# Report From Queen's Park



Julian Reed MPP, Halton-Burlington

The general public and media seem to place less emphasis on the provincial government than activities at the federal and municipal level, yet under the British North America Act, the province has responsibility for many areas which affect us all in our daily lives - health. education, highways, labour, agriculture, property and civit rights, and the administration or justice, to name but a few. The municipalities are also under the jurisdiction of the provincial government.

Twentieth Century government influence has penetrated into many areas previously: considered the concern of the private sector, the individual. and although the administrative or executive side of government has increased enormously, until recently the legislative aspects changed very little since Confederation. Former Premier John Robarts had a very businesslike approach to government, and he initiated many changes - longer sessions of the Legislature, provision for the important and special needs of opposition

parties, for instance. By the 1970s the administrative-legislative imbalance had reached the point where some people considered the Ontario Legislature little more than a rubber-stamp for decisions already made by the Cabinet or the bureaucracy - a situation aggravated by the strong majority of the Conservative Party after the 1971

election. In June 1972 the Camp Commission on the Legislature was appointed, which subsequently expressed concern for the "decline of the Legislature as an institution of unchallenged strength and independence", and the bellef that the revitalization of the Legislature would be possible only if action could be taken to alleviate to some degree "the constituency syndrome - the bellef that the priority role of the Member is to look after his "case load" rather than to be. in terms of priorities, a

legislator and a scrutinizer of

government spending."

Constituency problems with which MPPs are asked to assist have increased in accordance with the complexity of government and public awareness of the extent to which elected officials are in a position to act as Ilaison agents between the people and officialdom. Members help consituents unravel the proverblal red tape with respect to everything from birth certificates to Old Age Pension payments; Workmen's Compensation; Family Benefits, OHIP coverage virtually anthing involving the Provincial Government. In addition, people seldom differentiate between the provincial and federal spheres when they are in need of help, and we find ourselves dealing with Unemployment Insurance, Immigration problems, etc. in co-operation with our federal counterparts in Ottawa.

In addition, Members spend considerable time making representations to the various Ministries and Ministers of the Government about matters of local importance in the home riding - highways, hospitals, sub-divisions, schools, recreational facilities, environmental problems and so on. As a result of the tremendous growth in the scope and quantity of Members' responsibilities, services to the MPPs have improved in recent years. More secretarial and support services are available at Queen's Park and as of February 1st, 1976, local "Constituency Officers" will be established and paid for by the Legislative Assembly. These officers should help Members to deal with the problems of their constituents.



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