

PLAN TO CONFER ON TORONTO BILL TURNED DOWN

Disposition Rests With Committee on Private Legislation, Not With Ministers, Lamport Told

TIME INSUFFICIENT

Disposition of Toronto's application for special legislation rested with the Legislature Private Bills Committee, and not the ministry, Hon. Eric Cross, Minister of Municipal Affairs, yesterday told the members in opposing the suggestion that the city bill be discussed in private conference before it was submitted next Thursday to the committee.

The suggestion was made by Allan Lamport (Lib., St. David), that the work of the committee would be facilitated if all the features of the bill were first reviewed in conference by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Hon. Gordon Conant, Attorney-General, the Toronto members and any other members of the committee who wished to join the discussion.

The bill was scheduled for yesterday's meeting of the committee, but it was held over until Thursday when it became apparent to members there was not sufficient time to deal with it, particularly when it was intimated that certain sections, particularly one asking authority to remove obstructions in the vicinity of the Island airport, would be opposed.

It was hinted also that there might be considerable committee objection to the application for validation of the anti-noise by-law—a regulation, which, incidentally, did not pass committee stage last year.

C. M. Colquhoun, city solicitor, agreed with Mr. Cross that little could be gained through a conference. The sections of the bill, he said, were clear in terms and had been approved by the council.

\$100,000,000 Debt Rise Laid to Hepburn Regime

The charge that the Hepburn Government, in direct contradiction to its leader's pre-election promises, had pyramided Ontario's debt structure in the past four years to the point where budget surpluses were largely "imaginary" was voiced in the Ontario Legislature yesterday by L. M. Frost (Con., Victoria) in his address as financial critic for the Opposition.

Basing his criticism of the 1939 budget address on the contention that it did not present a true picture of Ontario's financial situation, Mr. Frost marshalled quotations and statistics to illustrate the "alarming increase" of \$100,000,000 in the province's gross debt since the Hepburn administration came into power.

In an analysis of the budget speech, which lasted more than an hour, the member for Victoria presented his case with an "impartiality" that won from the Premier an expression of warm appreciation and admission of an error on his part made in the course of an earlier exchange of words across the floor of the House.

"Bookkeeping Feat."

Mr. Frost charged that analysis of the budget showed the surplus of \$150,000 estimated by the Premier and Provincial Treasurer was achieved solely by a "feat of bookkeeping," and that a true picture would show the province faced with an acknowledged deficit of \$6,769,026 for the year ending March, 1939.

He cited statements made by Mr. Hepburn in pre-election addresses, emphasizing the necessity for a reduction of debt, and then quoted figures to show that the debt had been increased "by leaps and bounds" under the Liberal administration.

"The net debt of Ontario now stands at about \$475,700,000," he declared, "an increase since Oct. 31, 1934, of \$117,200,000. This is an increase of net debt for the year just closed of \$125,000 for every working day."

Reducing the debt figures to a per capita basis for purposes of comparison, Mr. Frost employed an illustration which had been first used by the Premier in his 1934 election campaign. At that time Mr. Hepburn had said that the province's net debt had increased \$3.53 per capita per year between 1904 and 1934.

"Let us apply the Premier's test to his own financing," he said. "The per capita net debt in 1934 was \$100.53. On March 31, 1938, this figure had risen to \$121.75. At that time the Hepburn Government had been in office three years and nine months, making an average increase of \$5.65 per head per year."

Attacks Income Boost.

Mr. Frost challenged the Prime Minister's statement that increases in provincial taxation were justified by corresponding decreases in the municipal burden. The assumption of social service costs by the province, along with the one-mill subsidy, he said, had amounted to nearly \$12,000,000. Municipal taxation, however, had not been relieved by a fraction of that figure, he said.

From 1929 to 1935, he said, ordinary provincial revenues derived from taxation had been under fifty-five million dollars per year, but in 1936, under the Hepburn Government, this figure had jumped to sixty-five millions. In 1937 the

amount was seventy-seven millions and last year eighty-six millions. The 1939 figure was estimated at more than ninety million dollars.

"In other words," he said, "the province has increased its demands on the public purse by \$40,000,000 and municipalities have received assistance amounting to only \$12,000,000."

The government's "artificial surplus," he maintained, had been obtained by improper application of highway revenues to meet expenditures in other departments.