

# Help wanted in the Highlands:

*Creative solutions needed for public and private sectors to address labour shortage, says Haliburton County CAO*

STEPHEN PETRICK

*Special to the Echo*

*This is the first in a series of stories for the Haliburton Echo/Minden Times, which will provide an insight on how a labour shortage is affecting our communities. This story looks at how it's impacting municipalities and the rippling effect on the tax base.*

Last fall, Haliburton County had an opening for a procurement specialist – and in another era the process to fill the position would probably have gone smoothly. The position, which involves sourcing goods and services for municipalities, was going to pay well, offer good working conditions and be set in beautiful cottage country.

The county found a qualified candidate from outside the area and offered the position, but the candidate declined after not finding housing that met their needs. The county then made an offer to another candidate, who also declined, for a variety of personal reasons, including housing.

As a result, administrators took a step back and came up with a creative solution. The county is now trying to build a partnership with a neighbouring county who has a senior procurement specialist and is willing to train a more junior specialist who would work in Haliburton County. The county recently re-advertised the job, but cast a wider net, so the right candidate this time didn't have to have all the qualifications right away. As of Aug. 9, the county was in the final stages of hiring the new candidate and an announcement on the new hire was expected soon.

The story, which was explained by Haliburton County Chief Administrative Officer Mike Rutter, is an example of hiring in 2022, when a labour shortage is affecting a variety of Canadian industries, including municipalities.

While the shortage of workers in health care is well documented and obvious to understand – given the stress that sector has felt since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic – there's also evidence that a labour shortage is being felt across various industries. A 2022 survey conducted by the local Workforce Development Board found that 63.6 per cent of businesses said they intend to hire in 2022. Yet 44 per cent of those surveyed said it's difficult to fill positions, due to a lack of applicants. The survey targeted businesses from a wide cross-section of industries in Peterborough, Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland and Haliburton County. The list included manufacturing, retail, food services and public administration,

the field that encompasses Rutter's type of work.

"In the past, we might have said we want to have qualification A, B, C, and hold firm to that," Rutter said. "We may now be flexible in that and recognize there will be training."

Rutter said he used to see about 15 strong applications whenever the county offered a position that required a specific skill set.

Now, he says, there's usually two or three good applications for a position. He believes the trend is the result of the pandemic, the stress of which has accelerated the number of retirements in the powerful baby boom demographic. He also says the process of bringing in a new worker is more complicated than it's ever been, considering that positions require such specific training and employees may now come with specific requests, such as the ability to work remotely.

He's not likely alone in that thought. The Workforce Development Board survey reported that 49 per cent of businesses feel there's a poor availability of qualified workers. The survey also reported 41 per cent of business saying COVID-19 had a significant negative impact on their business.

This problem has vast consequences. In the Haliburton County case, not having a procurement specialist, whose job is to find savings for municipalities as they purchase goods and services, impacts the county's budget and, in turn, residents' tax commitments.

Rutter said the county's service delivery review plan calls for nearly \$1 million in savings, based on having someone in that position working on collaborative procurement.

And while Rutter has to worry about ensuring municipal positions are filled so taxpayers are getting bang for their buck, he also realizes that he and his colleagues must also support the private businesses in the community.

When asked how concerned he is for them, he said "very," knowing that if a labour shortage is impacting their operations, they're not likely meeting their revenue potentials and not contributing as much to the tax base, meaning the residential taxpayer is shouldering higher costs.

Rutter believes there's no one magic solution to the labour shortage for the private sector in a rural area, but transportation is an issue that always come up in Haliburton County.

He touted a new program, which the county recently financially backed, hoping it will lead to more people accessing the training they need to enter the workforce.

The program involved the leasing of an eight-person van and the hiring of a driver, who picks up people from their Haliburton-area homes and takes them to training programs run out of the SIRCH (Supportive Initiative for Residents in the County of Haliburton) office in the village. The hope is that people in remote, rural areas will have access to training and will eventually work in fields such as hospitality, retail and carpentry, where there's demand for workers.

