

## Wages doubled for some bosses

Defenders of increases say top jobs require big salaries to attract best talent

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Hamilton's top public sector salaries have more than doubled in the last decade.

The increases were three times the raises given to the average worker.

Ontario's minimum wage has gone up 39 per cent between 1999 and 2009 while the Canadian average hourly wage went up by 36 per cent.

In comparison, Hamilton's three top paying public sector jobs -- the two hospital bosses and the president of McMaster -- went up 108 per cent to 126 per cent.

That is a jump to nearly \$706,000 in wages and taxable benefits in 2009 from \$339,000 in 1999 for the president and CEO of Hamilton Health Sciences -- the top paying public sector job in Hamilton for the last decade.

"I think the salaries are out of hand," said Paul Miller, MPP for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

The NDP has been pushing the province to cap public sector salaries at \$400,000.

"The CEOs continue to cash in while we're told to bite the bullet," he said. "It's mind boggling."

**But experts in human resources says it's a simple case of supply and demand.**

**"It's the competitive nature of the business," said Damian Borrelli, CEO of Hamilton human resources consulting firm PeopleRight. "You want to attract the best candidates and keep the best candidates. That tends to draw the price up."**

Public salary disclosure each spring has become as much about staying competitive as it is about being accountable.

St. Joseph's Healthcare and Hamilton Health Sciences both say they take a close look at the lists to make sure their top salaries are high enough to attract and retain the best.

"We never want to be lagging the market," said Louise Taylor Green, vice-president of human resources and organizational development at HHS. "We really want to be attracting the most talent we can to come to serve health care in our community. We know in order to attract and retain the best talent, you have to provide competitive compensation."

Not all top jobs have kept up with health care.

The city manager job still makes the municipal top five at \$196,961 as it did in 1999. But the pay is now topped by the medical officer of health and one of her associates.

Dr. Elizabeth Richardson has had one of the city's biggest public sector raises with her salary skyrocketing 156 per cent over the last 10 years to \$275,568 from \$107,624.

In comparison, the city manager's pay has gone up 23 per cent.

Pay for both the chief of police and the superintendent of education for the public school board have gone up around 50 per cent since 1999.

The differences in increases have to do with how hard someone is to replace, said Borrelli.

"It goes in waves. It's a matter of how many qualified people are out there now."

One of the biggest bumps for hospital CEOs has been in taxable benefits.

Murray Martin at HHS gets more than \$80,000 in taxable benefits compared to the nearly \$11,000 Scott Rowand got in 1999.

Kevin Smith at St. Joseph's gets more than \$70,000 in taxable benefits while Allan Greve got just under \$4,000 a decade ago.

Taxable benefits include perks like extended health care, life insurance, long-term disability, accidental death, pension contributions, dental and car allowance.

McMaster University President Peter George has had his taxable benefits go down slightly but his salary is up 123 per cent to \$536,474.

While Miller and some MPPs call for an end to increases, Borrelli says leaders like George are worth it.

"The price they're paid pales in comparison to the value they bring to an organization."