

Ben Lynch
100153345
Paper #2
ENGL 100-36

Canadian Media Bias Towards Business Interests

The increase in minimum wage has been a big topic of conversation over the past decade. In 2018, Alberta and Ontario increased the minimum wage to \$14 in 2018, and \$15 by the following year. Although this increase has proven little to no impact on businesses in Canada, the media creates their own narratives. There was a prominent narrative created around the increase in minimum wage that was heavily skewed towards the interest of businesses, rather than labor unions and workers. This narrative is a great example of how the media can create huge biases when it comes to public information.

Press progress wrote an article about the biased media coverage during this period explaining that, “three quarters of all news coverage (75%) between December. 31st, 2017 and January 4th, 2018 greeting the new minimum wage - including news reports, opinion columns and editorials - directly quoted or cited figures from business owners, bankers and corporate lobby groups.” (Press Progress, 2018) Fewer than one-third of all news articles cited sources like unions, labor economists or even low wage workers themselves.

The title of the article I chose is “Small business owners brace for impact as Ontario minimum-wage hike takes effect.” (The Globe and Mail, 2018) This title alone has a lot of framing or built in assumption behind it. It seems to suggest that *all small business owners* are “bracing for impact”, when this isn’t the case at all. In reality, “although there’s 400,000 small businesses in Ontario, reporters from The Globe and Mail only got in touch with 14 of them.” (Press Progress, 2018) One of the most mentioned businesses in this article was “Kaboom Chicken” who had previously criticized the minimum wage hikes on instagram. This is something that media outlets seem to do often. They find certain businesses that are public about their political positions on social media, and go running to them to get

they're opinion. They then proceed to act as though they are representative of the entire industry.

Although there are 400,000 small businesses in Ontario, they only spoke to 14 of them, one of which was publicly criticizing the minimum wage hike.

There was another number which was being thrown around a lot in the media during this period. An article written in 2018 titled, "Minimum wage hikes could cost Canada's economy 60,000 jobs by 2019." (CBC News, 2018) There is not much data to prove this number is true. In fact, history has shown us that when there is an increase in minimum wage, there isn't an increase in job losses at all. In the media there seems to be a hyperfocus on business interests rather than the vast majorities of people and the actual workers themselves.

Trends in the media show that there is bias framing of media coverage. Oftentimes the built in assumption of blame is on the minimum wage itself, instead of focusing on: Why can't these businesses properly pay their employees an actual living wage? This is not a problem of the minimum wage, it's more a problem of businesses who are not capable of handling the increase. Maybe their pricing is too low, or maybe the executives in these companies are making too much money. Instead, the blame falls on the rise in minimum wage. A financial post article headline reads: "Ontario's minimum wage hike off to a rocky start as employers slash hours, benefits to compensate." (Financial Post, 2019) This title is framed to put the blame on the minimum wage rather than the businesses themselves.

The rhetoric within my chosen article is that the minimum wage is a groundbreaking change for many small business owners, but fails to take into consideration the low wage workers' problems. Press Progress did an amazing review on the media coverage during this period. They found, "53% of articles they reviewed cast businesses as the victims of the story, frequently highlighting ways businesses will struggle as a result of raising the minimum wage. By contrast, only 14% of all news articles highlighted ways low-wage workers are already struggling to make ends meet." (Press Progress, 2018) In addition,

two thirds of voters in Ontario at the time were in favor of the increase in wages. However, none of this was shown in the media coverage. This proves that the media is not representing the majority of people, but business interests instead.

Recent history shows that there has not been a negative impact on jobs due to increase in the minimum wage. In fact, provinces like Alberta have a history of labor shortage at the low end of the wage scale. A higher minimum wage will actually make these jobs more attractive. “Raising the minimum wage increases overall consumer spending power and the amount of money circulating in the economy.” (Globe & Mail, 2019) A minimum wage increase is rather a stimulus to the local economy. This is because when low income earners gain money, they are more likely to spend their money in the local economy. On the contrary, if you put more money into the hands of wealthy people, it goes back into the bank. Or maybe they’ll spend money on a trip to another country. Therefore the rise in minimum wage should be seen as a benefit.

To conclude, there is always going to be this narrative of corporate interest over everything else. Whether you like it or not, the large corporations are the ones who control the media - they are able to push certain narratives that benefit themselves. Whereas, unless you’re in a union, the regular low-medium income worker’s narrative is not being pushed on the media. This is why we see most media articles in the interest of businesses rather than the interest of the vast majority of people. We can see this in Ontario, as the majority of people actually support the minimum wage increase. This article exposes how out of touch the media is with the everyday person.

Works Cited

(No Author Name Given). "News Coverage of Ontario's Minimum Wage Was Slanted Heavily Towards Business Interests." *Press Progress*. Feb. 2 2018.

<https://pressprogress.ca/news-coverage-of-ontarios-minimum-wage-increase-was-slanted-heavily-towards-business-interests/>

Thomas Rueters. "Ontario's minimum wage hike off to a rocky start as employers slash hours, benefits to compensate." *The Financial Post*. Jan. 9, 2018.

<https://financialpost.com/news/economy/corrected-minimum-wage-hike-has-rocky-start-in-canada-as-ontario-province>

Pete Evans. "Minimum wage hikes could cost Canada's economy 60,000 jobs by 2019." *CBC News*. January. 3, 2018.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/bank-of-canada-minimum-wage-1.4469912>

Selected Article

Brenda Bouw. "Small business owners brace for impact as Ontario minimum-wage hike takes effect." *The Globe and Mail*. Jan. 1, 2018.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-money/small-business-owners-brace-for-impact-as-ontario-minimum-wage-hike-takes-effect/article37465747/>