Rutter also knows, from the procurement specialist situation, that a lack of available housing in the region, is also linked to a lack of available workers.

He said he and his colleagues at the county have discussed the idea of either purchasing property or taking property it owns and converting it into housing, which could be rented out to new county employees on a short-term basis. The idea is that, if they take a job here, they'll have a place they can stay at right away and until they've found their own place to live. That might limit the potential of a repeat of what happened in the fall, but it could be tough to pull off, he pointed out.

"We're not spending our own money, we're spending taxpayer money so we want to do it well if we do it," he said.

He emphasized that to address the labour shortage both in the public and private sectors, the county and its partners will have to continue to look at creative solutions. Internally, the county is now considering different opportunities for recruiting and retaining staff, such as allowing them to work longer shifts, in exchange for a weekday off or allowing employees to spend some days working at home.

He also acknowledged there's silver linings in the issue. He knows a new generation of employees may be able to enter the workforce without the limitations that many other generations have faced.

Plus, he sees the story of what happened with the procurement specialist job as a potential opportunity to find a local person, interested in a career in municipal work. When a rural business has to hire a position with a specific skill, they may not always have a local candidate. But Rutter thinks, with the position now advertised with fewer specific requirements, he might be able to find an unexpected home-grown employee, who turns out to be well worth the investment.

"I say to my staff all the time, 'let's find people who love Haliburton County,'" he said. "We'd love to give those opportunities and training to local people. They may be in the county already and waiting for that opportunity."



Jim and Marilyn Frost received a standing ovation from the final crowd of the 2022 Highlands Summer Festival season.

## Summer salute

Highlands Summer Festival president Brian Kipping, centre, presents Marilyn and Jim Frost with a framed commemoration to thank them for their devoted work as ticket sellers for the festival for the past 18 years at the final show of the 2022 season. Marilyn and Jim are retiring from Highlands Summer Festival and have sold tickets since the festival began in 1999. /VIVIAN COLLINGS Staff



# Help wanted: Data shows Haliburton County has a slim labour pool

STEPHEN PETRICK

*Special to the Echo*

*This is the second in a series of stories the Haliburton Echo/Minden Times intends to run to address how a labour shortage is affecting our communities. This story looks at how the private businesses, and particularly restaurants and resorts, are dealing with a lack of available workers.*

An ominous message appeared recently on the Facebook page of Minden-based business Godfathers Pizza.

"We regret to inform you that as of Friday, July 29th we will be closing our doors temporarily due to a staff shortage," the post read. "We are currently hiring for all positions in the hopes to be operating as usual in the near future."

A post on the Facebook page of The Mill Pond restaurant in Carnarvon pointed at the same problem.

"There's the shortage of workers," wrote owner Brad Archer in an Aug. 1 post. "How does this affect small business you say? Well without workers we can't provide the service that our customers want. This is why I haven't been open nights during the week."

In an interview later with *The Haliburton Echo/Minden Times*, Archer said he has a healthy customer base, but due to a lack of workers this summer he's been staying closed on Mondays and closing at 3 p.m. on Tuesday to Thursday. The shortage of workers, he says, means he can't operate during the lucrative dinner hours.

"In Haliburton County the pool of employees to choose from is only so big. Everywhere you go there's a help wanted sign. I think it's a sign of the times."

He's right. Statistics show Haliburton County has a slim pool of available workers, forcing business to close at unusual hours and sacrifice potential income despite their location in a bustling summer cottage community.

The specific factors driving this shortage aren't all entirely clear yet, but the issue needs to be treated with some urgency, many business leaders say. If not, independent small businesses – the kind that give Haliburton County its unique tourist-town charm – are at risk of closing and crippling the economy.

"It's beyond crisis," said Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce executive director Bob Gaudette, who works with small business owners and is seeing the help wanted signs seemingly everywhere. "And it's heading into catastrophic impacts."

