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Sales tax is confusing, weak businesses say

By DONNA KELL
Herald Staff

The new national sales tax is confusing, weak and complicated, business people in Halton Hills are saying.

The Goods and Service Tax, released officially by federal finance minister Michael Wilson last week, will mean a nine-per-cent tax on most goods and services across the country. It will replace a 13.5 per cent tax on about 40 per cent of manufactured foods with a tax on all manufactured goods except for grocery items, medical items and a short list of other foods and services.

And it will mean an overhaul of sales structures, in Canada, in Ontario and in Halton Hills, according to some business owners.

Former Georgetown Chamber of Commerce president Murray Lawton, who owns a Canadian Tire franchise in Georgetown, will spend \$100,000 on new cash registers this fall to handle the nine-per-cent federal tax.

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"And I'm not even sure if they (the machines) are going to work," Mr. Lawton said.

That's how "simple" the new tax is, he added.

"It stinks. I think there's a simpler way of getting money that's not baffling all the people. The government, lately, seems to want to boggle everyone's mind."

But in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) overview issued by the finance minister last week, the government said the new tax would be simpler than the existing federal sales tax.

"The present tax is very complex both for business to comply with and for the government to administer," Mr. Wilson writes.

"The government is committed to making the Goods and Services Tax straightforward."

But lawyer and Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce president David Page said last week that the new system is "unnecessarily complicated". Every province but Alberta will have two separate taxes, he said, adding that there should be "one integrated sales tax".

The government should tax everything, the chamber president said. The Progressive Conser-

vatives "probably gave in to too many pressure groups".

Pressures from such groups would cause the government to tax clothes and shelter but not food, although all are considered necessities, Mr. Page said. The government should have the "guts" to tax everything, but at a lower rate, he said.

Government-subsidized institutions, such as colleges and universities, will not pay the nine-per-cent tax. Charitable organizations, when not competing in a market, will be spared the goods and service tax in many cases.

But the federal government

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False alarms are a hazard to police

Frequent false alarms occurring across the province disrupt police service and may in some instances endanger police officers, Staff Inspector Roy Taylor, of the Halton Regional Police force says.

Since only one or two per cent of alarm activations are legitimate, police respond to alarm calls without exercising the caution they otherwise might, Staff Insp. Taylor said.

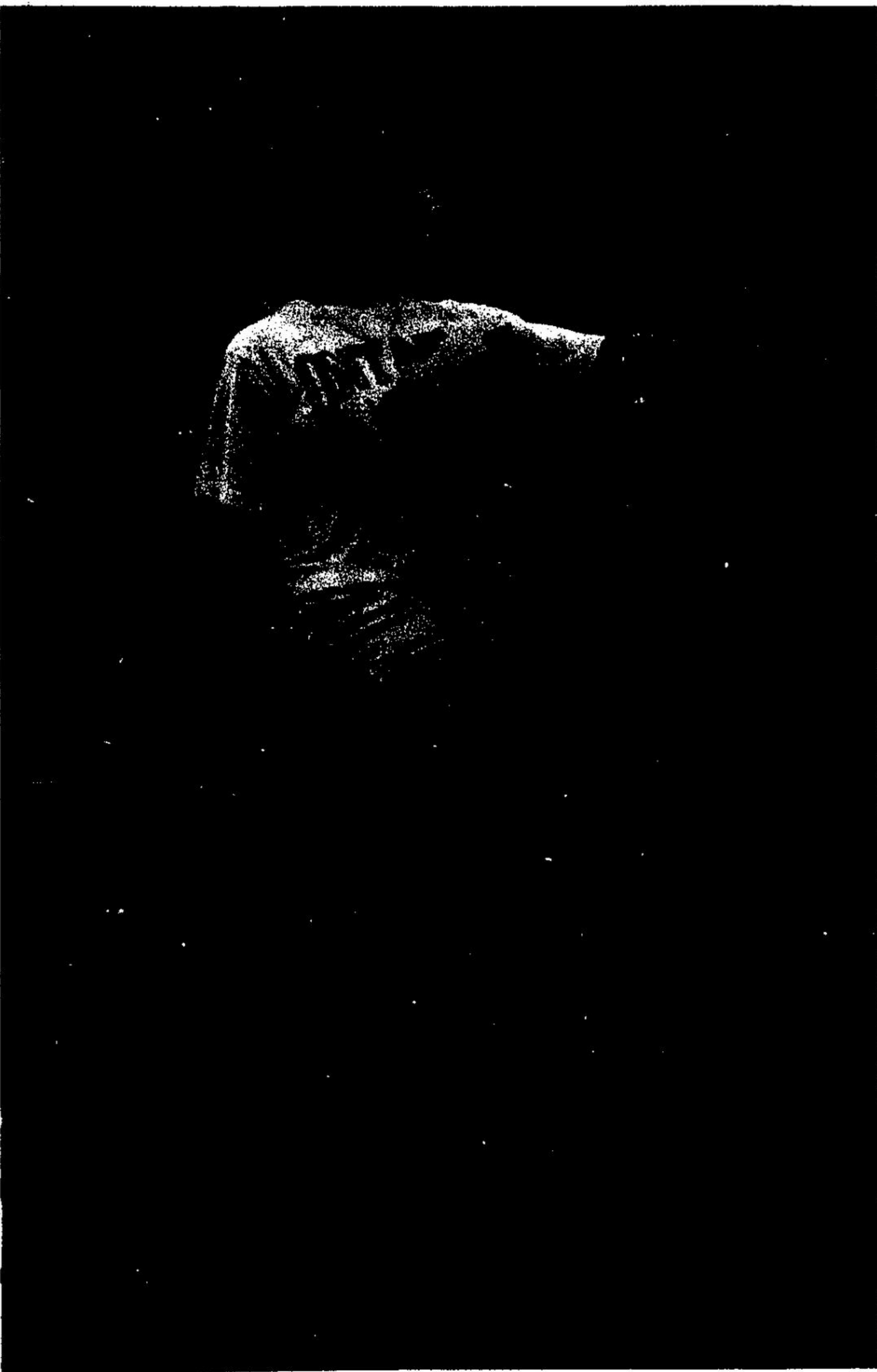
False alarms definitely tie up valuable man power, he said.

The sounding of one alarm involves a minimum of four people. A police complaints person first takes the call and passes it on to the dispatcher. The dispatcher notifies at least two police officers who investigate the call. Meanwhile the dispatcher has to monitor the situation until it is resolved. Staff Insp. Taylor explained.

There was a 20 per cent jump in the number of false alarms in Halton from 1987 to 1988. Two years ago there were 10,500 calls, but last year that figure increased to 12,600, he said.

Sergeant Dave Gwilliams, crime prevention co-ordinator for Halton Region Police, said the number has slightly decreased since 1988. While police report 6,049 false alarms from January to the end of July of 1988, there

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"Soccer it to them Julie"

Julie Ross, 17, of Georgetown displays her prowess with the soccer ball. A member of the Ontario Provincial under-18 team, Julie and her teammates left Canada Monday for a 10-day soccer-playing tour of Denmark. See story, page 16. (Herald Photo by Colin Gibson)