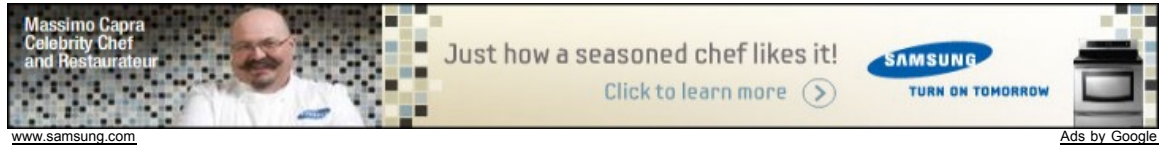


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Stop 'cradling' criminals

Ontario Tories urge government to strip provincial inmates of pensions

By **ANTONELLA ARTUSO**, QUEEN'S PARK BUREAU CHIEF

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Ontario Tories are telling the Liberal government to stop 'cradling' criminals and sign on to a federal plan that would strip provincial inmates of their old age pensions while incarcerated.

But as QMI Agency's Brian Lilley reported, the Ontario government has yet to respond to Stephen Harper's request.

Joe Kim, a spokesperson for Ontario Community Safety Minister Jim Bradley, says in an e-mail the ministry will follow Bill C-31 closely as it moves through the legislative process in the House of Commons.

"This a federally-administered program and we have yet to see the final legislation," Kim says, when asked for the government's position.

PC MPP Jim Wilson said he believes the Ontario Liberals may be philosophically opposed to the idea of cracking down on inmates.

"They're very soft on crime and they like to cradle prisoners. And that's certainly not the message you get from the people of Ontario or the people of Canada," Wilson said.

PC Leader Tim Hudak sent a letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty on June 7 asking him to support the bill.

Hudak said he would, if elected premier, join the efforts to strip jail birds of their Old Age Security payments.

"Seniors and families were shocked to discover that their hard-earned tax dollars were being used to contribute to retirement funds for convicted murderers like Clifford Olson and Paul Bernardo while they were struggling to save for their own retirement," Hudak says in his letter.

Bill C-31 would deny Old Age Security to federal prisoners, and if the provinces agree, to provincial inmates who are serving more than 90-day sentences.

Wilson said unlike the Canadian Pension Plan, Old Age Security is a government program to help cover daily costs for seniors.

"Their room and board's covered while they're in prison, many of them for the rest of their lives, and they don't deserve the extra money they receive for those purposes," Wilson said.

If all provinces and territories support Bill C-31, the federal government would save an estimated \$10 million a year.

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