



Sticker Shock Nation. A City Grocery Store Won't Fix It

By Dale Jodoin
Columnist

Call it SSN. Sticker Shock Nation. That's where we're living now. You don't walk into a grocery store anymore, you brace for it. You move slow, scan the tags, and hope you're wrong. You're not. The total climbs before you even hit the till. You cut items without thinking. Meat goes back. Extras disappear. You start choosing what to leave behind. This is the new habit, and it's settled in. Across Canada, people are stretched thin. Rent is up. Gas is up. Food is up. It all piles on. Paychecks don't move the way they used to. You can see it in the lines at Daily Bread Food Bank. More people show up every week. Not just people with no income. Working people. Seniors. Families with kids.

Before we go further, clear this up. You'll hear that city run grocery stores in the United States failed because of theft. That claim doesn't hold. Most of the closures people point to were private stores, not government ones. In places like San Francisco, large retailers such as Target shut down locations after losses grew too high. Theft was part of it, along with high costs and lower traffic. The lesson is simple. When losses keep stacking up, even big, experienced companies can't keep a store open.

Now look at what's being talked about here. In Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, the idea is a city run grocery store. Sell food at lower prices. Give people relief. It sounds good. It feels like action. But it skips a hard truth. Running a grocery store is not simple. You need trucks, coolers, shelves, staff, and a steady flow of food. Prices change fast. Food goes bad. Profit is thin even when things go right. Chains like Loblaw Companies Limited, Sobeys, and Metro Inc. have size and experience. They buy in bulk. They run tight systems. And even they feel the pressure.

So ask the simple question. If it's hard for them, how will a city do it better? And if it doesn't work, who pays? You do. When a public store loses money, that loss does not vanish. It comes from taxes. There is no quiet loss. It shows up on your bill. It may not come right away, but it comes over time, in small ways that add up.

Now look at what's happening inside stores. More items are locked up. Meat, cheese, baby formula. Things that used to sit on open shelves now sit behind glass. There's a reason. Theft. It's not the main driver of high prices, but it adds pressure. Stores lose goods every day. Rising prices mean some people steal food to turn into cash for resale. A pack of beef isn't just dinner anymore. That changes how people act, and it changes how stores run. Staff see the same faces come in. Someone takes something, gets stopped, and then comes back days later. There are reasons. Small charges. Busy courts. Limits in the system. But on the store floor, it feels simple. Nothing sticks.

When that feeling spreads, things shift. More cameras. More guards. More locked shelves. Less trust. And once trust goes, everything gets harder. Prices creep up to cover losses. Stores spend more on security. Good customers pay more and get treated like suspects. It wears people down. It changes how people shop, and it changes how they feel about the place they rely on.

Now take that same problem and drop it into a city run store. Does it go away, or does it follow the same path? If private companies are already dealing with rising losses and tight margins, a public store will face the same pressure on day one. The difference is who carries the risk. In a public model, the losses don't sit with a company. They land on taxpayers. That means the bill doesn't stop at the checkout. It shows up in taxes, fees, and cuts somewhere else.

This isn't about blaming people who are struggling. Anyone can see how tight things are. People are trying to eat, keep a roof over their heads, and get through the week. But a system still has to work. Prices have to make sense. Rules have to be clear. And those rules have to mean something. Right now, they don't feel like they do. Prices keep climbing. Trust keeps slipping. And the answer being offered is to build a new store and hope it fixes it. Hope isn't a plan.

That's the risk. If the same problems stay in place, high costs, weak control, and uneven follow up, the result will be the same. Only the bill will change hands. From the store to the taxpayer. Once that shift happens, it's hard to turn back. Cities will not close these stores easily. Losses will be covered year after year. What starts as help can turn into a long bill that never goes away.

So before we build something new, fix what we already have. Push for fair prices people can trust. Make sure rules are clear and applied the same way every time. Support stores so they can stay open without locking half their shelves. That's where the real work is.

People don't need a new sign on a building. They need to walk into a store, pick up what they need, and not feel that knot in their stomach when they check the price. Right now, too many do. And until that changes, no new store, public or private, is going to fix what people feel when they shop. They feel alone in it, and they're tired of carrying it.



7 Expectations Job Seekers Need to Let Go Of

By Nick Kossovan

Expectations are resentments in the making.

