HST is a lousy birthday gift

Ted Arnott

Only a McGuinty Liberal would think the best way to celebrate Canada Day is with a tax increase. But that's just what will happen this year in Ontario, when the Harmonized Sales Tax, or HST, will come into effect on July 1st.

By combining the 8 per cent provincial sales tax with the federal GST, the Liberals are touting their new HST as a magic elixir to create jobs and reduce costs to business. They claim they're cutting other taxes. They claim our economy will be more efficient, businesses will pass along the savings to consumers— and there will even be cheques in the mail!

But to many people, the HST will instead amount to nothing more than another tax hike from a government addicted to tax hikes. Affected will be goods and services, including many essentials like our fuel and hydro bills, which are not currently subject to provincial sales tax.

Taxes will rise to 13 percent on the following: hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline, vitamins, Internet service, mutual fund fees and financial services, condo fees, airplane, train and bus tickets, funerals and estate planning costs, home renovation and repairs, lawn maintenance and snow removal, golfing fees, bicycles and bicycle safety equipment, gym memberships, trips to the veterinarian, and haircuts— to name just a few.

For gas, be prepared to pay an additional 8 cents a litre, according to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. For an average family with an average car, that's at least $250 more, every year— just for gas.

Opposition members of the Legislature have an obligation to speak up for those who will be hurt by the government's policy. That's what we in the Ontario PC Caucus are doing, and will continue to do, when it comes to this new tax.

With the introduction of the HST, provincial Ministry of Revenue staff will be transferred to the federal government. In March during Question Period, I asked the government to explain why these provincial tax collectors would be receiving up to six months severance, when they wouldn't be missing a day of work or pay. We still haven't received a satisfactory explanation.

With all of that spending, it's no wonder he thinks he has to keep raising taxes, but he should at least be clear about his intentions. As I recently asked in the Ontario Legislature, the next time he offers to the people of Ontario his solemn pledge on taxes, who on earth will believe him?

Canada Day offers many things to celebrate. The HST is not one of them.

Ted Arnott is the MPP for Wellington-Halton Hills. He can be reached toll free at 1-800-265-2366 or www.tedarnottmpp.com

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