

## Slashing and minimizing social programs can be damaging

OUR READERS WRITE

**Re:** The cost of reducing the Provincial deficit, Jan. 24

Dear Editor:

I agree for the most part with your opinion on managing expenditures when we find ourselves in an ever-increasing debt situation. You laud Doug Ford's Conservatives in taking a look at the books to see where cost savings may occur. You compare that an action that I, as a homeowner and family member, would/should take to balance my personal budgets.

One difference with Doug Ford Conservatives is that they act and ask questions later. Case in point that you bring up in your article - the guaranteed supplement program. It was a three-year pilot project that still had one year to run. Results from that pilot would have been then examined to determine the best way forward according to costs and efficiencies. If accepted, some existing social programs may have had to go. Other programs could also be re-evaluated and perhaps consolidated together. After all, Doug is a big fan of consolidation and amalgamation. The end result could have very easily been one consolidated social program, a guaranteed income, encompassing all remaining ones under one umbrella. This approach is known as asking questions first and acting next. Quite an opposite approach to the same issue.

But then again, the data could just have easily shown that such a program was too expensive and could not be implemented. I believe the province of Manitoba took a pilot look at the guaranteed program and did find it too expensive to operate and shelved the program. Would a guaranteed income plan work for Ontario? Thanks to Doug's ?slash and burn? approach to budgeting we will never know.

Another point in your comparison is with household debt. 58% of hourly-paid employees in the GTA are paid less than \$15.00 an hour. 52% of those are working women and some single mothers. They don't have enough resources to plan budgets or balance their books. Most are making decisions about putting food on the table or paying rent or paying utility bills. In the GTA area and extending as far east as Kingston a working family of four must have two working people making \$18.00 to provide adequately for themselves and families. Doug Ford and Conservative band of slashers frozen the minimum wage at \$14.00. Leaving the minimum at \$15.00 would not have cost the government a cent and would have increased tax revenues with increased wages.

He plans to cut more. Do you not see what is so wrong with this picture? If you don't have enough financial resources to plan a budget, how can you balance a budget? Cuts to expenditures to balance a budget, absolutely, but not at all costs to those who can't. There comes a point when slashing and minimizing social programs can be just as damaging as a burdensome debt. Are we heading toward that tipping point with Doug Conservatives?

Ask questions first to collect the data and then act to rectify the situation. Doug, you have the wrong end of the stick!

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