



Lee and her friends

Santa Claus paid a visit Sunday to Midland Secondary School's Teachers' Children's Christmas

Party. That's Lee Wicksted pointing at her father who took this picture. —Photo by Andy Wicksted

Queen's Park Report
**Target,
 simply put,
 is inflation
 restraint**

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The Fall Sitting of the Ontario Legislature was convened nearly a month early this year, as you may recall, in order to allow the government enough time to deal with the inflation restraint package, Bill 179, without disrupting the entire fall schedule.

The objective of Bill 179 is to encourage economic recovery in Ontario by demonstrating equity and leadership through the introduction of wage and price restraints in the public sector.

Unfortunately, this worthwhile and needed bill has been stalled at every stage of its development by the two opposition parties. As a result, many other important bills have also been delayed.

Although the Liberals agreed with the bill when it was introduced, they and the NDP have held the bill up both in the House and in the Committee discussion stage through a series of delaying tactics which have accomplished absolutely nothing.

Three months of legislative time has been used as follows: more than 150 hours have been spent debating the bill. Debate was prolonged during second reading for more than 46 hours, and opposition speeches took up 42 of those hours. Following that, the bill was sent to Committee for public hearings, and the opposition parties overloaded the 35 hours allotted by encouraging representatives of repetitious groups to present separate briefs to the committee, each with essentially the same message.

Following the public hearings, the Opposition parties had agreed that the bill would receive the normal clause-by-clause examination in committee. Nevertheless, through filibustering, irrelevant procedural motions and deliberately time-consuming recesses, the opposition parties managed to use 42 hours of committee time on the bill without approving even the first clause.

In nine days, for example, there were 30 recesses in committee, each lasting 20 minutes. Twenty-four of those were for vote calls. Calling for a recorded vote means that all members of the committee must be in attendance. At every vote call, however, at least one opposition member would leave the room before the vote, forcing the 20 minute delay.

On Nov. 24, more than two months after the bill was introduced, the Government freed it from committee and sent it back to the House.

Again, it was the subject of delaying tactics. Finally, but with reluctance, the Government was forced to limit the debate on the bill, since the legislature had been hijacked by the opposition.

We feel that an important and vital piece of legislation was made the target of obstructionist, attention-getting tactics by the opposition parties. I do not believe that parliamentary democracy is well served by such behaviour.

Each of the opposition parties has a new leader this year, but their performance in dealing with Bill 179 would indicate that responsibility to the people of Ontario is not an issue with either of them.

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