

Taxing fee

While consumers have been sweltering in the July heat, cash registers have also been heating up with two additional charges—the HST and eco fees implemented this month. The former was a well-publicized provincial move that “harmonized” the GST and the PST, adding 8% costs on items not taxed provincially before such as hydro bills and haircuts.

The latter, eco fees, however, came as a surprise to many, and unless retailers designated a special eco fee on the sales receipt, many consumers would still be unaware of the additional costs they were paying.

Eco fees are not a government tax—it’s the cost of doing business being passed down from manufacturer to the retailer to the consumer in the form of a fee imposed by Stewardship Ontario. This is not a provincial government department, but is a provincially-regulated not-for-profit organization that is funded by and governed by the very industries it sets these fees for. These fees are based on the amount of goods they put into the marketplace. While the fees have been imposed on some items such as paints and solvents since 2008, on July 1, thousands of household items including batteries, hand soap, hand sanitizer, laundry detergent, over-the-counter pharmaceuticals and some prescription pills, syringes— have been added to the list to coincide with the launch of a special waste program called Orange Drop.

The fees these industries pay to Stewardship Ontario is used to develop better recycling and hazardous waste diversion programs. For Halton Hills residents Orange Drop will mean it will become easier—and safer for the environment—to get rid of hazardous waste with nearby retail store collection sites for paints and batteries, and collection sites at pharmacies such as Young’s and Walmart for disposal of pills and syringes.

While the program is commendable—to learn more go to www.makethedrop.ca—letting consumers know after the fact the number of everyday common household products now included as of July 1 was not. Yes, Stewardship Ontario may argue that the fees are on their industries, but it was naïve of them not to assume that these fees wouldn’t be passed onto consumers.

For many already struggling to recover from a financially difficult 2008 and 2009, to have both HST and these so-called eco fees (transparent or hidden) both occur on July 1 was a double whammy on consumers. Let’s be clear, eco fees may not be a government tax, but they are taxing on an already stretched pocketbook of the consumer.

Letters to the editor policy

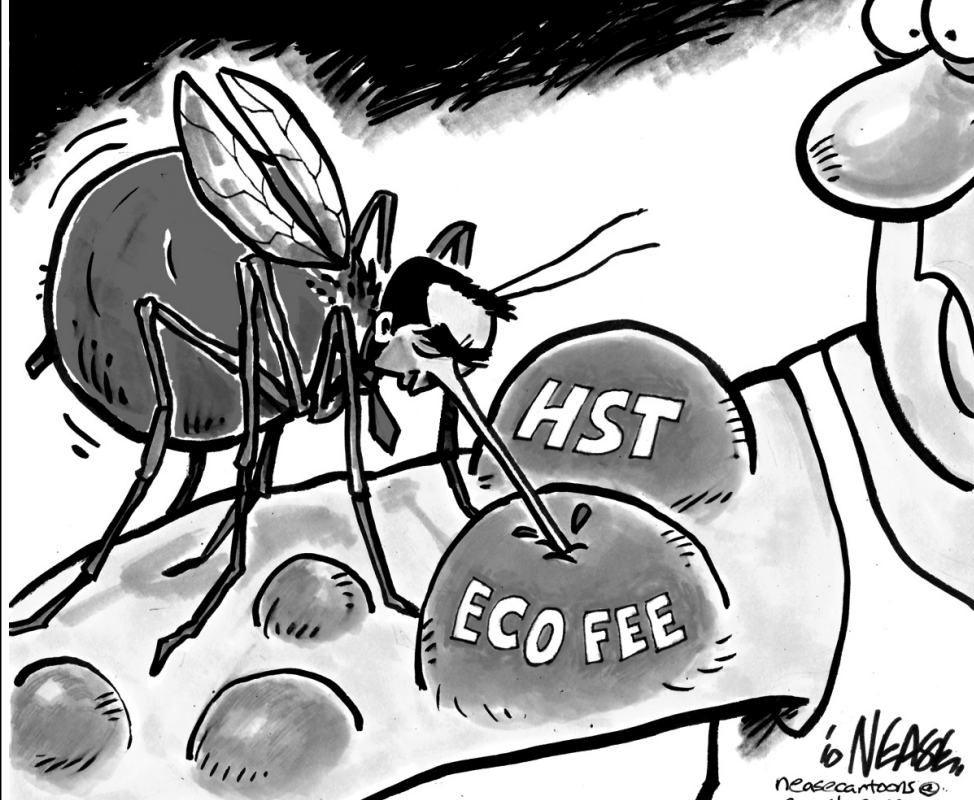
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July is Mosquito Season in Ontario...



