest.

In his web log post, Jim Quinn (2014) argued that retail sales are dropping drastically due to the decline in household income and to people’s limited ability to visit and shop at retail stores. Quinn highlighted some unreported headlines in the mainstream media that validate his claim. For example, “Wal-Mart Profit Plunges By \$220 Million as US Store Traffic Declines by 1.4%,” “Urban Outfitters Earnings Collapse by 20% as Sales Stagnate,” and “McDonald’s Earnings Fall by \$66 Million as US Comp Sales Fall by 1.7%”; he said reports from Wall Street usually are portrayed as “better than reported” in the main stream media. If the trend of precarious work and poverty wages continues, I believe that those who can afford to spend will hold on to their money and others will also stay away due to inability to purchase. Stimulus money will not be boosting the economy any longer.

In terms of self-interest, moral and market economists have different views. Stabile (2008) explained that market economists believe that, for the ideal results, self-interest is a force that drives the markets and makes them work (p. 61). On the other hand, unrestrained self-interest that evolves into greed cannot contribute to “a just society” (Stabile, 2008, p. 61),

Governments have to play a role just as people have to, as argued by Michael McCarthy Flynn (personal communication, May 14, 2014). Flynn (personal communication, May 14, 2014) emphasized the power of an IAF organization and of politicians recognizing its potential when he stated,

They see the potential in MVA, but relationship building takes a while, whereas people go, “Well, homelessness is an issue that we need to tackle now. We’ll start the campaign.” But we also blame the government, that they should be doing this, this, this and this. We don’t look at: have we been using our true capacity? Have we been using all our assets? Have we been smart enough? What things can we change as organizations? It’s not till we direct enough attention at that, intelligently.

In my opinion, people need to be strong, build power bases, and hold politicians’ feet to the fire to claim dignity for all workers. Campaigns should continue in all regions to raising the minimum wage.

Every participant I interviewed advocated for raising the minimum wage to a livable wage. The hope of earning a living wage is a distant goal for not only workers in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada but also for millions of workers around the world. When the living wage began in the United Kingdom, the campaign proposed that employers adopt living wage on a voluntary basis as opposed to it being statutory like the minimum wage, which has resulted in a “patchy” (Reed, 2013, p. 3) coverage. This approach was taken because of possible negative effects (Reed, 2013); not all employers can manage to pay a living wage, for example, nonprofit organizations. The Anglican Diocese of Toronto, representing 400,000 Anglican Church members in 200 parishes in Ontario, gave a presentation to the panel urging the panel to support the increase of minimum wage to \$14.50 by 2015 (MacAdam, n.d.). A letter from the Diocese read as follows:

A fair minimum wage is a basic issue of justice. The minimum wage should be high enough that it guarantees workers to live on. Yet in the three years since Ontario’s

minimum wage has been frozen, inflation has driven minimum wage earnings 19% below the poverty line. (MacAdam, n.d.)

The letter also highlighted that raising minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.25 between 2006 and 2012 added 150,000 jobs to the minimum-wage-dominated sales and service sectors, according to a CCPA study (MacAdam, n.d.). In addition to the CCPA and the Anglican Diocese presentations, many other groups in Ontario supported and campaigned for the increase of the minimum wage to \$14 per hour. In fact, according to CTV (2014), Ontario Premier Wayne was in strong support of the increase; nevertheless, the increase was only 75 cents an hour, making it \$11 per hour effective the first of June of this year.

In the United Kingdom, more than 6 million people who live in poverty are in a working household (Maher, 2013, p. 1). Also, Hutton and Buckle (2014) reported in the Bloomberg news that Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne is proposing an above-inflation increase in the minimum wage. Neil Jameson (personal communication, May 18, 2014) stated the following:

We fully support Buckle's proposal that government should lead by example and build living wage into all government contracts and procurement including NHS—thereby lifting millions out of poverty and making living wage the (voluntary) standard for good employment. A compulsory living wage would threaten small businesses and start ups and is not presently our position nor likely to be.

Therefore, to impact the most vulnerable workers, the minimum wage must be raised. All advocates I interviewed fully supported the idea that minimum wage should be raised at least closer to the living wage while local living wage campaigns continue to their efforts to encourage employers to embrace paying living wages.

