

# Editorial opinion

## TheHighlander

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## The Highlander's Mission

To tell the story of Haliburton County each week

To be a source of information and inspiration through stories and ideas

To report on issues, people and events important to the community

To reflect and promote pride in the culture, people and landscape of The Highlands

To encourage Highlanders to believe in themselves, in our community, and in their power to make our place in the world better every day.

## Cutting in all the wrong places

About 60 people at the local school board received layoff notices this past Monday.

In Haliburton County, at least four people no longer have a job once the school year ends.

They are educational assistants or EA's. Two work at Cardiff Elementary School. Two out of three. One can only imagine the impact that will have on a small, rural school.

The other is part of the Behaviour Intervention Response Team. These folks come in when there's a problem child. There are many. They help the teacher and other EAs to cope. One disruptive kid can impact an entire classroom so their presence is extremely important to any school. Especially when class sizes are poised to increase.

No doubt about it. They are the front-line workers that Premier Doug Ford and Member of Provincial Parliament Laurie Scott said would not lose their jobs.

Catherine Shedden, the P.R. person for the Trillium Lakelands District School Board said the board has had to make difficult decisions about the many programs and services valued by their students, community and staff.

She said they're working hard to preserve as much as possible in-school and classroom supports. Rest assured, she said, consideration for changes and reductions

are made with the best interests of students first and foremost.

Are they?

I had a look at the sunshine list for the past five years at TLDSB.

In case you don't know, the sunshine list is an accounting of every public sector employee in Ontario who makes more than \$100,000-a-year.

Five years ago, in 2014, TLDSB had 94 people on the list, making just under a combined \$11 million. Last year, the list had ballooned to 181 workers making just shy of \$21 million.

Not to pick on director of education Larry Hope, but in 2014 he was paid \$225K. Last year, he brought home \$338K. From 2017-2018, his salary jumped by about \$36,000 -- about what one of those laid off employees would make in a year.

So, if, as Shedden (herself on the sunshine list) says, they are being battered by reduced funding from the Ministry of Education, which is having a severe impact on the budgeting process, why not look at some of those bloated managerial salaries? We're not just talking at head office in Lindsay, either. Heads of school departments, vice principals and principals are all feeling the sun's rays.

To our knowledge, there have been no managerial cuts at the school board. And, yet, we are hearing about continuous

declining enrolment.

Premier Doug Ford is not wrong when he says spending is out of control in the province of Ontario.

Where he is misguided is setting a target of a percentage cut in funding to organizations and trusting them to make good decisions about where those cuts should be.

Take the Southern Ontario Library Service, for example. It has merely passed on its cuts to member libraries. It looks better on the province's books, but has a real impact on the ground.

It's the same with the TLDSB cuts. Cutting EAs, secretaries and janitors will be felt at schools. It will put more stress on teachers, and remaining EA's already worried about facing larger class sizes in September. Schools, which are not getting money for retrofits this summer either, will be dirtier and more run down.

It's a bit hard to swallow when managerial salaries continue to climb at head office at the board, and in schools.

It's time to take a good, hard look at where the over-spending is happening in the province of Ontario and leave the front-line workers alone, as promised.



By Lisa Gervais

## Tories chase beer demographic

To say the least, it is interesting to watch the Ford administration stumble forward with an agenda that only the inner circle of the government seems to be aware of.

Announcements are made only to be retracted, postponed or repackaged. Often the public policy actions seem to come out of the blue.

Certainly, Ford's election campaign contained few details other than sweeping pronouncements about getting spending under control and reducing the deficit .... both goals that were offered with little or no detail as to how they would be accomplished.

The reason for back-tracking on some grand announcements is often said to be the result of 'listening to the people', an excuse that is easy to invoke in selective cases but amounts to little more than government policy by opinion polling. It also speaks volumes about the lack of development of a coherent strategy.

One agenda that appears to be progressing well with Ford and his minions is the alcohol and beer file. Just two weeks ago, in an orchestrated tweet-storm, members of the Ford government went on social media bemoaning the lack of access to beer and wine in the province.

Unlike the extremely limited number of cannabis retail outlets, in Ontario, we are

pretty well served by vendors of beer and wine. According to a government report, there are 447 beer stores in the province, 660 LCBO outlets that sell liquor, beer and wine, 200 licensed extensions of the LCBO/Beer store franchises ... such as the stores in Carnarvon, West Guilford and Eagle Lake and 350 grocery stores that started selling beer and wine in the last couple of years. On top of that, craft breweries, larger beer makers and wineries can have their own retail outlets where the beverage is manufactured.

The plan is to rip up the 10-year contract with the operators of the Beer Store, which could prove to be costly, expand the market to corner stores interested in selling beer and wine, add more grocery and big box stores to the list and increase the number of what are to be called LCBO convenience outlets. Perhaps there is an opportunity here as well for the Girl Guides and Scouts to get in on the action, dropping the cookies and apples and offering door to door booze sales.

Having beer and wine for sale everywhere has a whiff of common man appeal, but one has to worry about the premier's seeming fixation with alcohol. From his lowering of the floor price of a can of beer to a buck, to regulations allowing alcohol at so-called tailgate parties, to earlier serving

hours (will you be having a beer with those bacon and eggs?) and now a proposal to make it available in corner stores, one might deduce a pattern here that should be concerning.

Now, don't get me wrong: Like many people I enjoy a cold beer or a glass of wine from time to time but I don't recall any crisis moment in my life when I felt that these beverages were beyond my reach. Doug Ford seems to feel that having beer and wine readily available is somehow meeting a dire need of the common Ontarian. I for one, don't ever recall anyone complaining about the availability (except all those PC MPPs in their ridiculous tweets) and demanding that if the government doesn't do something about it, the world, as we know it, would come to an end.

There are many more important problems the premier and his people should be setting their minds to solving. The availability of beer and wine is certainly not one of them.



By Jack Brezina

**HAVE AN OPINION?**  
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