

Queen's Park Report

# Treasurer backs down on OHIP premiums

By ALF STONG  
MPP York Centre

The Provincial Treasurer has been forced by the combined Opposition Parties to back down on the major revenue-raising item in his March 7 Budget. It was the Treasurer's intention to raise the OHIP premiums by 37.5 per cent as of May 1, increasing single monthly coverage from \$16 to \$22, family coverage from \$32 to \$44.

In a statement in the

Legislature last Tuesday, the Treasurer announced that the premium increase will be reduced 50 per cent — to 18.75 per cent — resulting in a rate of \$19 a month for individuals and \$38 a month for families.

Had the originally planned premium increase been put into effect, some \$271 million in additional revenue would have been generated, to pay a higher share of the Province's health care costs. At the new lower

rate, premiums will only generate \$126 million more.

To make up the difference, the Treasurer announced that the Government will reduce spending by \$73 million, partly by means of a freeze on hiring in the civil service. Also, the Minister of Revenue has introduced a bill to raise the Corporate Income Tax one percentage point. This tax rate will now rise to 13 per cent for large companies and 10 per

cent for small firms.

It is anticipated that the hiring freeze will result in a reduction by attrition in the civil service of some 4,400 employees, at a saving of about \$35 million. Summer student jobs will not be affected.

The Ontario Development Corporation loan program will receive \$37 million instead of the proposed \$47 million. Highway construction will be reduced by \$5 million, government building construction by

\$2 million and university capital projects by \$4 million.

Loans by the Ontario Housing Corporation will be reduced by \$8 million and the Northern Ontario regional priority program will be cut by \$9 million, making up the total of \$73 million in spending cuts by the Government.

You will recall that in my last week's report I outlined the Liberal package of proposed alternatives to the Treasurer's originally

intended 37.5 per cent premium increase. We proposed a 6 per cent increase in the monthly premium, to \$17 single coverage and \$34 family coverage. This would have raised an additional \$51 million.

To compensate for this change in the Treasurer's projected revenues, we suggested using provincial lottery funds (\$38 million); reducing the Ministry of Health's budget estimates by \$50 million; forcing the

Government to implement its 4 per cent limit for salaries and wage settlements (\$67 million); cutting Government spending on services such as public relations, consultants and printing (\$24 million); and increasing the Corporate Income Tax by 0.5 per cent to 12.5 per cent for most businesses (\$41 million).

The Premier has agreed to our proposal that a select committee be established to study

alternative methods of financing health care in the long-term.

Two bills have been introduced by the Attorney-General which will amend the Judicature Act and the Juries Act, respectively. The amendment to the Judicature Act provides for bilingual trials in courts in designated counties and districts of Ontario, and would

enable these courts to receive evidence and conduct proceedings in the French language in appropriate cases.

The Juries Amendment Act is complementary to the Judicature Act and provides for the sheriff to identify the persons on the jury roll who are bilingual in French and English.

In the opinion of the Attorney General, these amendments represent a major step towards laying the "foundation for the further development and expansion of French language services in Ontario courts". Albert Roy, Liberal MPP (Ottawa East), who has — since 1973 — introduced Private Members' bills which would amend this legislation in a similar fashion, congratulated the Attorney-General on the bills, which he considered "an important step".

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According to Ministry of Education statistics, only 43.5 per cent of the 6,279 people who graduated from the 13 provincial teacher education institutions last year found work with public or separate schools. Elementary teachers were more fortunate than their high school counterparts: some 55 per cent of them are employed, compared with only 33 per cent of secondary graduates.

A report prepared by the Council of Ontario Universities states that twice as many teachers graduated in 1977 than were required by provincial schools and the market is expected to deteriorate before it begins to improve.

At the high school level, according to the report, the supply of teachers is three times the demand. More than 3,000 high school teachers graduated in 1977 and only slightly more than 1,000 were required. Projections outlined in the report indicate that the demand for high school teachers will fall to near zero by 1981 or 1982 and then increase slightly.

The demand for elementary teachers will, apparently, remain constant until early in the next decade, when it will begin to increase a little.

*Maj. Ballard to be guest this Sunday at Maple*

Major Norman Ballard of World War II fame, will be the guest preacher, Sunday, May 7 at a regimental parade to be held at St. Stephen's Church in Maple.

Veterans of the Old Third Battalion, Toronto Regiment, the Royal Regiment of Canada and allied units will gather for their annual Spring Regimental Parade, which is scheduled for 11 a.m.

Norman Ballard was a member of the 48th Highlanders of Canada during the war.

His fame came from the Italian campaign and most of the veterans in the parade will remember that well.



Welcome Wagon is planning a special party for all Brides-to-be who live in Aurora, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and area.

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