

Farm income, tax credits

The provincial government has resubmitted legislation on Farm Income Stabilization, and the Liberal Party supports the proposed new plan in principle, although we are opposed to some aspects, which we hope the government will agree to amend.

We want an amendment to increase substantially insurance for farmers, and so do the N.D.P., and there are two other amendments which we consider important. The bill is a very complex piece of legislation, and the minister must, for example, explain exactly what he means by the phrase "cash-cost" which is crucial to the intent of the legislation.

The government bill amended so that the degree of stabilization or insurance will be based on a farmer's full cost of production of a commodity rather than just part of the cost. Essentially the bill is designed to guarantee Ontario farmers at least 95 percent of the average price of their products in the previous five years, and would supplement a federal government scheme giving 90 percent coverage on some products.

The government bill refers to "cash-costs", we use the term actual costs, while the N.D.P. prefer the term current costs. The minister has stated that if what the Opposition Parties have in mind is that the bill should be based on full production costs, then we're heading toward incentive pricing and that's what we don't want. Nor do the farmers want it.

Jack Riddell, Liberal M.P.P. (Huron-Middlesex) has stated that we have been led to believe Mr. Newman would support our amendments "through discussions I had with the Minister."

Donald MacDonald, the N.D.P. agriculture critic, accompanied by Stephen Lewis expressed the party's intention to vote against the farm legislation, saying "I would be delighted to fight an election on this issue."

The minister of revenue has announced that the extended audit of \$1,000 Ontario first homebuyer grants will concentrate on groups where the suspected fraud is highest. The government had intended to end the audit of the first payment under the grant scheme December 31st, but has yielded to Opposition pressure and decided to continue on a reduced scale. During the extended audit, investigators trying to recover money for the Government will check names of claimants against lists of those who claimed provincial property tax credits before 1975 as an indication of recipients who had previously owned houses. They will likely single out recipients who made large down payments, and might also check on those who received the \$1,000 cheques but did not claim the first of two supplementary \$250 cheques to which they are entitled if they are still living in the same houses.

The Ontario labour ministry is looking into the question of language rights for workers in private industry, said the minister of labour, replying to a question from James Breithaupt, Liberal House Leader, who complained that Inco Ltd. in Sudbury allows English only as a working language.

He said the company's 8,000 workers drawn from the area which is 30 percent French-speaking must pass examinations, printed in English, use English safety manuals and can lodge grievances in English only. The minister said she was unaware of the problem until the case of a French-speaking worker who complained about the grievance procedure was brought to her attention. Later in the interview, the labour minister said there is no legislation at present to guarantee language rights for workers in private industry.

In reply to a question from Liberal Leader Stuart Smith, the minister of community and social services said this week that he has asked for a report on a woman who died accidentally while waiting to be transferred to a centre for the mentally retarded. The woman in question was a patient at the Queen Street Mental Health Centre in Toronto since 1960, and died after scalding herself. She died November 2, of a cardiac arrest after the incident. The inquest is set for February 9, and a "Globe and Mail" editorial stressed the need for the protective requirements for nursing homes do not apply to mental hospitals, and how many retarded persons who are not mentally ill are still in residence at the Queen Street Centre.

The Ontario government has earmarked \$8 million from Wintario lottery funds toward the cost of repairing or replacing unsafe municipal arenas which were closed down this summer. However, the minister has admitted that this may not be enough, and that he may have to devote a large proportion of this year's Wintario grants to the arena program, putting other worthy applications "on the back burner". Ontario labour ministry inspectors have already singled out 181 arenas as being unsafe in their crackdown campaign.



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