

Duignan stands behind new provincial budget

By JANET BAINE
Staff writer

Ontarians have been hit hard by the provincial budget announced Wednesday.

A family of four with a single-income of \$60,000 will pay \$355 more annually in personal income tax, or \$7 a week, according to Finance minister Floyd Laughren's calculations.

People will get a double whammy starting July 1, because the 3 per cent pay cheque deductions will begin then, but deductions will be retroactive to the beginning of the year. There will also be a new tax on car and home insurance, on parking, fees for things like marriage licences will go up and even beer that you make yourself in stores will be slapped with a tax of 26 cent a litre. Laughren plans to raise \$1.6 billion through tax hikes to wrestle the deficit down to \$9.2 billion.

On the other hand, retail sales tax stays the same — except it's expanded to cover

more items — and there's no additional "sin" taxes on cigarettes, alcohol and gas.

North Halton MPP Noel Duignan stands firmly behind his government's attempt to get the financial house in order.

"It may be a lot of money, but where are we going to get the money to pay for the services?" Duignan said. "I believe this budget is fair, it is balanced, given the times that we have."

Duignan argues that his government has been fair, rather than taking a "slash and burn" approach, and cutting expenses equally, right across the board.

"We have a province to run and we're elected to govern all the people, not just some of them," he said when it was pointed out that



NOEL DUIGNAN



BOB MALCOLMSON

some unions have withdrawn their support of the NDP.

Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce president Bob Malcolmson thinks the government is taking the wrong approach.

"They need the money, for each dollar increase in taxes, they say they've cut expenses by \$4, but I don't think they've done that," he said. "If they lowered sales taxes it would get people to spend. If they created jobs (through incentives to the private sector), they'd get more income tax. They haven't figured that out and they can't keep going the way they're going."

This is the third time Premier Bob Rae's government has tried to get the deficit under control, and the past two times they failed, Malcolmson noted.

At the same time the social contract discussions are continuing, and Malcolmson wonders how the government can finalize the budget with this agreement still up in the air.

Businesses with less than \$5 million will be exempt from a new corporate minimum tax, but Malcolmson said this isn't much help to small businesses.

"There is no incentive for small businesses, that is the crutch of the Canadian economy, really," he said. These incentives are needed to create jobs and turn the economy around, he believes.

Everyone in Ontario will pay a new 5 per cent tax on car and home insurance and local State Farm agent Lora Greene thinks the government's timing couldn't be worse.

"People still have to buy it, but it's really poor timing on the government's part to add tax increases to insurance," she said.

The fledgling brew-your-own beer business which is getting on its feet in Ontario will also be affected.

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News

Digest

Alarms down

By the end of April, the Halton Hills Fire Department responded to 157 fire alarms, resulting in \$274,370 worth of destroyed property. Only one person had been injured in a fire so far this year, and there have been no fatalities. At the same time last year, there were 189 alarms and \$693,050-worth of damage, with three people injured and no fatalities.

GO no more

GO Transit's board has approved of the cancellation of the Guelph/Acton train. The cancellation was put on hold at a May 14 meeting, but after GO Chairman Lou Parsons met with George Dadamo, parliamentary assistant to Minister of Transportation Gilles Pouliot, a decision was made to go ahead with scheduled the cuts, scheduled for July 3.

Bang-O-Rama

Celebrate the holiday weekend at Bang-O-Rama at the Georgetown Fairgrounds. See page 6 for a schedule of events.

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A job well done

Longtime Red Cross volunteer Erica Thompson (right) was honored Monday night at the annual meeting of the Georgetown and district branch of the Canadian Red Cross Society with the presentation of a citation from Red Cross Ontario Division president Lesley Jarrett. Erica has served as Blood Chairperson for 26 years, organizing numerous blood donor clinics in that time. Although she is stepping down as chairperson, she will continue to convene one clinic a year.

TED BROWN Independent/Free Press

Pomeroy to remain on the job

By ROB KELLY

Special to the Independent/Free Press

Peter Pomeroy will tough it out for as long as possible as Halton regional chairman despite under a cloud of four corruption-related criminal charges.

"I will not be offering my resignation," Pomeroy told Halton regional council at its regularly scheduled meeting Wednesday in Oakville. "I will continue to discharge my obligations to Halton in an honorable manner."

Pomeroy convened a private meeting with councillors immediately prior to the afternoon full council session. At the private gathering, there were only "one or two negative comments" amid general support for his decision to carry on as chairman, he said.

Discussion about having Halton Region pay his legal fees also surfaced, the regional chairman said, but he threw cold water on that idea, at least for now.

"It was my choice that the legal fees will not be paid (by Halton)," Pomeroy pointed out. "I don't believe personally that the public should have to consider that as an option."

However, since he is a Halton regional employee and the charges relate to his activities as an elected official, "there may be some kind of legal obligation to cover me in this case. At some point in time the issue may have to be addressed. But it certainly isn't now."

In Newmarket, Mayor Ray Twinney faces charges similar to those against Pomeroy, although the cases are unrelated. Newmarket council is paying Twinney's legal expenses until a verdict is determined. If he's found guilty, the town plans on getting the money back.

Asked if he felt his position as regional chairman has been weakened, Pomeroy replied, "I don't think there's any question this is going to hamper my ability to do the job."

See SUPPORT, page 8

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