

Colleges should know better

With Ontario community college presidents poised to receive massive pay hikes, Queen's Park has stepped in to avoid a potential PR disaster.

Reports indicate that, with the end of the government's five-year pay freeze policy, senior executives at community colleges were to cash in on April 1.

Citing documents released by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, *The Toronto Star* reported that the heads of Georgian, Centennial, Confederation, Fanshawe and Lambton colleges were to receive more than 40-per-cent raises.

Algonquin and Mohawk colleges were proposing to increase their presidents' pay by more than 50 per cent. And at Algonquin, George Brown and Sheridan colleges, the presidents' salaries were to reach almost half a million dollars.

Enter Advanced Education Minister Deb Matthews.

At a press conference, Matthews said the province is ordering all 24 colleges to pull back on the proposed raises. She said the numbers are based on inequitable comparisons with other organizers.

Quite frankly, having some of the colleges choose comparators 10 times their own size is not in the spirit of the legislation as it was intended and it's not in the spirit of what we are trying to achieve as we move toward a balanced budget, Matthews told reporters.

College officials responsible for calculating the raises based them on comparisons with other top-level public-sector executives, not necessarily taking into account the size of the respective organizations. For example, college president wages were compared to executives of the LCBO and the University Health Network.

As well, consultations were held over the Christmas holidays, making it reasonable to assume that attendance was perhaps not optimal.

Factor in the reality that colleges are facing declining enrolment and less per-student funding from the province and the proposed hikes make even less sense. The tenuous state of Ontario's finances prompted the move to freeze public-sector wages in the first place.

Since things really haven't improved all that much, Queen's Park needs to make it clear that workers will not make up for lost increases in one big windfall at taxpayers expense.

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Letters to the editor

A helping hand

On Dec. 28, my daughter Jaidyn was enjoying a wonderful afternoon with her sisters and friends cooking in the kitchen.

Imitating *Top Chef* on The Food Network, these master kid chefs were on the dessert round when Jaidyn accidentally knocked a pot of boiling oil, resulting in her whole arm covered in the oil.

Rushing her to the Georgetown Hospital, I didn't take time to park my van but frantically called across the parking lot to an unsuspecting lady, who was leaving the hospital, to help park my vehicle.

Leaving the keys on the ground, I rushed my daughter in to be quickly cared for by wonderful staff at the hospital and then sent in an ambulance to Sick Kids. My daughter is healing.

I don't know who you are, but I want to say thank you for helping and confirming for me that I live in a community that cares.

Martha Clipperton

OMB a horror show: reader

So, Halton Hills Council has voted to approve the Eden Oaks development overlooking Glen Williams. This is in spite of well-thought-out presentations against the plan by local citizens. This should not come as a surprise, nor should residents have expected any other outcome. Town Council really had no choice because the system is rigged.

If they had voted against the development, the developer would have appealed to the Ontario Municipal Bully (sic) (OMB) and easily won their case. The town would have simply spent many thousands of dollars defending their vote to deny a permit and lost.

You see, the system is designed to protect process, not the rights of people in communities. Eden Oaks would have been found to have properly followed the process, paid for all the reports and surveys and therefore the OMB would find that Eden Oaks was unjustly denied their opportunity to make a profit at your expense.

Every day, citizens and their local and regional governments try to fight individual developments that ignore

the rights of people to have the nature of their communities protected and they fail. As long as the OMB exists, nothing will change.

The OMB exists so that the provincial government can pretend that it is innocent of the harm being done to communities. After all, it is an independent board and not political. What rot!

The people who are appointed to the OMB are carefully picked. I can guarantee I will never be offered a slot. (Premier Kathleen Wynne, if you're reading, I'd be pleased to serve, but you wouldn't like my approach.)

It is all about money and economics. The money is simple. Check public records regarding who donates to political parties. The existence of the OMB is the reward.

Economics is more complicated. If the development community ceased to build, Ontario's economy would suffer severely. The development community wants to build where it can get the biggest financial gain per square foot of residential construction.

As long as the OMB exists, communities will continue to be pillaged by the system.

Philip Lewin