

Energy, big issue at Queen's Park

By ALF STONG
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SPENDING CUTBACKS

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has urged the provincial government not to yield to critics who say the quality of health care and social services is being hurt by cutbacks — and in fact to go further and cut spending increases at least in half, because "the real test is yet to come".

In a brief to the Ontario Cabinet, the Chamber stated: "Virtually every creditable authority is saying government spending must increase at a rate less than the real growth in the economy."

On the other hand, a crowd of about 2,000 angry people protested at Queen's Park against cutbacks in services which hurt Ontario's children.

ONGOING ENERGY DEBATE
Energy continues to be a major topic of discussion at Queen's Park, as it is elsewhere. Premier Davis rejected opposition pleas for a resolution to be sent by the entire Legislature to Ottawa, urging that the price of oil be kept down. Liberal MLA James Breithaupt had asked for an emergency debate to pass such a resolution, because a large increase will hurt consumers and probably spur inflation. The Premier responded that the federal government is already aware of Ontario's position, and opposition parties had made their cases clear in an earlier debate on the energy question.

It seems highly likely that Ontario Hydro will only be allowed to build one more nuclear power station this century, instead of the four it wants, because members of the Legislature's select committee on Hydro affairs don't think they are necessary. The committee has accepted a staff report suggesting that the demand for electricity in Ontario will grow by only two to three per cent a year, instead of the 4.7 per cent predicted by Hydro.

A second committee recommendation is expected to the effect that there be a delay of four to six years in construction of the proposed four-reactor Darlington nuclear plant.

Ontario Hydro has shelved indefinitely its plans to build a \$25 million switching station in downtown Toronto, ending a nine year fight against opposition by residents.

However, Hydro has attributed this move to electrical conservation rather than the residents' protests, because load growth for the city is considerably lower than forecasts made in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

They were concerned about program cuts in special education and remedial English for immigrant students, reduction of mental health services for about 750 children, and the effects of budget cuts on Children's Aid Societies.

WELFARE MONEY

The Minister of Community and Social Services has attributed the recovery of improperly paid welfare money to the introduction last year of the eligibility review program, which so far has cost the Ministry \$1 million to operate.

More than \$4.5 million has been regained over the past year through the review which is particularly geared to catching welfare recipients who are no longer eligible for an allowance, or husbands of recipients who are in arrears of court-ordered payments.

It can also pick up on administrative blunders by the Ministry that result in over-payments on welfare cheques.

RESIDENT FISHING LICENCES

The Ontario Cabinet has postponed plans for a resident fishing licence.

Currently, only non-residents must buy a licence to fish.



Sign of the times

The Wheel of the Zodiac hanging prominently in a junior division classroom, was a great hit for students at Roselawn Public School. Each sun sign showed the zodiac symbol, characteristics and class

member born under the familiar signs. Students were given to understand that children are the same — all over the world. (Liberal Photo by Shaaron Hay)

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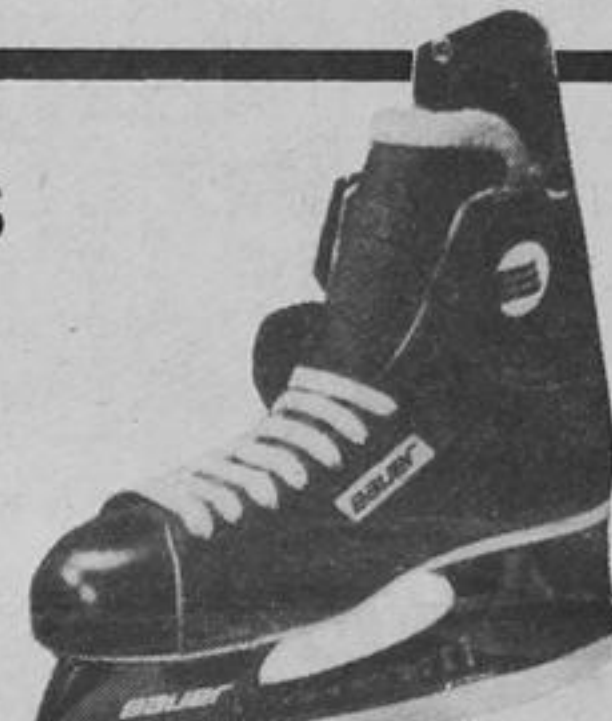
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