## The working demographic can't keep up with growth

A deep dive into statistics on Haliburton County's labour situation reveals some challenging trends, said Jennifer Lamantia, executive director of the Peterborough-based Workforce Development Board, which studies the labour pool in a region that also includes Northumberland, Kawartha Lakes and the Highlands.

She pointed out that recent census data showed that Haliburton Highlands has experienced a 13 per cent population growth between 2016 and 2021, a rate that's significantly higher than overall provincial population growth of 5.8 per cent.

But Haliburton has an older population. The percentage of Haliburton residents who are between ages 15 to 64 – the age of people who tend to be in the workforce – is only 55 per cent, compared to the provincial average of about 65 per cent.

That means there's a growing number of people in Haliburton County who need services, but businesses don't have a large employee pool compared to other regions. They then struggle to hire new people who can provide the additional services needed to capitalize on this growth.

Lamantia says a deeper dive into statistics shows even more troubling concerns.

She says the most dominant age group within the 15 to 64 age demographic are people on the upper side, aged 55 to 64. Province-wide data shows that 68 per cent of people in this age range are working, but Haliburton County's rate is 10 per cent lower, at 58 per cent, Lamantia says.

So it appears as though Haliburton County has a higher-than-normal rate of early retirees – or people not working for other personal reasons.

"People in that age category are making a conscious decision to not work, I'm guessing," she said. "For an employer in Haliburton, it's about how do they attract younger people to the region? But then again, if they can't, how do they attract that older segment to start working again?"

Gaudette is exploring the unknowns, so the Highlands can find its way out of the crisis. The chamber put out a survey to community members, to sense how the pandemic has altered its workforce. The survey targeted people who've made a conscious choice to leave the workforce; it asked what was holding them back from returning to the workforce and what industry they left.

But finding respondents in this hidden demographic, proved to be tough. Gaudette said the survey was sent out through a newsletter and other media channels, but it didn't yield enough respondents to give a definitive sense why workers aren't available to the extent they were before the pandemic.

"We thought there'd be an end point where we'd resume normal economics," he said. "But now it doesn't look like there's that same promise and it's a heavier burden for folks."

He suspects there are reasons why workers have not returned to work, after the rough pandemic years. Any information on that would be helpful as the community charts a new path.

"What supports and income are people living off that is enabling them to not be forced off into the labour market?" he asked. "Is it savings or investments? Did they sell property? Do they have social supports? Are they living off Mom and Dad? I don't know."

Gaudette meets regularly with other business leaders in the community, including Haliburton County's new economic development director Scott Ovell and Haliburton County Economic Development Corporation executive director Patti Tallman. They discuss issues impacting the community and the labour shortage almost always comes up.

"(Employees) can pick and choose because there are so many jobs out there," said Tallman, whose organization supports job creation and business growth.

She said the labour situation in the Highlands now is so tough on employers, that employees have a lot of power. "Some employers are to a point where they say, 'ok so, when can you work?' They're trying to fit people into their schedule so they can get some employees."

## They can't work here if they can't live here

When the *Haliburton Echo/Minden Times* asked business leaders to propose solutions to the labour shortage, one answer came up constantly; housing.

"I hear of people not being able to buy a home because it's so expensive and no rentals are available for people to re-locate here," Tallman said. "There are people who'd prefer to move to a rural community and live cottage life, as opposed to living in a city, and there's no where to go."

But solutions are being discussed. Tallman said she knows of a construction company that has bought housing for its employees, so out-of-towners who are interested in working here have a place to stay as they complete a project.

Lamantia says her organization speaks to employees and, anecdotally, she's also hearing that a lack of available housing is an issue, as is transportation, as many people don't have the means to get to an employer, or get to a school where they can gain new skills as they look for employment.

Gaudette has heard these concerns, too, and hopes the community will address factors that may be preventing people from even starting to job hunt in Haliburton County.

"The barrier used to exist at the finish line," he said. "Now that barrier has moved to the beginning. We can't get people to the door. How do we get folks that live here already what they need, so they can engage in the workforce?"