Two employers I interviewed, who wish to remain anonymous, disagreed with the living wage. One employer, who is a CEO of a small manufacturing company, said that his buyers demand bargains, which ultimately and adversely affects the staff wages as his profit margins are slim. He stated, "There is an unbridgeable gap between preaching and practice" after I explained

the moral case backed by cost-benefit study examples. The other employer had similar concerns; he was a restaurant owner who disagreed with the living wage notion because he said he would then be compelled to increase his food prices and, as it is, he does not pay himself. After explaining the concept (methodology for calculation and its impact), he stated, “I will wholeheartedly embrace it if I was able to afford it,” so it is clear that living wage is not an easy case to make.

Socially responsible, community-oriented employers, such as Vancity and KPMG, embraced paying living wages in a heartbeat whereas some municipalities are interested, but they seem to want clear facts to help them make decisions. I should acknowledge that some high profile corporate and public policy influences—such as Senator Elizabeth Warren and Robert Wilmers, a bank CEO—have acted upon growing inequality in society by highlighting the need for action. Durkheim (as cited in Ritzer, 1998, pp. 120–132), a well-known social theorist, was concerned about the societal decline in morality, but he saw the potential in religious groups to develop collective conscience and he argued that not only the religious belief but also the rules of conduct were necessary. Supporting this claim, my research found an overwhelming evidence of religious group involvement in the promotion of living wage campaigns.

When I discussed the hesitancy of employers to embrace living wages with Michael McCarthy Flynn (personal communication, April 25, 2014), he said,

I like to think they are not callous people. I think they are maybe unimaginative people who don't think through the implications of their position. By giving them the opportunity to have a firsthand chance to listen to, “If you do this, this is the impact it is going to have,” it can be powerful.

In addition, as Flynn (personal communication, April 25, 2014) emphasized, employers—whether they are religious or secular—should be given an opportunity to listen to

the moral reasoning for paying living wages so that they can make educated choices and can possibly self-understand their own secular ethics or religiously motivated morals.

Although opposing arguments about the negative impact of paying living wages exist, studies on efficiency gains have identified that living wage laws reinforce the creation of higher quality jobs and provide definite advantages to employers; consequently, taxpayers also received gains. Alan Freeman (personal communication, March 21, 2014), the lead economist for the living wage unit of the GLA, highlighted the benefits to employers and stated:

We were saying no, not the social policy. This is the procurement policy, which will get extra value for money for the taxpayer. I am convinced that we secured better money, better value for the taxpayer. I am happy to go on record. I am convinced that what we established, backed by research, is that the taxpayer gets better value from a municipal employer if they have a living wage procurement policy. Again and again, I just don't know what the effect on poverty is. My job was as the adviser to a municipal employer. I can stand up and justify it. You will do better by your employees if you pay a living wage. (personal communication, March 21, 2014)

Although it is not an easy case to make, living wage benefits the whole society as it would reduce social costs that ultimately land on the government. Queen Mary University's cost-benefit study showed that by using data from the questionnaire survey of living wage employees and from the household modelling of income, tax, and benefits, a potential savings to government was possible if all low-paid Londoners were paid a living wage (Trust for London & Queen Mary, University of London, 2012, p. 1). This could save the British government an estimated £823 million per annum by increasing the tax base and by reducing welfare benefit spending (Trust of London & Queen Mary, University of London, 2012, p. 1). This was based on an additional £477 million in income tax and employees' National Insurance payments and on a reduction of £346 million in welfare benefits payments and tax credits (Trust of London & Queen Mary, University of London, 2012, p. 4).

Faith-based organizations have tenets that motivate in ways secular organizations do not. AI teaches its members that individuals going up against governments have little power, and that is why people must organize. Their tenet is that involvement of faith groups is important because faith groups bring the vision of people as being the centre of an economic equation in a way that is different from secular groups. Buddie (personal communication, March 15, 2014) said,

We are focused on a person as a child of God as well as the idea of bearing one another's burdens, that the problems and difficulties that my brothers and sisters are having are my problems and difficulties. We are connected to each other and need to support each other.

London Citizens, AI, and MVA are all IAF affiliates. Participants who were organizers of these organizations collectively agreed that faith activism has been central to the success of living wage campaigns. The people who are experiencing poverty and other social injustices are inside the churches. The best of the faith communities act similar to our labour communities or union organizations when they see one person or group of people who are experiencing challenges; the community rallies around them.

