

COMMUNITY

# Veterinarians dead set against planned GST

By LISA RUTLEDGE  
The Herald

Adding the seven per cent Goods and Services Tax to veterinary services is like taking a member of the family for medical attention and that's not right, says an Acton veterinarian.

Dr. Steve Hess of the Acton Veterinary Clinic is not pleased that the federal government does not include veterinarian services in its medical services GST exemptions.

While the government promises that all the necessities of life will be exempt from the proposed tax, animal hospital services do not qualify for an exemption. "We don't seem to get the same respect that other medical professions get from the government," said Mr. Hess.

"They've singled us out," he said, adding that "they've overlooked the fact that there's a human content too. People are bound to animals. It has been shown that people who have animals live a lot longer."

Owning an animal is not a luxury but a necessity, said Dr. Hess. Taking an animal to the veterinarian is like taking a family member to the doctor, he explained. "The pet becomes a part of the family and taxing vet services is taxing a member of that family," he said.

Paying off the deficit is necessary, however, some things should be safe from taxation, said Dr. Hess. Referring to the federal government's responses to letters asking to exempt animal services from the GST, Dr. Hess said the demands are falling on deaf ears.

The clinic had to purchase a computer system to be able to streamline billing because of the new tax, said Dr. Hess. A \$1,000 computer program will have also



Veterinarian Dr. Ross Pezzack (left) and Trudy Kline inspect skin irritation on her dog Casey's paws. Dr. Pezzack of Georgetown Animal Clinic is angered that veterinarian services are not exempt from the seven per cent Goods and Services Tax. (Herald photo)

have to be purchased in order to be able to administrate the GST, he added.

Although there will be increases in veterinary service costs, Dr. Hess isn't convinced that people will stop taking their pets to the vet. "Those who love their animals and seek vet attention will continue no matter what," he said. Most pet owners won't refuse their pet medical attention is a \$7 GST tax is added to a \$100 bill, Dr. Hess explained.

However, Dr. Ross Pezzack, of Georgetown Animal Clinic, isn't quite as optimistic saying that

people who most benefit from owning a pet could suffer the greatest from the GST.

The tax will make it difficult for some people, especially the elderly, who may be on a fixed income but cherish a pet wholeheartedly, maintains Dr. Pezzack.

Dr. Pezzack estimates that veterinary service costs will increase about 13 per cent because of the GST and inflation.

For example, a dog or cat can be extremely important to a widow, who places a pet as the centre of her life, he explained.

That pet can be both mentally and physically therapeutic in that she may eat better because she cooks for the dog, Dr. Pezzack said. It may not be the best thing for the dog but she will probably maintain a better diet, he added.

Consider the fact that an elderly gentleman, who looks forward to taking his Beagle for a three mile walk every day, may not be able to afford to keep the dog, said Dr. Pezzack.

Those who are strapped by low incomes and who most benefit from the companionship of a pet are the ones who will suffer from the added tax, explained Dr. Pezzack. "That's the kind of person I worry about with the GST," he said.

The Ontario Veterinary Medicine Association has written to the federal government to say that the GST is unfair to animals. The association has also requested that Bill C-62 be amended to exempt veterinarian medicine from the tax.

The association argues that animals should not be deprived of medical or surgical procedures or become unwanted because of a decrease in spaying programs.

It is predicted there will be a 7 per cent decrease in the number of pets receiving rabies shots and fewer cases of diseases, which can be contracted by humans from the animals, will be detected.

About \$250 million in veterinary services were delivered in Ontario last year, and if the GST were in effect, Ontarians would have paid an extra \$13.1 million.

## Microwave cooking

Microwave cooking instructor Anne Smith will be demonstrating how to prepare hors d'oeuvres, etc. for your holiday entertaining. The program will take place on Wed., Nov. 7 and 14, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Registration for either session will begin Oct. 17, at the Georgetown Library. A fee of \$5 will be charged at this time. Register early to avoid disappointment. For more information, call 873-2681.

## New lights for Mountainview

Halton Region is constructing underground duct work at Mountainview Road and Delrex Boulevard and Mountainview Road and Sinclair Avenue in Georgetown, in preparation for the installation of traffic lights at both locations at some future date, said Wendy Fullarton, the Region's construction coor-

ordinator. Ms. Fullarton said the traffic signals will eventually be installed, but she couldn't give an exact date. The underground duct work is being done now, explained Ms. Fullarton, so that the roads won't have to be dug up when the traffic signals are installed.

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