Even some of Haliburton County's most well-known and established tourism businesses are facing challenges.

Andrea Hagarty has been with Minden's Bonnie View Inn for about 30 years and is still helping out, although she recently sold the resort to a new ownership group. She said the Inn has faced hiring challenges this year – and while other years have provided challenges – the Inn is going to greater lengths now to ensure the resort is well staffed.

This year, the Inn struggled to find an additional chef that would have allowed the resort to offer indoor dining. As a result, it's only offering dining on its patio.

"I searched for a team where we would offer free room and board and they could come live on site," she said. "We put it out everywhere. I advertised at colleges for chefs and so many places and we were unable to fill."

"It's not that we're not offering money – we're willing to be competitive, with the offer of free room and board,

but I just haven't found anyone to even offer it to."

She said, from her experience, the labour market is different now than in years past, because more people that approach the Inn want part-time work, as opposed to full-time. That puts more pressure on senior staff to train people, who may only be there for a few months. She also said it's a challenge to find full time workers for the more experienced, senior positions.

The owner of another big Haliburton County tourism institution, Sir Sam's Ski/Ride, says he's been able to fill positions, but he's also aware that there's a shortage of workers and he must make his offers competitive.

"We're ok, but it hasn't been easy," said Doug Wilkinson, the new owner, who has overseen a revitalization of the chalet and is re-branding the massive venue as Eagle View.

As summer nears an end, Wilkinson said he'll soon need to make a plan to ensure he's got about 120 employees for the winter ski season.

He'd like to see the community host more job fairs and more programs that can encourage students to enter the workforce. He also realizes, he has to think about how his business can be a good and enticing employer in a competitive market.

"We have to tell ourselves that it's not just pay, it's the type of work you're providing, the benefits you're providing," he said, explaining that the hill offers its employees a seasonal ski pass, hoping the offer will attract workers.

## A new model for sharing employees

Haliburton business leaders say a new model for managing hospitality employees could soon be adopted in the industry here.

Through her work with HCDC, Tallman recently visited a Peterborough-area employer to see how it was benefitting from Community Futures Development Corporation support programs.

She learned the employer has put their employees into a pool of available workers that is shared by four similar businesses in the city. Those employees are then invited to work shifts at any of the five business, when needed.

It's an opportunity for the employees to gain more hours and perhaps the equivalent of a full-time job through a combination of different employers, each of which may not be able to provide more than part-time hours.

"If you have three bartenders and one is working a day shift, maybe they want to take an evening shift to do a wedding for someone else," Tallman said, explaining how it works.

Wilkinson and Hagarty say that model is already happening here, but not in any formalized way. They say some of their employees juggle multiple jobs between different employers. It seems to be a win-win, as the businesses need the workers and those workers want additional income.

Tallman believes her organization, along with others such as the Haliburton County and the Chamber of Commerce, could play a role in setting up an employee-sharing arrangement – perhaps a website – for a group of private employers, who would post what shifts they have available. This, she believes, could help small businesses fill positions, but it wouldn't solve every problem.

There would have to be a healthy number of available workers in the system and Gaudette pointed out it would raise some legal questions, such as whether the workers in the system would be considered an employee, bound to certain hours, or contractors.

But few, if any, are disputing that creative solutions are needed to address the issue. If not, Haliburton County's beautiful resorts, restaurants and stores will continue to face stress, resulting in economic hardships and the spiraling effects that come with that, such as burnout and mental health issues.

Gaudette says if the labour issue isn't addressed soon, Haliburton County's at risk of losing the small, independent businesses that give it its charm.

"Why go downtown in this community and buy local goods?" he asked, rhetorically. "Because it's about being in a beautiful downtown and interacting with people. There's value in that exchange. You can talk to someone with local knowledge. I feel that becomes unaffordable when you're all competing for the same 10 employees."

"We've been in crisis since the start of the pandemic, but it hasn't felt like there's been a crisis response to these issues."



