

MP wants business to pass on GST savings

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Last week I wrote about what I'm trying to do in Ottawa now about the GST, which is to make sure consumers are not ripped off when the new tax replaces the old one. It struck me this was something people would want me to do - making sure when the price of services goes up that the price of many manufactured items, comes down.

So the committee I'm chairman of is holding hearings, and afterwards will write a report telling the government what it should do to protect consumers.

But maybe I'm just naive. "If Mr. Turner and the rest of the Tories believe all the savings from the abolition of the MST will be passed on to consumers," read the editorial in one Halton Hills paper

last week, "they're sadly mistaken."

The editorial dumps on me for just trying to "deflect some of the criticism away from the Tories."

"We hope the Canadian consumers won't be fooled," it says. Buy what, exactly, does that mean? Should I stop pushing the feds to make sure the savings are passed on in the form of lower prices? Is it hopeless? Do I go back to Georgetown and garden for the summer?

Meanwhile another person in another newspaper writes an open letter to me: "Can't you people understand that even with the Manufacturers' Sales Tax coming off, by the time you put new taxes on freight, commercial rents, supplies, commissions, packaging, etc., prices must go up dramatically? Or is it that you just don't give a damn?"

Actually, I do. It's the only reason somebody would want this job - to try and make things better. And no, I don't believe that prices next year will go up dramatically. And yes, this is exactly why I'm trying to get *Big Business* to commit to passing on the savings, and Big Labour to commit it won't use the GST as an excuse for big, inflationary wage demands.

Five economists told the com-

mittee a few days ago that prices will rise next year by between 1.25 per cent and 1.5 per cent - hardly a dramatic increase. But if business gets greedy or labour gets militant, then things could be far worse. And you know who gets hurt in a wage-price spiral. Consumers - average, middle-class, working people.

All of us know, I think, that some things have to change. The country is still going into debt, and that will ultimately be our greatest enemy. If we don't fix the debt problem, you can kiss away the prospect of money for things like improving the environment.

Spending cuts alone won't solve it - even through a lot of people would like to believe that fantasy.

The GST is part of a package of things (along with selling government assets and increasing trade, for example) designed to get Canada out of hock.

I support that long-term goal. I want to start paying back the debt, instead of adding to it. Then we can get lower interest rates and lower taxes. That's exactly why I rang to be an MP. That's why I voted for the GST. That's why nobody's going to divert me by threatening to defeat me next time.

It's also why I'm going back to Ottawa in a few hours, and will resume my hearings. Canadians deserve to be told a change in the tax system is not going to end up hurting them. If some people think I'm wasting my time, well, tough.

I'll waste it with passion.

If you want to help reduce the federal deficit, the Burlington and Halton Hills Chambers of Commerce have a deal for you. This Thursday evening the chambers are hosting a Deficit Reduction Barbeque, at the Alcott Arena in Georgetown.

Tickets are just \$15, with proceeds going towards cutting the country's budget shortfall.

And to receive the cash, I'll be bringing along the federal Finance Minister, Michael Wilson. There will be some speeches, a question period and lots of ketchup and mustard.

Can one person do anything to help Canada's finances? You sure can. Be there.



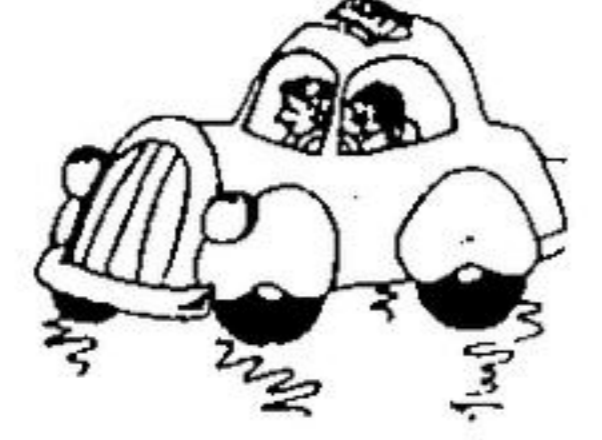
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