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WEB POLL RESULTS

Blistering hot weather is expected to dominate this summer in Ontario. How do you keep cool?

1. head to the beach (13%)
2. hibernate in air-conditioned buildings (61%)
3. keep your fridge stocked with ice cream and popsicles (11%)
4. check out the flights to Antarctica (16%)

Go to www.independentfreepress.com

Letters to the editor

Canadian poverty shocks reader

The following letter sent to Ted Arnott, MPP, Wellington-Halton Hills was filed with this newspaper for publication.

Dear Mr. Arnott,

I recently attended a Community Justice Camp in Hamilton. There were nearly 100 people involved in this venture. It was an international event, sponsored by the Anglican Church of Canada and the fifth one held so far. People attended from across Canada with guests from Cuba and Burundi.

The theme of this year’s camp was Live the Change you want to see. Part of our experience was a three-day immersion into a number of specific areas of interest. Mine was poverty. I toured shelters, helped in soup kitchens and food banks as well as met and interacted with street youth at a drop-in and helped start a community garden. This all in the Hamilton/St. Catharines area.

Mr. Arnott, I have lived in southern Ontario all of my life. I have volunteered for many charities, both local and international. I have visited the townships in South Africa and I need to tell you that I saw conditions in both these communities that rival what I have seen overseas. Shame on all of us.

The purpose of my letter today is to

strongly oppose the recent budget cuts to the special diet allowance for people receiving OW (Ontario Works) or ODSP (Ontario Disability). When we take food away from the most vulnerable among us, there is no imagining where the cuts will end or why they always seem to affect the ones who can least afford them. The special diet allowance was meant as a supplement for those with health issues that are diet-related such as diabetes and for whom the purchase of special food represents a financial hardship. This hardship has not changed, nor has a viable substitution been suggested. In a province as well off as Ontario, in a country as rich as Canada, how can we continually beat the ones who struggle the most? I strongly urge you to oppose these cuts.

Annette Graydon, Terra Cotta

Hospital volunteers appreciate support

Dear editor,

The Georgetown Hospital Volunteers held a very successful strawberry social on June 23. We would like to thank Andrew’s Scenic Acres for their donations of strawberries.

Thank you to Glen Emmerson and the Lions Club of Georgetown who allowed us the use of their hall. Many thanks to The Royal Ascot and the Se-

niors’ Centre who lent us coffee and tea makers and punch bowls.

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped prepare and serve the strawberries. Especially thank you all for coming. Mrs. Shirley Long was the winner of the door prize.

Iona Lobb, strawberry social convenor

Pink camera has precious memories

Dear editor,

A 13-year-old girl left her pink digital camera in a porta-potty in Glen Williams Park on Canada Day. When she returned, it was gone. Announcements failed to locate the camera, so I guess someone decided that Xmas came early.

If you need the camera that bad, please keep it. On the other hand, that camera’s memory card holds some irreplaceable pictures, such as her recent middle school grad pictures. The least you could do (and it would be a lot) would be to drop the memory card in an envelope and send it to the Georgetown police station. Or, put it in my mailbox or send it to me at 105 Joseph St., Glen Williams.

Oh, and if you have a friend who suddenly has a pink camera and doesn’t know how to use it yet... hey, time to look for new friends.

Phil Lewin, Glen Williams