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### Fair fun

Vivi MacMillar enjoyed the bubble station at the Haliburton and District Lions Club Stories in the Park Fun Fair on Wednesday, Aug. 31 at Head Lake Park in Haliburton. The Lions Club gave out free books to children and stations were set up with games and activities. See more photos on page 8. /VIVIAN COLLINGS Staff

## 2022 defined by unfilled jobs for some seasonal businesses

STEPHEN PETRICK

*Special to the Echo*

*This is the third in a series of stories the Haliburton Echo/Minden Times is running this summer to explore how a labour shortage is affecting our communities. This story focuses on the summer recreational sector.*

A young person looking for summer employment can do worse than Algonquin Outfitters. The tourism organization employs people to help customers enjoy canoe trips and guided hikes as well as to serve customers in several retail stores, sprinkled through cottage country.

Its website shows an image of smiling employees on a doc, above, text which

proclaims it's a great place to work if you "love the outdoors" or for employees with innovation and looking to "better themselves."

All this adds to the puzzlement that Mark Sinnige has felt this summer, while trying to fill positions. Sinnige, the company's head of human resources, says some candidates "ghosted interviews."

They were invited for a job interview but, without warning, didn't show up.

"We might call and say, 'hey, are you ok? Do you have COVID? Do you need anything?'" said Sinnige. "Even getting people to attend the interview now is a stretch."

see **LABOUR** page 2



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### Ride on

The Rotary Club of Haliburton held their grand opening of their Bike Share program on Thursday, Aug. 25. The six bicycle Bike Share facility is next to the historic Caboose and Visitors' Centre in Head Lake Park, and the bikes are free to use through the ON Bike Share app. /VIVIAN COLLINGS Staff

## Local businesses troubled by slim labour pool

from page 1

As previously reported in this series, Haliburton County has a slim pool of available workers compared to other Ontario regions. According to the local Workforce Development Board, the percentage of Haliburton residents between ages 15 to 64 – the age of people who tend to be in the workforce – is only 55 per cent, compared to the provincial average of about 65 per cent.

That slim labour pool making it difficult for local businesses to fill positions and offer services that can help them capitalize on the region's recent population growth and amazing rural aesthetics.

Haliburton's recreational sector is no different, as leaders of businesses that offer outdoor summer employment who spoke to the *Haliburton Echo/Minden Times* reported that filling positions this summer was more difficult than in years past, meaning those businesses are at risk of losing their ability to contribute to Haliburton's normally vibrant economy.

The idea of skipping a job interview is foreign to Sinnige, who said he was a member of Generation X, the generation of people who came into adulthood in the 90s, when new jobs were scarce, and a worker was expected to be grateful for any chance of employment.

But, he acknowledged, times have changed, and now major employers like his struggle to find workers, perhaps owing to a large number of baby boom generation retirements and pandemic-related changes to the workforce. He said Algonquin Outfitters typically needs about 150 employees during the busy summer season. This year, it was about 10 per cent understaffed, meaning it had about 15 fewer workers than, ideally, needed, due to a lack of applicants.

Another renowned recreation business, Haliburton Forest & Wildlife Reserve, has also experienced candidates "ghosting" interviews.

"It's a strain on us," said general manager Tegan Legge. "We block off a whole hour of time and they don't show up."

Legge said, despite the ghostings, her business was able to hire enough people to get almost fully staffed this summer. However, there were some housekeeping positions that were never filled, which put extra strain on staff.

As the company began to realize the labour market was changing and cost of living was rising, it started to do extra things to recruit and retain staff. When gas prices began to skyrocket in spring, the company gave employees a \$1 per hour raise immediately, instead of waiting until the end of year, when wages are typically given cost-of-living increases.

Legge said Haliburton Forest has also worked to ensure the wages they offer are competitive and there are perks for employees, such as benefits after six months of work and the opportunity to use the company's amenities for their own recreation.

But she also believes there are issues that the county needs to work on over the long term, to ensure an employer, like hers, can recruit workers. She points out that the lack of affordable housing in the area, or a pub-

lic transportation program that can help people get to work, impacts Haliburton Forest's ability to find willing employees.

