

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.

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