

\$100 Tory gift dubbed 'cheap stocking stuffer'

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

Local poverty advocates are calling the Tories' \$100 Christmas gift to poor working families with young children little more than a cheap stocking stuffer.

"I guess something is better than nothing," said Jack MacFadden, president of Bradford-based Coats for Kids, which supplies winter clothing for babies and children.

"I would say \$100 is not even (the equivalent of) a toothpick if you're building a house, it's that small."

As part of his economic statement Tuesday, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty announced he will cut a one-time, tax-free cheque for poor working families with children under the age of seven.

Flaherty suggested the money, which will go to families earning less than \$26,000, can be used to buy children coats and boots and Christmas presents.

About 222,000 families with 367,000 children under seven will receive the benefit, which will cost the province \$37 million.

Flaherty is hoping the gesture will help to stimulate Ontario's faltering economy.

While some critics have complained families on social assistance won't receive the bonus, Flaherty said parents living on welfare already receive an extra \$105 for each child under the age of 18 every November to help pay for winter clothing and presents.

Rosanne Rodgers, spokesperson for the York Region Food Network, wonders why Queen's Park has placed such stringent conditions on the benefit.

She argued \$26,000 is a paltry amount to use as a cut-off, especially for families struggling to make ends meet in the Greater Toronto Area, with its high cost of living.

But what upsets Rodgers more is the fact only families with children under seven will receive the cheque.

She questions why a child of seven or 10 or 12 doesn't qualify to receive a winter coat, boots or a Christmas present.

"Why set it at seven? What's that got to do with anything?" she said.

"Even with an economic cut-off, I guess you have to cut it off somewhere, but let's not use an age cut-off."

Rodgers, who suggested children up to 16 or 18 should receive the cheque, argued the \$100 has little long-term benefit for disadvantaged families.



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

ENJOYING SOME HUNKY HELP

Firefighter models Norm Jones and Frank Bobesich make sure Marie Anderson has enough blush as she prepares for the Heroes in Uniform fundraising dinner and fashion show at Sinfonia Italiana in Unionville on Tuesday. All proceeds went to families of firefighters and police who died in the New York City and Washington terrorist attacks. Also preparing for the show are from left: model Magda Mo with Bitia Makki, model Sylvie Martin with Christina Coteanu, and model Dena Kakaletis and MC Sandy Bonk.

'Relationship terrorism' similar to hostage situation

BY ROGER VARLEY
Staff Writer

Victims of spousal abuse — particularly those who have been in long-term violent relationships — should be treated the same as survivors of hostage situations, said an RCMP expert on domestic violence.

While freed hostages are recognized for having survived the situation, there is no such praise for women who have survived long-term abuse, Staff-Sgt. Dave Franklin said.

Unlike survivors of hostage takings, they are often left on their own following the initial police and social services response.

"Our profession has focused on are we doing things the right way rather than 'are we doing the right thing,'" Franklin said Monday.

In a seminar for York Regional Police, health workers and social workers involved in domestic violence cases, Franklin said the term "domestic violence" might actually diminish the seriousness of the crime.

He said the phrase tends to downplay spousal abuse crimes

such as beatings, physical and psychological intimidation, sexual assault, murder and attempted murder.

"I'm more inclined to call it relationship terrorism," Franklin said, pointing to a host of psychological traumas shared by hostage victims and battered women.

These include indecisiveness, an apparent dulling of comprehension and intelligence, self-blame, decreased self-esteem, a strong dependence on the abuser and "frozen flight," a phenomenon that has been observed in many hostage situations.

Hostages and women in violent relationships often refuse to take advantage of what others see as escape routes, he said.

"An open door is not an open door. They see it as a trap," Franklin said. "No one asks a hostage why they didn't try to escape, but when a woman is finally free from an abusive relationship, people often ask why she didn't try to leave."

He said a partner's threat of reprisal is a common but powerful inducement for women to stay in

abusive situations.

Hostages, driven by the impulse to survive, are quickly overcome with feelings of defencelessness and suffer depression brought on by the thought that no one cares or is coming to rescue them, Franklin said.

They begin to depend on their captors to the point they do nothing without direction or their captor's approval. All these symptoms are equally present in victims of abuse, he said.

He told of one such victim who, finally freed after years of abuse, was asked what she would do with her freedom.

She surprised her questioner by saying she would wash her kitchen drapes. They hadn't been washed for five years because her spouse had once told her he would kill her if she touched them again.

Franklin said since it is impossible to send a hostage negotiator or emergency response unit to every domestic violence call, perhaps "we, as a community, can view ourselves as community health workers."

Info Box

• inBRIEF •

As part of our new eGuide — a listing of York Region entertainment events that appears in our Tuesday papers — we are asking residents to post recommendations for a film currently playing at any York Region theatre.

All you have to do is visit yorkregion.com and click on the movie reel on the home page. You'll automatically qualify for a weekly contest for movie passes.

• beenTHERE •

Rock the house

"What I liked, though, was that I was shooting better as the game neared its end. I made a particularly good shot into the house and another that took out an opposing rock. My last two shots curl, one after another, into the outer blue circle of the house."

Catch staff writer Mike Adler's experiences as a first-time curler at Unionville Curling Club in *Been There, Done That*, page 18.

Life-changing books

Have you read a book that had a profound effect on your life?

Did it change the way you think or feel about something or the way you behave toward other people?

Maybe you took up a new interest or hobby after reading a good book on the subject.

If you have a tale to tell and would like to share it for an upcoming article, contact staff writer Anne Howland at ahowland@erabanner.com or call her at (416) 798-7284, ext. 290.

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www.collections.ic.gc.ca

This website, Canadian Veterans Recollect, was developed by students, for students, under the auspices of Industry Canada to pay tribute to all the courageous veterans who fought for Canada in the First World War.

Unlike textbooks, the site allows students to read, see and listen to the history of the "Great War", while helping them recognize that, without these brave people, Canada would not be the same as it is today. Includes interviews with veterans.

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