She said, several years ago, the company explored building a cul-de-sac with housing on its own property, so seasonal workers would have a place to stay, but the project was bogged down with government regulations and never went ahead.

She believes, if such a project was explored again, it could gain approval. "The government was not aware of the housing crisis at the time," she said. "Now they're more open to working with us."

Algonquin Outfitters is trying to fight the labour shortage by marketing itself as an attractive place for an employer to work – hoping that the right messaging will attract would-be workers who realize they're in a seller's market and have some choice of where they want to work.

Sinnige said his company is working with a human resources consultant to revamp job ads that will better recruit workers, given that "the power has moved to the candidate, not the employer."

"It's less of 'hey, here's what we're looking for.' It's more, 'here's what's in it for you,'" he explained.

Sinnige added that his company has realized it really has to market itself as a great place for workers, as they get to work as part of a great team and be outdoors.

The leaders of some other Haliburton seasonal institutions reported that the summer went fine, but not without some labour struggles.

The Monarch Bible Camp hosts programs from May to August every year at its location outside of Norland. Its director, Teresa Ward, said this year it relied more heavily on volunteers and had to restrict its registration numbers, due to a staff shortages. To get some staff, however, it had to up its game with social media promotion. The camp hired a "social media officer" which helped recruit some employees.

Another big business, the YMCA's Medeba summer camp program, made it through the year successfully, but, to do so, it needed to recruit employees from outside the area, plus rely on volunteers, said an official.

"This summer has not been out of the ordinary for us," said executive director Steve Archibald.

But, Sinnige and Legge know that their businesses are dealing with a challenge that could hinder their future, despite the fact they're both established institutions that are deeply engraved into the community.

Sinnige pointed out that Algonquin Outfitters has a store in Minden that may have to close on some days in September, due to a shortage of available workers. This would hurt its revenue and its contributions to the Haliburton economy.

"It's something we're worried about; it's a concern," he said. "We have to anticipate and look ahead. We're doing everything we can."

But, the good news, he says, is that if a person in Haliburton County wants a job, they shouldn't have a problem finding one.

"For young people entering the workforce, this is a golden opportunity."

# op-ed

## Most solutions to our labour shortage problem are within reach

STEPHEN PETRICK

*Special to the Echo*

When I was a young man first entering the work world in the 1990s – back when dinosaurs roamed the Earth and your TV remotes actually worked – I was taught a few things in school: send out tonnes of resumes, assume that most employers won't get back to you and, if you get an interview, treat it as gold. That meant show up on time, dressed to the nines, and if you're offered anything, say "yes." I was part of what had been labelled Generation X; a group of young people who entered the work world at a time when new jobs were scarce and the powerful baby boom demographic had a grip on everything already out there.

I recalled these stories a few times to sources I spoke to for a series of stories, reported in these pages recently, about a labour shortage and how it's hurting Haliburton County employers and the area's normally vibrant economy.

Many of those sources, Generation Xers themselves who now have the responsibility of hiring people, shared the same sentiments. And we shook our heads in disbelief at how the work world has changed.

The series revealed that many employers are not filling jobs, due to a lack of applicants. The shortage is affecting big employers who offer career jobs with decent salaries, like municipalities, but also employers in the service industry,

like those at restaurants and hotels, as well as summer, recreational businesses, who hire summer students. We even heard that some businesses, like Haliburton Forest Wild Life and Reserve Ltd. and Algonquin Outfitters, had job hunters "ghost" them on interviews, meaning the candidate was given a time to come in, but, without warning, didn't show up. Doing that would be like asking for a one-way ticket to poverty town when I was a teen.

Of course, it's easy to crack jokes about youth today or make judgmental assumptions that an upcoming generation of workers have no work ethic. In reality, the problem isn't about any demographic's lack of dedication; it mostly comes down to numbers.