In the case of Baltimore, almost all of the members of BUILD were faith organizations; Joe Chrastil (personal communication, March 26, 2014) stated,

BUILD was their organization; they were using the organization to advance their interest, which was to help make a difference to people and their families. (J. Chrastil, personal communication, March 26, 2014)

Neil Jameson (personal communication, February 13, 2014) said that the job of London Citizens—an IAF affiliate—is to institute, to campaign, to demonstrate, and to stop people from lying. He says you need not just the campaign, but the people behind it. Other organizers from IAF affiliates—Deborah Littman from MVA and Barbara Budde of AI—expressed similar sentiments. In his book, *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky (1971) said that Machiavelli's *The Prince* was written for the haves on how to gain power, whereas *Rules for Radicals* was written for the

have-nots on how to take it away (p. 3). Rather than focus on general interest, Alinsky focuses on the common good, which is a term used by neoliberals to promote the power of market and capital in portraying themselves as serving the best interests of humanity (Duchrow & Hinkelammert, 2012, p. 171). The common good is the opposite of general interest (Duchrow & Hinkelammert, 2012, p. 172). The common good is an historical notion that considers the good of humanity based on the principles of justice; it is revealed through the experience of life itself (Duchrow & Hinkelammert, 2012, p. 172).

IAF leaders are passionate about their work and they demonstrate a religiously justified public sphere; they are striving to reclaim the dignity of their community members and politicians are beginning to acknowledge the potential of IAF affiliates. For example there were several federal, provincial and municipal politicians present at the 200,000 member strong MVA launch I attended in March this year in BC.

In Habermas et al.'s (2012) book, *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, Habermas began his essay, "An Awareness of What is Missing," by referencing the memorial service he attended on April 9, 1991, of agnostic Max Frisch, whose last wish declared his memorial service to be held at the St. Peter's Church in Zürich without a priest nor a blessing (p. 15). Habermas et al. (2012) claimed that four things were missing in the public sphere: final rite of passage, solidarity, lack of knowledge on political legitimacy, and religiously justified public sphere (pp. 29–31).

Although I acknowledge the issues of religious tensions between different religions, Iannaccone (1997), argued that religious-political environment has contributed to this violence rather than to religion itself. According to Iannaccone (1997) violent religious groups arise in countries where the state suppresses religious freedom or favors one religion over others,

“whereas government regulation and state-sponsored religion encourage sects to fight both church and state, a truly competitive religious market encourages religious tolerance and mutual respect if only as a matter of necessity” (p. 114). Essence of all religions is the dignity of the human being and that coming together to work toward human dignity transcends the differences between religions.

Most people, including students and scholars, do not invest the time to investigate the effective and positive roles that religions can adopt in social justice issues; therefore, neither the complexity of religion nor its potential contribution are fully understood. Rather, people prefer to think of religion as all the same and tend to categorize it all as problematic to society based on their limited knowledge (Matyok, Flaherty, Tusso, Senehi, & Byrne, 2014, p. 3). I argue that working together against the labour injustices and in development of value-based praxis, one can learn more from and about each other and can help bring about religious solidarity around social issues.

According to Zeitung (2001), Habermas—who originally wrote secularization theory—surprised many when they heard his speech on faith and knowledge when accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Frankfurt in 2001. Habermas, who is the only living second generation philosopher from the Frankfurt School, invited secular citizens to develop postmetaphysical thinking and noted that they should appreciate religious citizens and communicate with them in order to understand religious worldviews; he proposed a complementary learning process for both secular and religious persons (Habermas et al., 2012, pp. 18–23). Although metaphysical reasoning—the questioning about reality that cannot be answered by scientific observation and experimentation—challenges certain secular assumptions, it also brings together members of different traditions (Metaphysics, n.d.). Habermas (as cited in Limone, 2012) argued that secular

and religious citizens should complement one another because, in his opinion, they “share a common rationality” (para. 53).

Fundamentally, faith communities offer a place in society where one person’s gain does not have to be the other person’s loss. Community organizing will continue to benefit from religious moral authority that advocates for social justice and the dignity of every human being.

### **Recommendations**

To help bring dignity back to working people and their families in Hamilton, I have made a number of recommendations below. As a remedial action, I have argued that community organizations should support the campaign to raise the minimum wage in Ontario. Due to the voluntary nature of the living wage, the time it takes to positively affect the most vulnerable in the labour force—who are without union or other forms of protection—means that they continue fall deeper into poverty. Although opposing arguments exist, raising minimum wage has not resulted in job cuts. Therefore, I have argued that governments need to set examples by legislating living wage procurement policies at federal, provincial, and municipality levels.

I saw the lack of Canadian cost-and-benefit analyses to be a problem. Both subjective and objective cost benefit-analysis scholarly reports should be made available for employers. Employers wish to see facts when they are called to make financial decisions; therefore, I recommend that comprehensive cost-benefit analyses be carried out at the local level for each city. The Living Wage Hamilton acknowledges that faith-based organizations have a part to play in the living wage movement. An organization called Faith Groups in Action is working with the Hamilton Poverty Roundtable, and I recommend that the Living Wage Hamilton campaign engage fully with these organizations.

