

Minimum wage

by BRIAN LOCKHART

The Ontario government will soon introduce legislation that will increase the minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour.

That's an increase of .65 cents. The rate will increase every October according to the current inflation rate.

It's good news for people who are currently working minimum wage jobs.

That means someone working full time at that wage, with a standard 7.5 hour work day, at five days a week, could take home around \$29,250 per year.

You're not going to get rich with that type of salary, but at the very least you should be able to pay your bills and have a roof over your head.

It wasn't that long ago that a person earning minimum wage could pay the rent, buy groceries and drive a car. However the rate of inflation has now surpassed what minimum wage employment can keep up with.

I know people paying \$1500 to \$1800 per month in rent for a small one-bedroom apartment. Do the math on a minimum wage salary and you can easily see how life can become very difficult.

There should really be no need for government to legislate a minimum wage.

Employers should have the common sense to know what a job is worth and that the people working for them are there to earn a living ? not do them a favour.

Unfortunately, without a legislated minimum wage, some people would indeed take advantage of others and pay them less than what they should be making.

There are many small family run businesses that stay alive but really don't earn much of a profit. They pay themselves and hire a couple of people to help out.

In those cases, it is understandable that you're not going to be making big bucks working part time in a business where Clara, the cousin-in-law is bookkeeper, supervisor, secretary and vice president of operations.

However, when it comes to businesses that are making a big profit, there is no reason to continue paying employees the absolute minimum.

I recently dealt with a company that makes auto parts for all of the major automotive companies.

They have several manufacturing facilities around the country and are making a hefty profit each quarter. They are now complaining that they can't find enough people to work for them.

Well, guess why? It's an assembly line job, in less-than-ideal conditions. A bell rings, you start to work. A bell rings, you go for a 20 minute lunch, and you better be back when the bell rings to start the line again.

All this, and they pay minimum wage.

People no longer want to work at a mind numbing assembly line job to receive a pay cheque that barely covers their monthly rent.

If these larger companies would start paying a living wage they would be far more likely to attract workers who will stick it out.

Years ago I lived near a warehousing company. They were desperate to hire people. They posted a permanent sign on the front lawn that stated, "Work available. Midnight Shift. Weekends only. Deep freeze warehouse. \$7.50 per hour."

That was the minimum wage at the time, so this was indeed a few years ago.

They want to hire you, for two nights per week, on a weekend, working in absolutely miserable freezing conditions, at night, so you could take home \$120, minus deductions.

How could the knuckleheads running that operation not see why they could not attract interested employees?

The other problem with minimum wage jobs is lack of any kind of security.

How often do you go into your local coffee shop or similar type establishment and see the same people working the same shift every day?

Go into a grocery store every day at 10:00 a.m., and you will seldom find the same cashier there every day. For some reason employers scheduled these people all over the map.

As a test I asked woman I know who works in a local store. Her schedule made no sense at all and never included an eight-hour shift.

She worked four hours one day in the morning, then six hours two days later on the afternoon shift.

If you're going to work for minimum wage the least you should expect is some kind of standard hours that allow you to work a full week.

The minimum wage may be going up and that will give some people a small bonus every week, but with the current rate of inflation, housing costs, and the price of food, most likely anyone making that \$15 will also be looking for a second job to make ends meet.