

*"who dares not offend, cannot be honest"*

# One Manitowaning Road

opinion

*editorial*

## *Services Board should maintain Island's 40 Jobs for Youth*

The three Manitoulin representatives on the District Social Services Administration Board (DSB) were put in an awkward position during last week's meeting when a request came from an outside DSB municipality requesting a share of the summer student subsidy funding that has, over the past six summers, been given exclusively to Manitoulin Island businesses.

DSB has been funded for 40 students, and 40 businesses have been able to request full subsidy on a summer student's wages from this fund. Students who have been sponsored in this way will not be eligible to be refunded the next year by the same business that employed them and received this subsidy.

This has been the only caveat for the program and the 40 student spots have annually been quickly snapped up by businesses applying for the subsidy.

Now, it would seem, the 40 student allotment may have to be shared throughout the entire DSB catchment area with communities that include: French River, Espanola, Killarney, Chapleau, Markstay-Warren and Gogama, among many others. This is especially ironic in that the DSB's student subsidy allotment is rising from 40 to 80.

But now that the number of subsidized places has been increased, the door has been opened for the DSB to determine the method of allocating these positions within the district, and there may be no guarantee of a particular allotment for Manitoulin.

The irony is that, when the number of subsidized jobs was 40 (until last summer) it was a program designed for Manitoulin Island.

The thing is, many, many Manitoulin Island businesses some years can only afford a summer student because of this subsidy.

Fern Dominelli, CAO of the DSB, suggested that perhaps Manitoulin could maintain a guaranteed 40 of the positions while some of the other members of the board, from the other areas within the DSB, felt the entire 80 positions should be spread among the businesses in this very large catchment area, with a 20-spot allotment for Manitoulin Island.

The Manitoulin DSB representatives, clearly feeling on the spot,

did not disagree strongly with this notion put forward by their colleagues and, instead, the group opted to see if the sponsoring ministry would itself designate a guaranteed number of the subsidized student positions for Manitoulin.

Of all the communities within the DSB catchment area, Manitoulin is the only region without traditional Northern Ontario resource industries (forestry, sawmill, paper mills, mining) that create well-paying summer jobs for students.

Our businesses, many of them, rely on what seems to be an ever-shorter summer tourist season and so the ability to hire students subsidized in this way in many cases means the difference between providing first-rate service and having an overworked proprietor trying his or her best to do everything, plus serve the public.

Manitoulin must be guaranteed to maintain the status quo at 40 sponsored student jobs.

In the scheme of things, we are not playing on a level playing field within the DSB in the first place, responding to the issue of proposed fair distribution of the subsidized positions.

Most of the other communities within the DSB area have more options for viable student employment than does Manitoulin. No other community within the DSB catchment zone relies so heavily on a short tourism season, but on Manitoulin, that is an important mainstay of our economy.

The point was made, repeatedly, during last week's DSB board meeting that the 40 subsidized student placements that have been heretofore dedicated to Manitoulin Island businesses have been over-subscribed each year since the program's inception; there has been far more demand than supply.

This alone should tell those who control the purse strings on this endeavor that Manitoulin deserves to maintain what it already has, and has had for six summer seasons.

We are certain that the colleagues on the DSB of the three Island representatives will understand when they raise a strong and united lobby to maintain the 40 student subsidies for this area.