

OPINION

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Editorial

Vote for change just pocket change

The Liberals have come through and raised the minimum wage.

Great. One election promise kept. But beyond the public relations boost for a new government already losing support, will Ontarians greatly benefit from the move? Doesn't look like it.

This week, Labour Minister Chris Bentley announced the general minimum wage in Ontario will increase from \$6.85 to \$7.15 per hour in February.

The rate is pegged to reach \$8 within four years.

It's really nothing more than a token gesture. And higher costs associated with a wage hike could kill off entry-level jobs, said Judith Andrew, Ontario vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Likely to be affected most by the increase are small business owners, who often operate on the tightest budgets.

Faced with having to hike wages for employees, small businesses may choose to eliminate a position to make up for the added expenditure.

Sure, there will be extra money in the pockets of minimum wage earners — enough to buy a McDonald's Happy Meal — but will it really make a difference to those in need?

The NDP has said the increased wage translates into an annual, full-time salary of \$14,872, which falls \$3,000 below the poverty line.

If the Liberals want to help people, the labour lobby is right — it has to be a lot more than 30 cents an hour. The NDP promised an immediate increase to \$8 an hour, a move the Liberals rejected because they knew it would kill jobs.

By taking half measures, Premier Dalton McGuinty may have avoided driving large corporations out of the province, but he has done little to help either low-wage earners or those businesses, which, incidentally, make up 80 per cent of our commercial base.

While the Liberals have been criticized for backing away from one campaign promise after another since getting elected, they should have backed away from one more — the cancellation of the Tories' tax reduction program.

Not only did the Tories' tax cuts help low-income earners, with more than half a million exempted from paying provincial income tax, they also assisted small business owners, those more likely to offer minimum wage jobs.

Ontario voted for change.
 What we got is pocket change.



KINSMEN SANTA CLAUS PARADE - SATURDAY DECEMBER 6, 2 O'CLOCK



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Santa puts in wish list for Saturday's parade

That Santa is sure a stickler for detail.

"Is everything in order for my visit Saturday, little Jimmy?" came the voice from line three.

"Mom? You got a cold?" I asked.

"Mom? It's the big guy in the red suit, Jimmy," he said. "You don't remember me?"

"Curtis Joseph?" I asked with trepidation.

"It's Santa Claus, you punk," he came back. "Just making sure everything is set for the parade this Saturday in Stouffville?"

Santa came down off the roof when I told him all was well in his favourite small town south of the North Pole. The Stouffville Kinsmen Club has promised to fill Main Street with floats, bands and spectators. They reserved a spot for the guest of honour at the rear of the lineup.

"Just make sure they don't put that team of 20 heavy horses right in front of me again this year, Jimmy," he said. "The air got a tad funky by the time we hit Park Drive."

There were more requests.

"Has the town flattened the railway crossing on Main Street?" he asked. "One year we went over the tracks so fast I thought I was going to end up inside Pizza Pizza."

And there was the incident with the police another year.

"Got stopped at a RIDE check on the Tenth Line headed for your parade," he said. "Had a hard time explaining the red nose and reindeer-powered vehicle, but I think one of the officers recognized me and let me off with a warning. He got something extra in his stocking."

The kids who tossed candy canes at Santa in front of Stouffville Canadian Tire didn't fare as well.

"Nothing for those bad boys," Mr. Claus said.

"In fact, one of them looked a lot like you, little Jimmy. You're a lot taller than you appear in the paper, aren't you?"

"Your cell phone's breaking up, Santa," I said. "Put that on your Christmas list. See you Saturday."

Jim Mason is editor of the Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Preston Lake bus circle answer not as obvious as it seems

Re: *Ward 3's new councillor already big on environment, Nov. 6.*

Acclaimed Ward 3 Councillor Clyde Smith's enthusiasm to get on with the job is admirable.

However, I suggest Mr. Smith move cautiously when dealing with Preston Lake's school bus turning circle. Things are rarely as obvious as they look on the surface.

According to calculations I made with the help of neighbours, there are only two families here with children who take the public school buses and wish to have the bus come on our private road. Some residents who are pushing the hardest for this don't even have school-age children; others are in private schools.

If this is a safety issue, why have they chosen the most dangerous part of the road to put it in? With all the supervision at the end of the road, how can it be that dangerous? Will that supervision end if the children are dropped off farther down the road?

There is also the outstanding Oak Ridges Moraine and York Region tree cutting allegations pending since summer against the town from the same location.

Why is all this attention being given to a turning circle when we have other serious outstanding maintenance issues with the roads that could be a safety problem for the school buses — which is why they stopped coming in originally?

SANDRA CARVELLO
 PRESTON LAKE

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters.

All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Stouffville Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

Write: Letters to the Editor, 34 Civic Ave., P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5, e-mail: jmason@ymg.com

Whitchurch-Stouffville merchants backed United Way campaign

Each year, the employees of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville hold a campaign to contribute to the United Way of York Region.

This year's campaign raised \$4,832. The major event for the campaign was a silent auction that raised more than \$3,000.

It wouldn't have happened without the support of Lebovic Enterprises, Pace Savings Credit Union, Greystone Homes, East Side Marios, Sleepy Hollow Golf and Country Club, Schell Lumber, Bruce's Auto, Bill Houston Ford, Amaretto's, Crupi's Pizza, Domino's Pizza, Da Classic Scoop, Ballantrae Golf and Country Club, Stouffville Co-op, Giant Tiger, Dynalync Ltd., Cook Canada Ltd., Canadian Tire, DNJ, Septic Designs, Shoppers Drug Mart, Giffels Associates, Card Appliances, Harveys/Swiss Chalet, A & P and No Frills.

Thanks to all for supporting such a worthy cause.

JACK BOONSTRA
 UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN CHAIRPERSON
 TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

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