In reporting the series, we found that there are statistical reasons for the vast amount of "Help Wanted" signs in windows. According to census data, Haliburton County experienced a 13 per cent population growth, between 2016 and 2021, a rate that's higher than the overall provincial population growth rate of 5.8 per cent for the same period. But the percentage of Haliburton residents who are between ages 15 to 64 – the age of people who tend to be in the workforce – is only 55 per cent, compared to the provincial average of about 65 per cent. So there's a growing number of people in the county who need services, but businesses don't have a large employee pool to hire workers. Also, the most dominant age group within the 15 to 64 age demo-

graphic in Haliburton County are people on the upper side, aged 55 to 64, and not all people in that demographic are choosing to work.

So what should Haliburton County do? How can our leaders work to ensure businesses have more people they can hire? What has to be done to keep our charming cottage communities humming?

Finding out more information would be a start.

Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce executive director Bob Gaudette pointed out that he doesn't know all the factors that are leading to the problem, which has amplified with the onset and subsequent easing of the pandemic. A survey put out by the chamber to explore why some people haven't returned to work following the pandemic, yielded few results. He wonders if more people are living off investments or sharing homes to reduce their income needs.

Finding out more information on this would help business leaders key in on how they can make a return-to-work more attractive to employees, and our municipalities and big institutions can certainly work together to develop surveys or studies that hone in on this answer.

But the biggest interim solution is obvious, housing. When I asked sources what they thought was the biggest roadblock, the lack of available housing came up unanimously. Haliburton County chief administrative officer Mike Rutter shared the story of how, not one, but two, people who had been offered an administrative job with the county, ultimately declined it after realizing they couldn't find a home that met their needs.

It's not radical for us to suggest that all three levels of government must get

to work immediately on plans to build more housing, whether that be affordable housing programs or encouraging more private developments. The plan should include the growth of both permanent homes or units that could be for seasonal employers or for people to live in temporarily until they find a long-term place to stay.

There are also creative ideas being discussed for the service industry, such as employee sharing programs, which would allow a worker to get something like a full-time income, by splitting duties between two or more part-time employers. And some good ideas have already started, like a county-funded transportation program that's resulted in the hiring of a driver who can pick up people and take them to SIRCH Community Services' training program, which will help them gain skills to enter the workforce.

Our leaders can't let up on any of these efforts. They must continue to develop and perfect them and not let them get bogged down in bureaucracy or red tape.

The labour situation is a serious problem – some have suggested it's a crisis – but it doesn't have to be a depressing situation. The silver lining here is that there's probably never been a better time for a young, determined person to enter the work world, gain income and independence and become a contributing member of society. They don't have to face the uphill battle that many Generation Xers unfairly took on years ago.

Moreover, most of the factors that are contributing to Haliburton County's troubled labour situation have already been identified. We just need community leaders to work together on their solutions – and take action right away.

**1ST ANNUAL SCARECROW COMPETITION**

JUDGING WILL TAKE PLACE ON THURSDAY OCTOBER 6TH!

**CATEGORIES:**  
 Children: 0-10 years old  
 Youth: 11-16 years old  
 Family: 3-4 Members (Min 3 scarecrows)

**RULES:**  
 1) Scarecrow must be built by competitors  
 2) Scarecrow must be able to stand on its own  
 3) Scarecrow must be taller than 2.5" but no taller than 8'

Drop your scarecrow off to Country Rose. After the judging takes place you can pick your scarecrow up so you have it for Thanksgiving weekend.

**Country Rose**  
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 13513 ON-118, Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0  
 (705) 457-3774

Haliburton County Folk Society proudly presents

New folk, sophisticated pop!

**Big Little Lions**

Opener: Bill Candy

Friday October 7 / 22 7:30pm  
 RCL Br 129, 719 Mountain St, Haliburton

\$20 Members / Students - \$25 Non-member - Door \$30

Tickets online: [www.haliburtonfolk.com](http://www.haliburtonfolk.com)

A project of the Haliburton County Community Cooperative Thanks to Canadian Heritage for their support

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