

Opinion

Minimum wage reform long overdue

There's definitely something wrong when many people who work full-time still live below the poverty line.

That's both socially unacceptable and just plain bad for an economy that needs consumer spending to thrive.

Some 534,000 Ontarians work 35 hours or more each week in fast-growing retail and service industries, earning the provincial minimum wage of \$10.25 an hour.

Indeed, with annual earnings under \$20,000, these workers will never even crack the paltry official low-income measurement of \$23,000 a year.

This doesn't bode well for Ontario.

And the Liberal government hasn't helped matters by freezing the minimum wage for the past three years.

The government needs to stop stalling. To both alleviate poverty and increase consumer spending, it should move as quickly as possible on minimum wage reform.

It should speed up the work of the advisory panel it set up on the issue this summer and get ready to make a substantial increase in Ontario's minimum wage.

The government should hike the minimum wage to at least \$11.65 an hour.

That would disappoint activists pushing for an immediate increase to \$14 an hour — the level that would bring earnings just above the poverty line. But that would mean a hike of almost 40 per cent, a huge burden on many businesses.

The government has to ignore the familiar warning that minimum wage increases are job killers. In fact, giving the poorest workers a few extra dollars in their pockets could actually help create jobs, particularly when the economy needs additional consumer spending.

Unlike many corporations, low-income workers aren't going to hoard their extra cash. Instead, it will go right back into local businesses on necessary purchases.

And we all know that when consumer spending begins, job growth ensues.



Heritage Matters

In this 1963 view of Milton, looking northeast from Bronte and Main streets, on the right is the CNR Station, which was moved and relocated to Martin Street. On the left is the P.L. Robertson Screw Factory, which was the first firm in the world to produce socket head screws. The Ford Motor Co. used 700 screws in every Model T Ford produced. The factory was a major Milton employer especially during the Great Depression. — Submitted by Heritage Milton and Milton Historical Society

Editor's Desk

Learn all about local volunteer opportunities this weekend

I have written before about how I volunteer for an event about volunteering.

Suitably named the Milton Volunteer Fair, the annual event is made up of non-profit organizations that have volunteer opportunities available.

The people who attend are from all walks of life with a common desire to make a difference in their community — and in their own lives.

They're seeking the right fit to give of their time and expertise.

The members of the committee who or-



Karen Miceli
Managing Editor

ganize the fair, including myself, know volunteers play a vital role.

Have you ever volunteered? If so, you no doubt know the rewards.

If you haven't volunteered, why not give it a try?

The benefits include making a difference in someone's life, developing skills, meeting new people and gaining work experience.

The Milton Volunteer Fair will be held this Saturday at the Milton Sports Centre (Banquet Room), 605 Santa Maria Blvd., from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event provides volunteer opportunities for all ages.

Hope to see you there.

For more information about the fair, see story on page 23.

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