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# Time for it to disappear

EDITORIAL

LAST WEEK as we were putting our final issue of March to bed, the Ontario government was in the midst of rolling out its 2019 Sunshine List.

Released every year at the beginning of spring, the Sunshine List is a document produced by the provincial government highlighting public sector employees across Ontario who earn $100,000 or more annually. While the Citizen has previously reported the names of local employees included in the document, we made the decision this year to ignore the latest Sunshine List entirely.

Let's be honest and call it what it is ? an outdated publicity stunt designed to appeal to one of the most dangerous personality traits a human being possesses, jealousy.

When the Conservative government, led by Mike Harris, first introduced the Sunshine List in 1996, it was offered up under the guise of their ?Common Sense Revolution'. It was supposed to provide accountability on behalf of the public sector and transparency to the taxpayer.

Instead, all the Sunshine List ever really accomplished was embarrassing those whose names were inscribed within its pages year after year. At its very core, the List is an incredible invasion of privacy. It always has been, and will remain one until the day it is cancelled.

While there are those, undoubtedly, who look forward to the Sunshine List's publication each year, one has to ask the question ? why?

What exactly does the Sunshine List accomplish? Knowing how much money an individual at Town Hall makes has absolutely no bearing on any of our lives. It may, however, have a bearing on theirs. Something that was, apparently, designed to improve accountability and, presumably, productivity, today likely has the complete opposite effect.

Disagree? Then riddle us this. How many of you would be happy to have your name and earnings plastered in newspapers and around social media for all to see, simply because you earn a good living? Not many, we would assume.

And emphasis should be placed on that last point, a good living. Because that's what $100,000 a year is now.

Back in 1996, the very first Sunshine List contained 4,501 names. The recently released 2019 Sunshine List boasted a mammoth 151,197 individual entries. That's approximately a 3,400 percent increase on the number of people whose earnings were disclosed in that very first list. Extraordinarily, despite inflation rising by some 56 percent in that time, the cut-off point for the Sunshine List remains the same.

For argument's sake, $100,000 from 1996, when the list was first released, would be worth $156,230 today. Looking at some other avenues, the average price of a home in Toronto was approximately $198,150 back in 1996. Today, that average has increased to an eye-watering $835,000. And 23 years ago, a litre of gas ran you 56 cents. Today, that very same litre comes at a cost anywhere between $1.05 and $1.20, depending on location, (and due to rise thanks to the federal carbon tax hitting Ontario).

So, with everything else on the uppity up, why has the Sunshine List remained at that $100,000 threshold? That question has yet to be answered at Queen's Park.

Close to 100 Dufferin County residents suffered the ignominy of having their position and earnings called into question last week.

The practice is wrong, and should be halted immediately.