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THE PICTURE SAYS IT ALL

OTTAWA and Small Business



Taxation — too high a price Risk must be recompensed

By KENNETH McDONALD
 Coopers and Lybrand, the well-known chartered accountants, wrote recently: "If one accepts that taxes — in any shape or form — are a cost, either of doing business or simply of living, then this country's current efforts to combat inflation are a cruel hoax."

Taxation is the price of government services and unless the price of them is controlled at least within the same limits as wages and salaries and profits, then everyone's disposable income is reduced.

Municipal property taxes, sales taxes, gasoline taxes, customs and excise duties, income taxes — unless these are used to provide additional services, their imposition reduces our ability to buy other goods and services. If business profits are held back while income taxes on existing profit levels are increased, the same with wages and salaries. Yet the tax effect is concealed by the device of exorbitating the cost of government services from the cost of living index which is used to measure inflation.

Ottawa is fond of shifting the blame for spending to the provinces, and it certainly has a point. Between 1975 and 1976, sales taxes increased by 14 per cent in Nova Scotia, 26 per cent in Newfoundland and 40 per cent in BC. Corporate income tax rates rose by eight per

cent in Newfoundland, 15 per cent in Manitoba and BC, and 20 per cent in Nova Scotia. A new 20 per cent surcharge in Manitoba brings the rate of provincial income tax in that province to 51 per cent of Federal Basic Tax on taxable incomes over \$20,000. For self-employed persons in Ontario, the provincial health premium has been increased by 45 per cent. In Quebec it has gone from 8 per cent of income to 1.5 per cent, an increase of 87.5 per cent.

Municipal property taxes are shooting up. With 55 per cent of them going to education, teachers' union settlements of 20 per cent and more are working their way through in taxes.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business is under continual pressure from members to seek reductions in government spending. There is no question it must be reduced, but when whole communities are dependent on social spending of one form or another, sudden cuts would be disastrous.

What is needed is an unequivocal commitment from Ottawa and the provinces to reduce government spending, over a five year period, at a rate corresponding to increases in spending in the private sector. The two must move in phase — public closure or being passed reduction, private increase over for promotion. Job — if Canada's social and economic fabric is to be preserved.

According to Funk and Wagnall's dictionary, an entrepreneur is "one who undertakes to start and conduct an enterprise or business, usually assuming full control and risk." In other words, a self-starter, someone who makes things happen.

Entrepreneurs can be found in government, in big and in small business. They're needed everywhere, but Canada, especially, needs them in small business. In a community of 1,000 people, three or four entrepreneurs can make the difference between dependency and prosperity. The businesses they start and the jobs they create are like widening ripples in a pool. Their successes will inspire others to emulate them.

What they have in common is an attitude. Behind their driving force is the personal conviction of success. But entrepreneurial qualities can also be acquired. Students may develop ideas from summer work with small firms. Regular employees of small firms are themselves a natural source of such qualities. Entrepreneurial courses should be part both of formal education and of government re-training schemes.

Entrepreneurs may get started for negative reasons, too, such as plant move in phase — public closure or being passed reduction, private increase over for promotion. Job — if Canada's social and economic fabric is to be preserved.

will often motivate people toward independence. However, though money is by no means the dominant motive, the survival of new enterprises requires an adequate cash flow in return for the investment and the risks assumed.

The individual is the key. If he can get 10 per cent, risk-free, from Canada Savings Bonds, he must recover more than that from a business to make up for risking everything. He has. Moreover, public policies must be directed toward removing barriers to the formation of new enterprises, particularly the lack of manpower availability as a result of inadequate national apprenticeship programs.

In its representations to federal and provincial governments, The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has made specific recommendations stressing the need for incentives to individuals rather than to banks, venture capital companies and other institutions.

Entrepreneurship is an affair of the community, matching men with experience and capital to the newcomers. Almost every community has a small, conspicuous group of local businessmen and professionals who back local ventures, often in real estate. These groups are the natural channel for creating new enterprises. All are motivated to succeed because they're risking their own money. That's the secret. It's a local, self-generating process.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business

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