

Anger brings people to Town Hall meetings

Garth Turner
MP
Halton-Peel



For the past week the papers have been brimming with news of the feds' plan to reform taxes. There's a hot and heavy national debate going on over Michael Wilson's plan to eliminate an old tax and replace it with a Goods and Services Tax at the rate of nine per cent.

As a Member of Parliament, and a member of the government, it's my job now to find out what people think of the plan, then to let Wilson know. And that's exactly why I'm in the middle of a string of Town Hall meetings which will stretch from Burlington to Palgrave by the time they're over.

I'll be straight with you - this isn't easy. Any time there's a major change in the way people are taxed, there's going to be anxiety and skepticism. Some people are angry, and that anger brings them out to my meetings.

Frankly, that's a good thing. In many ways the debate going on now is one which probably should have taken place during the last election campaign. I hate high taxes, and I hate unfair taxation. The existing system needs to be improved - it's unfair and riddled with exemptions.

Mike Wilson has proposed sweeping changes - taking an old, invisible tax and bringing in a highly visible one which will be on

most of the things we buy. It may not be a perfect plan, but it sure took a lot of political guts to suggest. Most Canadians feel they are highly taxed to start with and the last thing they want is an additional tax grab. It's the challenge of everyone in government now - including me - to explain exactly what the changes will mean, and what goals we hope to accomplish with them.

That's one of the reasons for the Town Hall meetings. I think it's my responsibility to tell people why, and how, the tax system might change. You have the right to know. You also have the right to tell me what changes you might suggest are made before this thing gets carved into stone.

So far, the meetings have gone well. I've come away with pages of notes on the tax and other issues. I've heard people talk about how they feel the feds should not just rely on taxes to finance the country but also be serious about cutting government spending.

I couldn't agree more. I've told you before that there are many things I see in Ottawa which could be eliminated. Later this year the House of Commons committee which I chair will get into exactly that topic. It strikes me that Canadians will pay their fair share of tax, but they want to know the money isn't being wasted or squandered by politicians.

As for the tax changes, I've told people at each meeting that I'm not going to be a salesman for the government. What I will do is take the time to explain in detail what Wilson is suggesting and then listen hard to peoples' reaction.

In a couple of weeks every home will be receiving a pamphlet I'm writing on the tax plan - with a complete explanation of the changes, and my comments on what's good and what could be improved. Included in that will be a

page for your thoughts, and I really hope you take the time to fill it out, and send it to me.

This is one of several ways that people in our community can have a voice in reforming the system. I will be preparing a report for Wilson after the meetings are over and after you've had a chance to

read the pamphlet and respond. In addition, members of the Halton-Peel tax committee - citizens from Bolton, Georgetown and Burlington - are preparing a submission on the new tax for the House of Commons Finance Committee which is about to hold public hearings. These people, by the way,

have already had a chance to meet face-to-face with Mike Wilson here in the riding.

Where do I stand on the tax changes?

Well, I support the idea of a tax on consumption because the big spender are the ones who end up paying the most. I certainly support the \$700 million-a-year tax cut proposed for middle class taxpayers. And I think the feds are right to cushion lower-income earners with a series of regular cheques to offset the effect of that tax.

But that's not to say things couldn't be improved. To my mind, it would be fairer for the government to tax everything - with no exemptions - and at a lower rate. Right now groceries, rents, daycare, insurance, financial services and a bunch of other things are not going to be touched.

I'd appreciate your thoughts - please call or write, or come out to one of the meetings. I'm at Terra Cotta town hall on August 29, Bel-fountain hall on the 31st, and the Elks Lodge hall in Norval on Sept. 6.

On another note, I was happy to see a copy of Pro-Earth last week.

That's the environmental newsletter published by Katrina Barber, of Caledon. Katrina has agreed to be a member of my environment committee, and help us with the big task of educating people into better everyday habits.

As the latest edition of Pro-Earth points out, the first principal of reducing pollution is to reject excessive or unnecessary packaging. After that, we can all recycle and re-use and apply common sense.

I really appreciate what Katrina is trying to do, and I hope a great many people support her. If you're interested in subscribing to this \$20-a-year effort, then get in touch. The address is RR 2, Caledon, L0N 1C0.



Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner has been busy recently renovating his constituency office in Georgetown. Mr. Turner, along with his wife Dorothy and some volunteers, are replacing the floor and knocking out some of the walls. Mr. Turner wants more space so he can hold committee meetings in the office. This will save taxpayers money because currently a space has to be rented out everytime a meeting is scheduled, Mr. Turner says. (Herald photo)

The Mutual Group



Brian Goodlet
Georgetown
877-5129



Tom Shillington
Georgetown
873-1588



Tom Hower
Georgetown
877-0489



Avtar Janda
Brampton
451-3460



Al Heaney, C.F.P.
Brampton
451-3460



Carl Ingebertson
Brampton
451-3460



Clarke Ingebertson
Brampton
451-3460



Gord Zinn
Brampton
451-3460



Brian Smith
Orangeville
941-5812



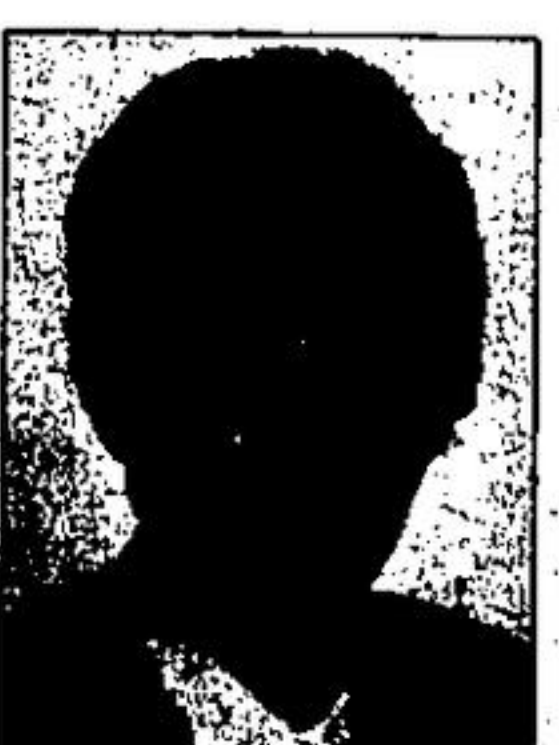
Eilwood Madill
Orangeville
941-1231



Bill Hill
Shelburne
925-5264



Tom Bulloch
Bolton
857-3518



Theresia Andrews-Maas
Assoc. Manager
451-3460



Bruce Field, C.L.U.
Br. Manager
451-3460

"Is it time your insurance program had a check-up?"

"Have you recently changed:

- your marital status? your family obligations? your financial priorities?
 your residence? your job?

"If you checked off one or more of these, then your life insurance may no longer meet your needs. Now's the time to review your insurance coverage. For personal service, call or drop in and see us."

Brampton Branch Office
Telephone: (416) 451-3460

Financial Planning, Life Insurance, Disability Income, Annuities and RRIFs, RRSPs, GICs and Savings Plans, Investment Funds*, RESPs* and Employee Benefits

Licensed with Mutual Life of Canada/Mutual Investco Inc., two of The Mutual Group.



The Mutual Group

Facing Tomorrow Together