

# Report from Queen's Park

by George W. Taylor  
Simcoe Centre  
Solicitor General

Traditionally, at the end of the year, the House "prorogues" or ends its session to begin again in the spring with

a new Throne Speech and a fresh start.

This year, however, this is not the case. To say the least, 1982 has been busy. We began our sittings in March and continued well past

the usual date for recess, sitting until early July.

We were recalled again in September, a full three weeks before the scheduled date, and sat into Christmas week. We are resuming our sittings on Jan. 17 for a few more weeks before the 1982 session can be officially finished.

During the spring sitting, many interesting and worthwhile Bills were passed.

Legislation was enacted to make child restraints mandatory in automobiles. Infants must now be buckled into federally-approved infant carriers, and toddlers into child seats.

Older children are required to wear lap belts. Another law was passed to require all Ontario school children to be immunized against measles, reubella, diphtheria, tetanus, polio and mumps.

The spring sitting also saw the introduction of the Ontario budget which contained measures to help homeowners, small business, and the unemployed. Corporate income tax on small business was removed for two years. This will help some 60,000 small businesses this year by returning about \$250 million to them.

Budget job creation measures committed \$171 million to the creation of 31,000 short-term jobs. The province participated in the federal provincial program which uses U.I.C. funds to create jobs for unemployed forestry and mining workers. And, scheduled repairs and additions to public buildings, highways, roads, bridges, and water and sewage treatment projects were speeded up with provincial funding.

Youth employment programs were stepped up to help one of the hardest hit sectors of our economy - the young people. The ongoing summer experience program was expanded, and a new winter version was created for disadvantaged young people who have special difficulty breaking into the job market. Nearly 3,400 short-term jobs were created through the Tile Drainage and Farmstead Improvement Programs.

The Legislature was recalled in September to enact the Provincial Restraint Bill. As everyone is aware, the opposition, mainly the NDP, tried to block the Bill through filibusters and procedural wrangles and succeeded in delaying its passage until Dec. 15.

As a result, the whole legislative schedule was disrupted and many important pieces of legislation were held up for the entire sitting. To keep them from "dying on the order paper", the fate awaiting a Bill which is not passed or sent to Committee before the end of a session, the House recessed on Dec. 21 with plans to resume in January.

In November, the Treasurer announced further job creation measures. The Federal and Provincial Governments will spend \$280 million on job creation in Ontario over 18 months. Ottawa has allocated \$130 million and Ontario has committed \$150 million. We estimate that the program will create about 38,000 temporary jobs.

I would also like to take this opportunity of extending to all of you my very best wishes for a happy and prosperous 1983.

## Contact Community information 526-9333 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

by Irene Quesnelle, administrator.

The name Better Business Bureau is so widely recognized and its function apparently so well-defined that you may have called your local bureau for information yourself.

You probably asked how long a certain company had been in business and whether other consumers had had satisfactory dealings with it.

You thought that the BBB was a consumer-oriented group that would steer you clear of incompetent companies. In addition, you may have thought BBB members would give you better service. If you did, you were slightly mistaken.

The BBB doesn't bill itself as a complaints agency. Since its inception in Canada in 1928, the Better Business Bureau has not endorsed the products or services of its members. Nor does BBB membership mean that a company is any better than dozens of others. What it does mean is that a company, in order to gain membership, has agreed to handle any customer complaints brought to its attention by the BBB. If you have a problem with a member, the BBB can step in as mediator and attempt to resolve it.

However, the majority of people don't use the BBB as a complaint service. Heeding the BBB slogan to "investigate before you invest" 250 people an hour phoned the 16 BBBs across Canada in 1981 to find out about a particular company's record - that's over 522,000 enquiries.

They did so hoping to avoid shady operators, incompetent charlatans or plain rip-off artists.

The BBB keeps files on members (which range from grocery stores to multi-nationals) and non-members alike. Any business can check the information on file by calling the Bureau.

Non-members files often outnumber member files by ten to one. Though a non-member is under no obligation to respond to a request for information, this will usually get its name published in the Bureau's bulletin. A non-member need not respond to a complaint forwarded to it by the BBB, either. But companies know that unanswered complaints on their BBB file are bad for business.

The BBB claims its "company reliability reports" (as these are called) are an important and valuable tool for the consumer. This is true, indirectly, in that their existence is a disincentive to business to ignore complaints from consumers. But when you call the BBB and are told a company's record is satisfactory, don't think it means demonstrated competence. All it means is that the company has attempted (or is attempting) to clear up consumer complaints after a dispute has arisen.

If mediation is still ongoing, the record is still satisfactory. Very few complaints remain unresolved (even those against non-members) and only unresolved complaints enter the BBB record. If the company resists resolving the problem, it probably won't be on the BBB membership list.

Company reliability reports are incomplete, from CAC's point of view. Only written complaints are recorded.

If you complain, make sure you do it in writing. If you don't, you won't get anywhere and your complaint won't be recorded for the benefit of other consumers. As a courtesy, send a copy of your letter to the business in question as well as the BBB.

If you are still dissatisfied after BBB mediation, you can take your claim to provincial Small Claims Court if its value is small enough to fall within the court's jurisdictional limit. The price is right.

Register now for the Enjoying Your Preschooler Program beginning on Jan. 19, 1983 at the Civic Centre. The program consists of eight weekly sessions one and a half hours long and cost \$5. You may register at Contact Information Centre at 526-9333.

The solution to even the most difficult problem begins with the first step. If you have a problem take the first step, call Contact your community information centre today.

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