When comparing the United Kingdom, the United States, and BC campaigns with Hamilton's, I was able to see that Hamilton needs more resources and grassroots engagement.

My recommendations are as follows:

1. Hire a full-time organizer for Living Wage Hamilton campaign.
2. Develop cost-benefit analysis of the 15 organizations that have already signed up to ascertain the situation.
3. Obtain the backing of a nonpartisan, broad-based organization, ideally an IAF common good affiliate to support the campaign with people power that will help maintain momentum.
4. Prepare a toolkit for all the Living Wage Hamilton members to promote a unified message containing facts including the methodology of annual rate calculation to ensure everyone is on the same page and that the language used to promote is unified.
5. Promote the importance of paying living wages through mainstream media and citizen journalism and get the whole community on board.
6. Develop an accreditation program to go along with the campaign to monitor and support employers who embrace paying living wages.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This paper explored the role of faith-based activism in successful living wage campaigns. Through engagement with three case studies—London Citizens, AI, and MVA—I argue that the unique role of faith-based organizations in supported living wage movements is altering the redistribution of wealth.

The data presented are original and empirical and highlight the following themes:

1. Faith-based organizations provide tenets that highly motivate people.
2. Faith-based organizations have helped foster organizational models for economic and social justice activism.
3. Living wage coalitions build solidarity around social issues.
4. Interfaith organizations can achieve social policy goals because of their legitimacy.

I argued that top-down living wage campaigns impose an alien structure; therefore, they are not successful. I also argued that, for living wage campaigns to witness success, they need to have a grassroots broad-based community organization with faith organization backing. The paper highlights that successful living wage campaigns are IAF affiliates, and that IAF underlying framework is consistent and theologically aligned for political action. The IAF includes grassroots voices, builds leaders within, and makes them political social actors to achieve common good.

IAF affiliates—London Citizens, AI, and MVA—were all deeply rooted in faith traditions but evolved from grassroots with high levels of collective motivation. On the other hand, the Hamilton campaign is a top-down campaign and does not have the power of the people—the working class—and faith-based models reject a top-down approach. Hamilton will benefit from working alongside a broad-based community organization such as an IAF affiliate.

In addition, I found that the living wage is only one measure of poverty reduction. Poverty wages have damaging effects and emphasize the falsehood of the notion of equity. Poverty wages not only deny affected families their freedom and civic participation, but also have costly social consequences that ultimately affect the fabric of the whole society. Exploring from a historical lens, I found that interconnections of issues (years of capitalism and trends towards neoliberal ways of organising society) have contributed to the present day poverty wages and the precariousness of work. Successful living wage campaigns have the potential to tackle economic injustices and give decision-making power to those who are excluded from the political sphere.

**Secularization equals lack of cohesion.** I argued that the essence of all religions is the dignity of the human being and that coming together to work toward human dignity transcends the differences between religions and secularization thesis failed to account for current patterns of religiosity. Habermas's (as cited in Bretherton, 2013) secularization thesis classified secularization as an unavoidable result of modernization (similar to urbanization, specialization, socialization, and bureaucratization), whereas Peter Burger (as cited in Bretherton, 2013) among many others argued that secularization theory is fundamentally false because "the world today, with some exceptions . . . is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever" (pp. 10–11). According to Toft et al. (2011), most people in the world estimated 79% believe in God (p. 2). The presence of religion cannot be ignored when billions of people frame their lives by exercising their religious beliefs. Christianity has especially played a significant role in the early trade unions that created supportive working conditions for workers, and it continues to engage people from all walks of life for a moral fight to uproot causes of impoverishment and to create social frameworks and conditions for all human beings.

Bretherton (2013) offered several examples of partnerships of government—local, regional and national levels—and faith communities in both the United Kingdom and the United States for public policy consultation (pp. 36–37). Considering inequality around the world today, I conclude that secularization has promoted separation and lack of cohesion. I argued that faith organizations are crucial to motivate and to provide structures and models to encourage actions with a consciousness towards economic justice in our society. Also, solidarity around social issues is the goal of IAF organizations with acceptance of each other’s individual beliefs. Living wage movements backed by faith organizations have contributed to redistribution of wealth and dignity of workers.

I have argued that secular movements attract motivated people but do not necessarily have the ready-made means of keeping them motivated in the face of setbacks. Faith-based organizations, however, are consistent and provide motivational tenets and a structure; thus, they are theologically aligned for political action.

