

Queen's Park Report

Budget increases consumers' problems

By ALF STONG
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Of course, the Provincial Budget was the big news this week. Although most of the tax increases introduced appear comparatively small in themselves, they collectively increase the average consumer already hard hit by inflation.

Gasoline tax has increased on 2 cents a gallon. Tax on diesel and aviation fuel has also increased, and for the first time, fuel used by railways will be taxed which may well lead to higher train ticket prices.

On July 1, Ontario Health Insurance Plan premiums will be raised, effective for the October benefit period. Single rate will rise from \$19 to \$20 a month; family rate will rise from \$38 to \$40 a month. Increased gasoline and fuel taxes will raise an extra \$79 million, and O.H.I.P. premiums another \$40 million in Provincial revenues.

Cigarette tax is up to 24 cents (from 22 cents) on a package of 20, and taxes on cigars and most pipe tobacco are also up slightly. For the first time, basic cable T.V. services and telecommunication services are subject to retail sales tax, which will add 50 cents a month to the average cable T.V. bill.

Land transfer tax is increased by 33 per cent and the general rate for corporation income tax is increased to 14 per cent from 13 per cent. However, manufacturing and processing industries, and mining, logging, farming and fishing operations are exempt from increase.

A 24 pack of beer will cost 10 cents extra (\$8.40 including deposit), and mark-ups on domestic liquor and wine will be raised, adding 20 cents to the cost of a 25 ounce

Mini-Skool here won't be investigated

The regional director of Mini-Skools Limited said she "doubts very much" that an investigation by the Ministry of Community and Social Services will affect the operation of one of the company's newly-opened centres in Richmond Hill

Jocelyn Cowern isn't sure what Minister Keith Norton means by an investigation into alleged improprieties and violations of provincial regulations. He hasn't mentioned what he is going to do, she said.

"All I can tell you is that we have a beautiful new facility in Richmond Hill that was only opened three weeks ago. Before it was opened, there was a government inspection and complete licensing of everything we offer," she said.

Mrs. Cowern hoped parents who have either registered their children at the new Mini-Skool or are thinking about it, won't be discouraged from doing so. She claimed all the staff were put through a full training program and the qualifications of each employee have been checked.

"Bev Bernier, an employee of one of the government agencies was there and gave a demonstration on fire procedures and prevention just before we opened up."

The new facility on Avenue Road in Richvale, is worth \$500,000.

Last week a number of allegations were made against other Mini-Skools operations (there are 14 in Ontario) including negligence which led to the deaths of two infants — one in Bramalea and one at a Centre on Dixon Road in Mississauga. Other charges include violation of child-staff ratios as set down by the Ontario Day Nurseries Act — in one case so severe, according to a Metro MPP — it also amounted to contravention of the child neglect section of the Child Welfare Act.

bottle of liquor or a 26 ounce bottle of wine. Some time this year, the Government will announce increases for various Provincial fees and licences.

The good news is that the 7 per cent retail sales tax on all candy, confections and soft drinks priced at 49 cents or less is eliminated, and the 10 per cent entertainment tax will apply to ticket prices of \$3.50 instead of \$3 as of July 1.

Sales tax has been removed from fabrics and clothing patterns as

well as smoke alarms for home use, aircraft and aircraft parts purchased by carriers licenced to provide commercial transportation, and materials bought by individuals to build their own solar heating systems will be eligible for a rebate of the sales tax up to a maximum of \$700.

Succession and gift taxes are eliminated, effective midnight on April 10.

The sales tax will be taken off kitchen machinery and

restaurant equipment at least until March 31, 1981. Purchases of furniture for use in tourist accommodation also will be exempt for the same period. The budget extends the present sales tax exemption on rates in Ontario tourist accommodation until 1981.

Also the top mining tax rate will be cut from 40 to 30 per cent and the basic exemption from mining tax raised from the first \$100,000 to the first \$200,000 of mining profits.

FEWER JOBS
Criticizing the

Provincial Budget, Liberal Finance Critic, David Peterson, M.P.P. (London Centre) said: "Overwhelmingly, the tax increases against the individual taxpayer are regressive, hitting low and middle income taxpayers hardest of all. In addition, these tax increases are uniformly inflationary simply increasing costs for consumers, so that this Government can continue to incur huge debts — now totalling almost \$3,600 for every worker in Ontario. "Supposedly, the

Budget is designed to: 1) help create more jobs — yet during the coming year fewer jobs will be created than last year; 2) provide incentives for economic growth and small business development — yet during the coming year real growth will be less than in preceding years; 3) continue responsible management of Provincial spending thereby helping to contain inflation — yet most of the tax increases will only contribute to the rate of inflation; 4) reduce the

deficit — yet the Treasurer projects the decline in his deficit on the basis of the assumption that his new venture capital program will either cost nothing, or cost so much that he will have to step in and limit the program"

In the last half of this past decade, expenditures of health, education and other social programs increased annually by an average of about 11 per cent, while the interest on our public debt has grown by an average of about 20

per cent every year. It is now costing us \$3.8 million a day to pay the interest on our debt — \$1.388 billion a year, 9.2 per cent of the current budget and an increase of 12.6 per cent over the last year.

HUGE DEBT
A decade ago, when the present Premier came into office, the funded debt stood at \$4.2 billion. It is now projected to be by the end of the fiscal year \$15.3 billion, an increase of 263 per cent. On a per capita basis, this amounts to an in-

crease from \$551 a person in 1970-71 to a projection of \$1,791 per person for this fiscal year. Both Opposition Parties will be giving responses to the Budget next week, including criticism of the governments Employment Development Fund for Ontario and the Small Business Development Corporations Plan intended to be an improvement upon The Venture Investment Corporations Registration Act of 1977, which the Government itself admits has been a failure.

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- Top sirloin**, 12 steaks, 5-oz. each. Only **\$3.33** per serving. **39⁹⁵** box
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- Barbeque shishkabobs**, 10 kabobs, 8-oz. each. Only **\$2.99** per serving. **29⁸⁰** box
- Breaded shrimp** — jumbo, fantail. Only **\$1.33** per serving. (4-oz.) **15⁹⁵** 3-lb. pkg.
- Scallops in batter**. Oven ready. A gourmet's delight! Only **\$1.50** per serving. (4-oz.) **11⁹⁵** 2-lb. pkg.

'Family Favorite' line

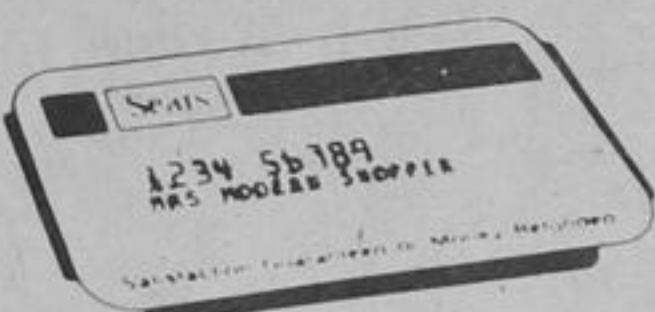
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