

Report from Queen's Park

\$60 million program comes at the right time

by Allan McLean, MPP Simcoe East
Many Ontario farmers facing financial difficulties will be helped by a new \$60 million program announced by Agriculture Minister Lorne Henderson just before Christmas.

The details of the program are laid out in the report of the farm action committee. That committee was established by the Premier to review the report the Ontario Federation of Agriculture made to the Legislature in November.

The farm action committee's report made some excellent recommendations which are now being implemented in the new program.

Eligible producers may receive help through one or more of the following mechanisms:

- The bank may defer interest for a

period of six months. The government will guarantee the deferred interest, and the banks have agreed not to compound it.

- The producer may receive an interest reduction grant on floating rate bank loans of up to five percentage points for a period of one year, however, interest rates will not be reduced below 12 per cent.

- The Province may guarantee a new operating line of credit for a producer. The line of credit would be provided by the banks at the prime rate.

There are four criteria for eligibility for the new program.

First of all, the producer must have a remaining equity of between 10 and 50 per cent in his farm assets, measured at current asset values. Second, the producer's interest and principal payments must exceed twenty per cent of

his operating costs.

Third, the producer must have realized receipts of more than \$25,000 in 1981 for food or tobacco products produced on his farm.

Finally, in the opinion of a local screening committee, the producer's enterprise must be viable in the long run.

The initial screening of producers will be done locally by a committee made up of the bank manager, the farmer's accountant and the local Provincial Agricultural representative.

This committee will create an assistance package tailored to the individual farmer.

The final decisions will be made by a provincial committee of three senior people: Peter Taylor, a former partner in Price Waterhouse Associates, Bob Sanderson, formerly the Manager of

Agriculture for the H. J. Heinz Company, and Ed Hutton, a farmer and member of the Farm Products Tribunal.

The program went into operation on Jan. 4, and local banks have the necessary application forms.

All the Ministry's farm management specialists, approximately 65 people, will be working on the program.

This program is directed at farmers who need adjustment or bridge financing to help them recover from current difficulties and carry on into the future. It is a bridging program, but the aim is long term.

The Ontario Government wants the producers who receive this assistance to be running full-time, fully productive, viable operations several years from now.

Questionnaire is first phase in getting feedback

In an effort to drum up interest in a Penetanguishene Merchants Association-Business Improvement Area (BIA) group similar to one already in place in Midland, a merchant's questionnaire is being circulated

to Penetanguishene shop-keepers this week. During the next few days merchants will be asked to fill out the questionnaire so that officials can get a feel for what merchants want in Penetanguishene as far

as starting up a fullscale BIA is concerned.

This is a sample of the questionnaire:

1. Do you feel that the present situation in the downtown needs to be improved upon?

If your answer is NO then do not proceed.

If your answer is YES then please complete the remainder of the questionnaire.

2. Do you feel that you know enough about a Business Improvement Area (B.I.A.) to make a decision on whether or

not to have one?

3. a) If YES to question No. 2, are you in favour of a B.I.A.?

3. b) If NO to question No. 2, please suggest the best ways in which we might inform you of

what a B.I.A. is and does.

4. If NO to question No. 3, would you be in favour of a stronger Merchant's Committee, where instead of several visits for money each year, you would be asked for one larger donation or several post-dated cheques.

5. If you are not in favour of either suggestion No. 3 or No. 4, would you indicate how you would like to see the downtown improved and who should do this improvement.

6. Any comments you would like to pass along to the present Merchant's Committee?

Will take a hard look at request

Town of Penetanguishene has requested that Midland consider entering into an agreement for joint use of the town's dispatching system for

a certain annual fee.

It was indicated that there is one module on the centracom system for police dispatching, whereas fire depart-

ment dispatching would have to be on the county frequency, much the same as Tay Township and Port McNicoll.

Midland Public Safety

Committee has recommended that Penetanguishene be considered for use of the town's dispatching system pending a report

from the fire and police departments in regard to total costs of extending such services to neighbouring municipalities.

December 'stats' tell important story

Last month Midland police investigated a total of 21 reportable and 19 non-reportable motor-vehicle accidents on town streets.

As a result of several of those mishaps, 11 persons suffered a variety of injuries.

The above information was contained in Police Chief Ernest Bates' December monthly report.

In other police news, officers here laid 32 charges last month under the Criminal

Code. As well they laid 10 charges under the Liquor Control Act and 110 under the Highway Traffic Act including 86 charges for speeding.

The chief's report also mentioned, 408 tags were issued in town for parking violations last month.

Last month,

municipal police investigated 387 complaints, served 30 summonses and laid 36 charges under local bylaws.

Chief to shop around

gets go-ahead to lease new unmarked vehicles

Police Chief Ernest Bates of Midland has received permission from council to contact local dealers so as to obtain quotations for leasing a new unmarked vehicle for an 18-month period.

It was noted at a recent public safety committee meeting, chaired by Deputy-reeve Bev Day, the 18 months is a change from the current two-year period due to the accumulation of too many miles on rented vehicles.

And in other news of interest to local tax-payers comes word that both the committee in particular and council in general had no hesitation in recommending the town approve maximum coverage under Workmen's Compensation for volunteer firefighters in the town.

A report from the Deputy-Treasurer, G. M. Morrison, indicated that effective January, 1982 the maximum coverage allowed under Workmen's Compensation has been increased to \$22,200.

The volunteer force is presently covered at \$18,500, costing the corporation \$659,534 per year.

To increase the coverage to the maximum allowed, the cost would be a total of \$791.43.

They responded to alarms

Midland firefighters in December responded to a total of 16 calls.

Nine of those were general alarms with both full-time and part-time volunteers answering the alarms.

As well the department answered seven "silent alarms." These are only answered by firefighters on duty at the fire hall.

During the month

local smoke-eaters also responded to four false alarms while during the same month provided medical assistance on two separate occasions.

Fire Chief Terry Lethbridge noted in his monthly report for December, the department spent \$2,318.16 during the month on overtime.

Much of that was eaten up fighting a 12-

hour three-alarm fire at Peoples Department Store in downtown Midland.

Total cost of overtime to the department in 1981 was set at \$12,432.42.

In other local fire department news, Chief Lethbridge's report shows, just over 69 hours of in-service training was conducted last month.

Familiar story for our policemen

discovering insecure premises

It is getting to be a familiar story for members of the Midland police force...finding premises insecure.

Last month police here in town discovered 10 premises.

During December they also con-

ducted 42 unoccupied house checks as part of their monthly routine.

And it appears crime took a bit of a holiday last month with police probing only two house break-ins and four shop break-ins.

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