### **Limitations**

In Canada, almost every province is developing a living wage campaign except Québec, a province heavily invested in organized religion. Ideally, I would have liked to interview people from Québec as, without these data, a gap exists around social policies that perhaps have prevented Québécois from forming a living wage campaign.

I also made attempts to connect with a social planner at the Social Planning Research Council and the Hamilton District Labour Council without success. I wish I could interview both of these organizations to obtain an understanding of their activities involving faith activism. In particular, I would have liked to interview the Social Planning Research Council planner, who is involved in the Ontario poverty reduction coalition, which was founded as a faith coalition.

Nonetheless, I have enough Hamilton data to understand that the development and successes of the Hamilton living wage movement support my conclusions.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Community groups and faith organizations have a critical role to play in creating just and equitable communities. Also, in various localities, individuals already influential or recognizable to other community members—whether or not they belong to a faith—are drawn to social justice activism, and they should engage with faith-based living wage organizations and leave behind any prejudices in order to build Durkheim's (as cited in Ritzer, 1998) organic solidarity to form political power for the common good of humanity. I argued that secular social movements in general have a challenge to maintaining momentum, as the work is mostly voluntary. By contrast, IAF affiliates were able to build and maintain momentum. It is necessary, however, to do further studies of other community models to see how secular and religious counterparts have engaged in community organizing, achieved goals, and have maintained momentum.

Although successful living wage campaigns and initiatives have delivered higher wages for thousands of workers, little evidence exists to suggest that these campaigns have secured living wages for a substantial proportion of low-paid workers. Further research is recommended to explore how the majority of low-wage workers can be impacted positively. Since faith-based organizations have proven themselves valuable in living wage campaigns, further research could explore other anti-poverty avenues in which faith-based organizations could lend their support. Regardless of what motivation scholars may have in studying religious ethics, I believe in the importance of religious persons and their communities seeking to understand their own traditions and how these are related to other religious traditions; this was certainly true in my personal journey since starting this study. Perhaps more importantly, religious and secular people alike are

beginning to recognize the possibility of religion's psychological motivation to tackle damaging economic injustices. Although disagreements regarding living wage may exist, a theological perspective can provide more common ground including shared values and perspectives regarding ethics, values, and morals. Perhaps this shared commitment to justice can serve as the entry point to interreligious dialogue.

Powerful forces—years of capitalism and neoliberal policies—have labelled necessary work in the service sector as low skilled, which seemingly substantiates the poverty wages. Living wage movements, backed by faith activism around the world, sparked conversations about the dignity of work, the growing income inequality, and the precariousness of work. In doing so, they have motivated employers to pay living wages for many and reached the national policy debate. For this and the other reasons I have outlined, my premise is that the living wage movements with faith-based organizational backing is an essential force in every locality in order to continue highlighting the root causes of poverty and to persuade the government and private sector employers to assure fair distribution of capital and dignity for workers.

I hope my study's essence and style will resonate with economic and social justice practitioners, students, and academics in order to spark a new discourse in which interreligious and secular individuals can learn from each other in their common struggle to provide economic justice.

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## **Appendix A: Sample Questions**

### **Employers**

1. What benefits have you received by engaging with a coalition (i.e. London Citizens) and raising wages for your employees?
2. How would you justify the increase in costs to embrace paying living wages?
3. In what ways has increasing wages affected the relationship between you and the employees?
4. In your opinion what are main barriers or fears employers have in adopting a living wage?
5. What recommendations would you make to other business that need to raise or are considering raising wages?

### **Cost Benefit Study Experts**

1. What are the key findings of your studies that would be applicable globally, such as benefits to the larger society, tax payers, individuals and families?
2. Do you think neo-liberal policies and years of capitalism are resulting in low wage jobs in the UK?
3. Employers generally have financial concerns when considering living wages. How would you respond to their concerns?

### **Organizers**

1. What type of background did you come from?
2. How did (London Citizen) get these affiliates, in particular such devoted volunteers?
3. What was in it for you personally?
4. In your opinion does faith play a role making the campaigns effective?
5. What recommendations would you make to living wage campaigners who are just starting?

### **Faith Leaders**

1. What is your take on Faith in public life and in what ways have you demonstrated that?
2. How has Christian social teachings contribute to promoting economically and socially inclusive societies?
3. How do you establish relationships with other faith organizations and leaders to work on matters of social justice?
4. What are the major challenges that you have experienced working with other faith leaders/groups?