Many job seekers today enter the job market with an inflated sense of entitlement, expecting employers to prioritize their self-interests over their own. Instead, they're experiencing a fiercely competitive environment where emotions are decimated, and proving your value to an employer's profitability is your only currency for getting hired. The sooner you realize that the world owes you nothing—not a job, not a reply, and definitely not a career built around your "passions"—the sooner you'll start working strategically on your job search. Success doesn't come from expecting what you think you deserve, which, as I mentioned, is nothing; it's achieved by what you're willing to accept—akin to Rocky Balboa's "You gotta be willing to take the hits!"—by maintaining a more resilient mindset than the job seekers you're competing against, who, for the most part, are busy whining about employers' hiring practices. Job search success in today's job market requires a disciplined focus on what you can control and an indifference to what you can't. It's imperative to let go of the following expectations:

Expectation of Communication

Silence is communication.

You submitted your résumé, had a second interview, and then silence. Ghosting is no longer a breach of etiquette; instead, it's become a social norm. Today, recruiters and hiring managers conservatively receive over 500 applications per role and therefore need to rely on technology that reduces candidates to data points. Silence isn't poor manners or unprofessional; it's the message. Socially or professionally, ghosting is regarded as an efficient way for someone to let you know they've moved on, and you should do the same.

Expectation of Feedback

In a litigious society like ours, expecting feedback is naive. An employer giving feedback to a candidate they didn't select risks liability issues. In an era of 'strip-mall lawyers' looking for a payday, a single wrong word about 'culture fit' can lead to a discrimination lawsuit. A prudent strategy to avoid giving candidates ammunition for a lawsuit is to refrain from providing feedback to rejected candidates.

Expectation of a Fast Hiring Process

Corporate bureaucracy is a slow, grinding machine, and the cost of a bad hire, both culturally and financially, is exorbitant. As bad actors flood the job market with AI-generated résumés and exaggerated qualifications, employers are conducting more due diligence than ever.

"Hiring is not a democratic process; it is a risk-mitigation exercise. Companies would rather leave a seat empty for six months than fill it with a liability." — Lars Schmidt, Founder of Redefine Work. If you're frustrated by waiting, remember that the employer cares about protecting its culture and bottom line, not your bills.

Expectation You Don't Have to Sell Yourself

The belief that your "experience" speaks for itself is a form of laziness. Job searching is a sales activity; an interview is a sales meeting. Your résumé isn't a trophy case; it's a marketing brochure. It's not what you did that matters to employers; it's what you can do for them by the end of the next quarter. Unless you clearly explain in your résumé, LinkedIn profile, and especially during interviews, how you'll positively impact the employer's business to make it more profitable, you should expect a lengthy job search.

Expectation of Human-Only Reviews

Complaining about Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) is like complaining about the weather; it's pointless and changes nothing. AI is a necessity for companies to sift through the thousands of mostly unqualified applications they receive. "AI isn't the enemy of the job seeker; it is the filter for the unprepared. If you can't speak the language of the machine, you'll never get the chance to speak to a human." — Jan Tegze. When the application process shifted from a handshake to an online portal, the "human touch" vanished. It's what it is.

The Expectation of Guaranteed Networking Help

No one is obligated to help you. Today, thanks to digital fatigue and heavy workloads, a stranger owes you nothing; someone you've neglected to stay in touch with owes you even less. When you haven't consistently added value to a relationship, don't expect to receive a favour when you need one. With a sense of entitlement widespread, most job seekers think pestering strangers and people they've lost contact with for "a job" counts as networking. Don't be that job seeker! Having expectations of others is more than just a recipe for chronic resentment and anger; it's a self-imposed hindrance that anchors you in a victim mentality. You can't change how a recruiter, hiring manager, or anyone else behaves, and quite frankly, it's not your responsibility to try. Your only job is to manage your own behaviour. The biggest obstacle between you and a paycheque isn't how employers choose to hire or being ghosted; it's your expectations. Conducting a job search with the expectation that employers will acknowledge your potential, without any effort on your part, to boost their profitability or hire you on your terms, is why many job seekers are frustrated and angry. The most effective job search strategy a job seeker can adopt is to lower their expectations of what's out of their control to nearly nothing and expect more from themselves.

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