

THE LINDSAY ADVOCATE
KAWARTHA LAKES' FINEST MAGAZINE

WINNER - NEW BUSINESS OF THE YEAR



Some small businesses are paying a living wage — even during the pandemic

Published on December 1, 2020 — in Business/Social Issues — by William McGinn

As COVID-19 rages across Canada, now in a second wave, most businesses and workers have been affected in some way. Some people have lost their jobs. Countless others have had their hours cut. And while major grocery store chains, for a time, inched

closer to a living wage (calling it a “temporary pay premium”) the extra pay was eventually revoked.

The minimum wage in Ontario is now \$15 an hour. It was slated to reach that level 34

GO TO
TOP

months earlier but the new Conservative government stopped the increase when it was elected in 2018. Then-labour minister Laurie Scott oversaw the halt to the wage increase.

“I hate this idea. It’s like, ‘Oh, how would I pay you the lowest possible (amount) that I can pay you?’ How does that value a person?”

Instead, the environmentally conscious health-food store owner has kept her employees’ pay closer to a living wage — which is \$18.42 an hour in Kawartha Lakes, according to the Ontario Living Wage Network. In fact, once COVID-19 hit, Taylor actually gave her employees raises.

She said one of the main reasons for the raise was that COVID made the work environment very “high-stress.”

“Because we were food and grocery ... we just [became] extremely busy overnight — and it really didn’t stop until the last couple weeks.”

A living wage reflects the cost of living in a particular community. According to the Ontario Living Wage Network, in a household with two parents and two children, the two parents both must make at least the living wage to make ends meet.

The network uses a standardized calculation to determine each community’s living wage, while also accounting for government transfers such as child tax benefits, child care subsidy and government deductions and taxes. The living wage calculation also factors in a set amount across Ontario for clothing, footwear and contingencies.

In a 2018 interview with the Advocate, Mary

For Julia Taylor, owner of [Country Cupboard in Fenelon Falls](#), the notion of a minimum wage does not sit easily with her.

GO TO
TOP

Lou Mills, a social determinants of health nurse with the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit, said employers can reap the rewards of paying a living wage. (The social determinants of health are simply the social and economic factors that impact people’s health, such as wages, social status, education and more.)

“Generally, businesses that pay a living wage see an increase in productivity, experience less staff turnover and save on hiring and training costs. When low-paid workers earn a living wage, they also tend to spend most of it in their local economy, which contributes to stronger economic growth,” said Mills.

Another local business owner who pays a living wage is Kim Dupuis, owner of [Lindsay’s Point of Balance](#), a physiotherapy

and massage therapy clinic. Dupuis told the Advocate her employees were already paid above the living wage and it stayed that way as COVID hit, despite a reduction in revenue.

The reduction stemmed from being unable to see as many patients because of social distancing policies, and new expenses like extra hand sanitizer. Point of Balance also hired a new staff member to make sure clients sanitize and go through proper screening procedures, and that PPEs and laundry were managed.

Dupuis believes the clinic will stay strong as winter approaches. “I’m very proud to say that I am able to continue to support my staff and their families as they were supported before.”

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

GOOGLE

PINTEREST

LINKEDIN

TAGS:

COVID-19

EMPLOYMENT

JOBS

KAWARTHA LAKES

LIVING WAGE

SHOP LOCAL

SMALL BUSINESS

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN

DECEMBER 1, 2020

Local food banks report nearly 800

The Optimist Club of Lindsay unloads its shipment of Christmas trees.

NOVEMBER 29, 2020

NOVEMBER 29, 2020

We need to know where and how [GO TO TOP](#)