

Robots more than job-killers

I watched a rather compelling video the other day that someone had posted to Facebook.

The video took place in an industrial setting. It was a fairly large warehouse facility with racking designed to hold wooden pallets that contained nondescript cardboard boxes.

I've been there, done that job. When you're a poor college student, that type of work is valuable.

In the video, two robots were hard at work taking the boxes from one pallet and transferring them to another pallet or onto a conveyor line to be sent to the shipping department.

The robots were of a unique design I had not seen before. They have two wheels and a long arm for picking up boxes and a counter weight between the wheels that kept the robot balanced.

Box after box, the robot did its job.

At first I thought it was a science video demonstrating achievements in the world of robotics. These machines were in fact quite impressive.

After watching the video for a few moments, you get the real message.

The video was hosted by a labour union to show how this type of interference in the workplace is taking away jobs from human beings.

The union seems to think that the introduction of non-human workers is a slap in the face to the hard-working man.

In this instance, yes, some guy who used to do this job of manhandling boxes would have had to find employment elsewhere.

What the video does not mention are the jobs created by these robots.

The robots didn't design themselves.

I'm not exactly sure what all is involved in building robots, however I'm pretty sure there are engineers of various capacities both male and female, experts in electronics, computer software, and robot design who put the plans to paper.

Someone built the parts and electronic components to make these machines work. Someone was even responsible for designing and manufacturing the rubber tires that grip the concrete floor and keep the robot from slipping.

After the robots arrive at the workplace and are put to task, there is someone or maybe a team, of people who will maintain them and keep them running. Robots aren't self-sustaining works of ingenuity.

So yes, they will replace some workers – but at the same time they have created other jobs.

It's a sign of the times and a sign of things to come.

If you have checked out new cars and trucks over the past couple of years, the number of driver assist functions now available is remarkable. I've driven in a truck that corrects the vehicle if you stray from centre lane. I read an interview with a car owner who claims he drove through downtown Toronto and never touched the gas or the steering as a forward collision mitigation system, pedestrian detection, and a few others features guided the car effortlessly through traffic.

All these driver assist functions are the result of a lot of ongoing research that will also be used in other industries as the world becomes more and more automated.

During recent radio program about the subject, a truck driver called in and said his job could never be replaced because it takes a human to carefully deliver a truck to a loading dock. It was pointed out that self-driving trucks are already in the works and would be a huge benefit to industry to have their raw materials delivered and off-loaded without people having to be involved.

Yes, it's a sign of the times. I'm pretty sure when steam-powered tractors first started making an appearance in the 19th century,

at least some farmers grumbled that no 'new-fangled' machine could ever replace a horse.

In a world where technology is taking over more and more every year, a lot of jobs will be terminated.

Soon enough, you're going to see the receptionist at a local business or your doctor's office become nothing more than a computer generated image that will have the ability to ask you to fill out a form and direct you where to sit to wait for your appointment. In fact, that technology is already operating in some places.

Yes, jobs will be lost, but others will be created.

The key is to make sure your future work force is educated and trained in some kind of useful skill.

As for the lost jobs – stacking pallets isn't much of a career anyway. I've done it and would recommend a different career path.

BRIAN LOCKHART
FROM THE SECOND ROW



Time for it to disappear

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 uppy 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.

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Appalled by local nomination

As a 45 year resident of Dufferin/Caledon and a card carrying individual with a disability I have several complaints with the elections at the fairground.

We now live in a multicultural society and I applaud the organization of the winning candidates supporters who intently encouraged and signed up several memberships prior to the voting date. Also the loyalty to which 2 at least buses of folks showed up plus large numbers of supporters.

To the 1300 of voters who did not exercise their right to vote SHAME ON YOU. We have a privilege in this free nation to vote yet we are lazy and complacent in this country and I hope we got a wakeup call by how the winning candidate and his supporters were so well organized recognizing their rights to vote and acting on it.

TO THE LOCAL EXECUTIVE: Shock and dismay as to

1) Why weren't off duty police hired? They are trained in crowd control and were much better able to keep the crowd back so someone like me with a walker could enter the building to vote. Folks wouldn't move out of my way I had to continually ask them to move hanging around the entrance to the facility.

2) A school bus blocked people from backing up. Also, I saw,

as I waited for my ride home, people trying to back up and had no room, the bus was so close to the back of their cars.

3) Why wasn't there an all candidates meeting separate from the voting day so each person could speak.

4) Why was the lobby towards the polls filled with candidates and their supporters, blocking us to get to main auditorium.?

5) Process of being able to run for this district where was EXPERIENCE?? To my knowledge only Barb Shawnessey had experience politically and former Mayor Jeremy Williams was the only delegate to send me a copy of the voting card instructing how to vote He seemed the only one prepared to help voters?

In closing both papers talk about the successful candidate having attended a Private Christian School in Brampton and some degrees he obtained, plus his being Manager of his father's local Taxi Cab Company. No mention as to his political or lack of experience.

Dianne Zahodnik
Dufferin-Caledon resident

Message to the PC Party

Dear PC Party - stop ruining Education, Healthcare and the Environment.

Unless you stop destroying the future for all of us, we are going

to end up in an uneducated, sick, poisoned world. Sounds some kind of horror dystopia if you ask me, and i hope it does not become reality

Please stop the legal actions you are taking against the federal government for implementing a carbon tax that we are desperately in need of. It's an absurd waste of money to fight something that is a proven solution to the climate crisis we are witnessing everyday!

You campaigned on the promise that no Front line jobs would be lost! You LIED! Get your Hands off health care! Get your business interests of my license plate. And no you are no allowed to hire your friends as Police Commissioner.

Also 10 million for Horse racing really!?! when things like healthcare and education and the environment are at risk?! really couldn't have looked more like rich bourgeois arrogance if you tried.

Also, not only was the initially scheduled 2 day consultation period for the healthcare reform bill C74 completely unacceptable, but i was supplied false information by a member of your team. i was told i could submit written comments until 6 p.m. Wednesday (April 3). Except when i looked it said it close today (April 2) at 6 p.m.

S. Hannon
Orangeville resident

The humblest Citizen of all the land, when clad in armour of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of Error.
~ William Jennings Bryan

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PRODUCTION
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Steve LeBlanc
Sarah Didycz

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