

OPINION

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The phantom workforce

Is an unpaid internship simply a synonym for slave labour? Or, is it an excellent way for job seekers to dip a tentative toe into the workforce — plumping up their resumes with valuable work experience?

Does an internship act as a speed bump of real job creation, and inflate the actual employment numbers in this province? All good questions, and hopefully many of them will be answered if, or when, a provincial election is called this spring.

Recently, the Ontario labour ministry cracked down on unpaid internships at magazines *Toronto Life* and *The Walrus*. It says they were “in contravention of the Employment Standards Act.” Both publications cancelled their internship programs.

One of our readers charges that Stats Canada includes ‘unpaid internships’ as full-time jobs — thus artificially padding the employment numbers. She also says many colleges claim 100 per cent employment for graduating students based on a high per cent of placements when, in fact, many are unpaid internships.

Many companies and non-profits also “employ” interns, throwing them the carrot that one day they might gain full-time jobs.

Countries like Switzerland (very low unemployment) do not use unpaid interns. Employers have to compensate these entry-level workers with a livable wage. It’s clear that our job market is ever changing.

College and university graduates might have five or more careers in their work lives. Some practical on-the-job training in a company only enhances their career aspirations, right?

But working for zero compensation is a no-win for all. Have we blurred the lines between job creation and exploitation?

Not yet — but we’re getting there.

Ontario should be creating good, solid, and well-paying jobs if this economic recovery is to “work” for all.

WEB POLL RESULTS

(Go to www.theifp.ca)

Do you think Gardiner Public School should be renamed Ethel Gardiner Public School?

Yes (50%)

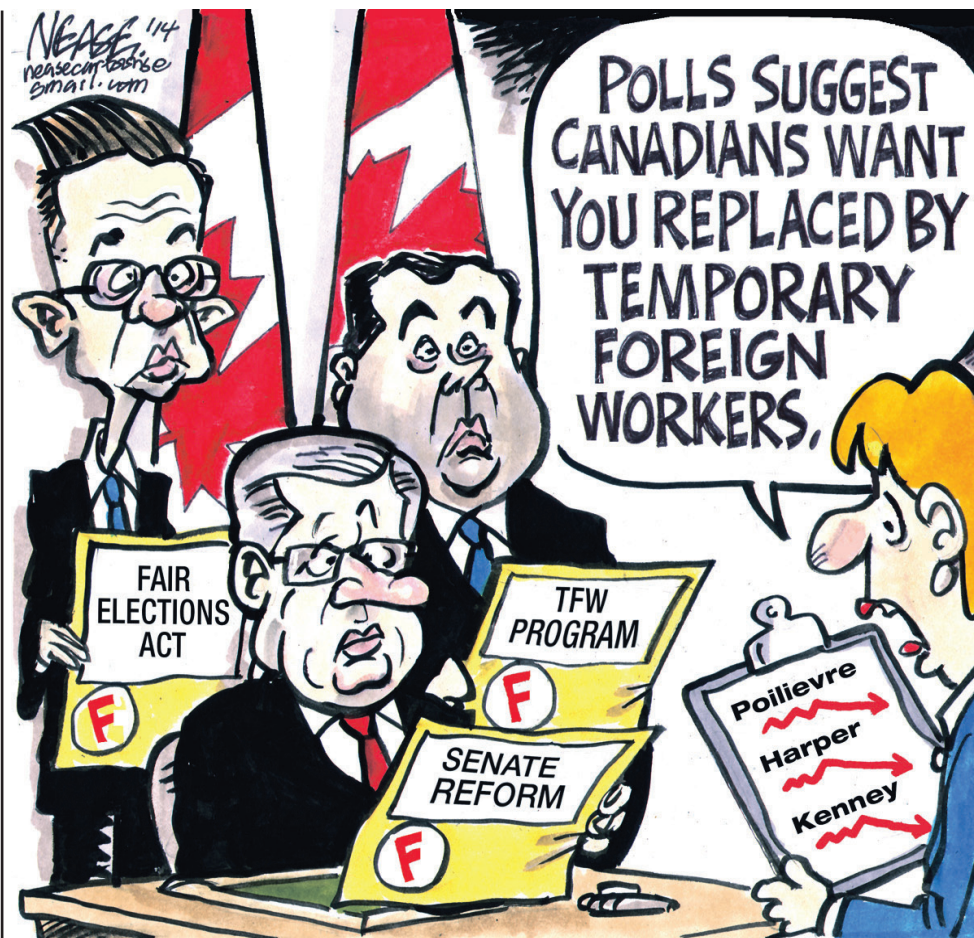
No (50%)

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Letters to the editor

We all have a role in safety

I had the privilege of attending another National Day of Mourning in Oakville on April 28, commemorating workers whose lives have been lost or injured in the workplace.

Flags were flown at half-mast on federal buildings and establishments in Canada, including the Peace Tower in Ottawa.

The Canadian Centre Occupational Health and Safety, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, International Confederation of Free Trade, and more than 80 countries recognize this event.

We all can do our part to breathe new life into efforts, strengthen the resolve to establish and secure a safe workplace for all.

I truly believe that our actions encourage the ability to make a difference in each decision we make to promote a healthy and safe working environment.

As we operate in an atmosphere of co-operation, be effective, diligent and promote self-awareness through networking.

Every worker has the inherited right to return home, safely, to their loved ones.

Through continued commitment to provide ongoing education, collaboration to ensuring safe working conditions, and increased awareness through internal responsibility systems, hazard identification, and prevention we can pledge collectively to be safe.

Let's look forward to saying, “work safe.”

Jamie Leach,
Georgetown

adapted.

A rather large population has already started to enter our nursing homes – nursing homes which aren't monitored closely enough.

The amount of improper treatment and neglect nursing home residents suffer is repulsive. The drugs being given to our elders are not always safe, prescribed, or given in the proper doses.

Speaking as someone who lost a loved one in a nursing home from something as basic as dehydration, I think that our Ministry of Health needs to step its game up, and redefine for its employees exactly what proper and legal patient treatment is.

Rebecca Scarr,
Georgetown

Our seniors deserve much better

Re: Lay off the drugs, Editorial April 24.

As the baby boomer generation continues to age, I agree that our healthcare systems need to be

Letters policy

Letters must include the author's name, address and daytime phone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 150 words and may be edited for content and/or length. Publication is not guaranteed.

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