

Editorial ? Students need second thought

We received a rather bothersome media release by email last week, announcing that students, staff and faculty on campuses throughout the province would be launching a campaign to demand that university and college presidents limit their contact with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

This launch was scheduled to take place last Wednesday (Nov. 15).

And why has such action been deemed necessary?

The Chamber has raised concerns about Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act. This is the legislation that, among other things, is calling for the increase of the minimum wage in Ontario by some 32 per cent by 2019. It seems there are people on campuses who have a problem with such positions.

There are two sides to every issue, and whether the minimum wage should be raised by that much that soon can be hotly debated.

But to take a position that advocates limiting ties with a group simply because of its stand on a particular issue is unacceptable.

And we are even more distressed that a campaign like this is being launched on post-secondary campuses. We have always understood that colleges and universities are supposed to facilitate the broadening of patterns of thought, not limit them.

We can understand why students would like to see a nice increase to the minimum wage. At this stage in their lives, they have little work experience. That means to crack the labour market for part-time or summer jobs, they often have to settle for minimum wage. That's been the reality since the idea of a minimum wage was established.

And if they are so anxious to see the minimum wage increased, does it not make sense for them to wonder where the money is going to come from to pay for it?

The Chamber, in the act of doing what it's there to do, has raised the issue that increasing the minimum wage to this extent could cause business owners to cut back on the number of jobs they make available.

These students should ask themselves whether the summer or part-time job market isn't tough enough already.

Apart from last week's media release, we have not heard if this campaign has gained any traction. We suspect not. Indeed, it's not likely there's been much action taken on this at the colleges. Nothing much has been happening there over the last several weeks.