

Opinion

Full impact of tax

People are just now beginning to feel the full impact of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as hydro and gas bills join the myriad other items on which the 7 per cent tax is imposed.

Needless to say it is not popular as the "Gouge and Screw Tax" appellation consumers give it indicates.

The federal government has estimated the GST will only increase the cost of living by 1 1/2 to 2 per cent but that figure is scoffed at by most consumers. They see it as another attempt to make living harder in a country where taxes are killing the incentive to work and buy.

If consumers had only to face the 7 per cent increase for their goods and services the GST wouldn't engender such contempt. But put the GST on top of an 8 per cent hydro increase and you've got a 15 per cent increase. A hydro bill of \$100 becomes \$115. The same with any other goods and service where price hikes are indicated.

It's true large ticket items such as automobiles, stoves, refrigerators and furniture can offer lower prices now the government has scrapped the old 13.5 per cent manufacturer's sales tax. But how often do people buy these big ticket items? Rarely, we'd say, in most cases.

The situation is exacerbated by the continual escalation of local taxes headed by the boards of education. Halton expects only a 6 to 7 per cent increase in school taxes this year as opposed to 13.9 per cent imposed in 1990. Council has managed to keep the Town's taxes at 5.2 per cent while the Region of Halton anticipates a 7.7 per cent increase.

Then when Finance Minister Michael Wilson suggests pay increases should be limited to two or three per cent people get downright angry. They're just trying to keep afloat on four or five per cent pay hikes and he wants to make it even more difficult to balance their books and pay the GST. - H.C.

Cutting our own throats

Business in the United States is bombarding communities along the border between Canada and the U.S. with advertising flyers, newspaper inserts and other promotions to entice Canadians to shop in the States. They are achieving dramatic results.

The Ontario government estimates at least \$600 million left the province in 1990 and landed in the tills of our American neighbors. The Province says that translates into about 6,000 lost jobs in Ontario and a loss of about \$50 million in provincial sales tax.

We feel the pinch slightly here. Shoppers go on binges in the U.S. because some goods are much cheaper there. However, when you add up the cost of driving to the U.S. and possibly staying there for a night or two, it is likely the "bargains" are more costly than shopping at home.

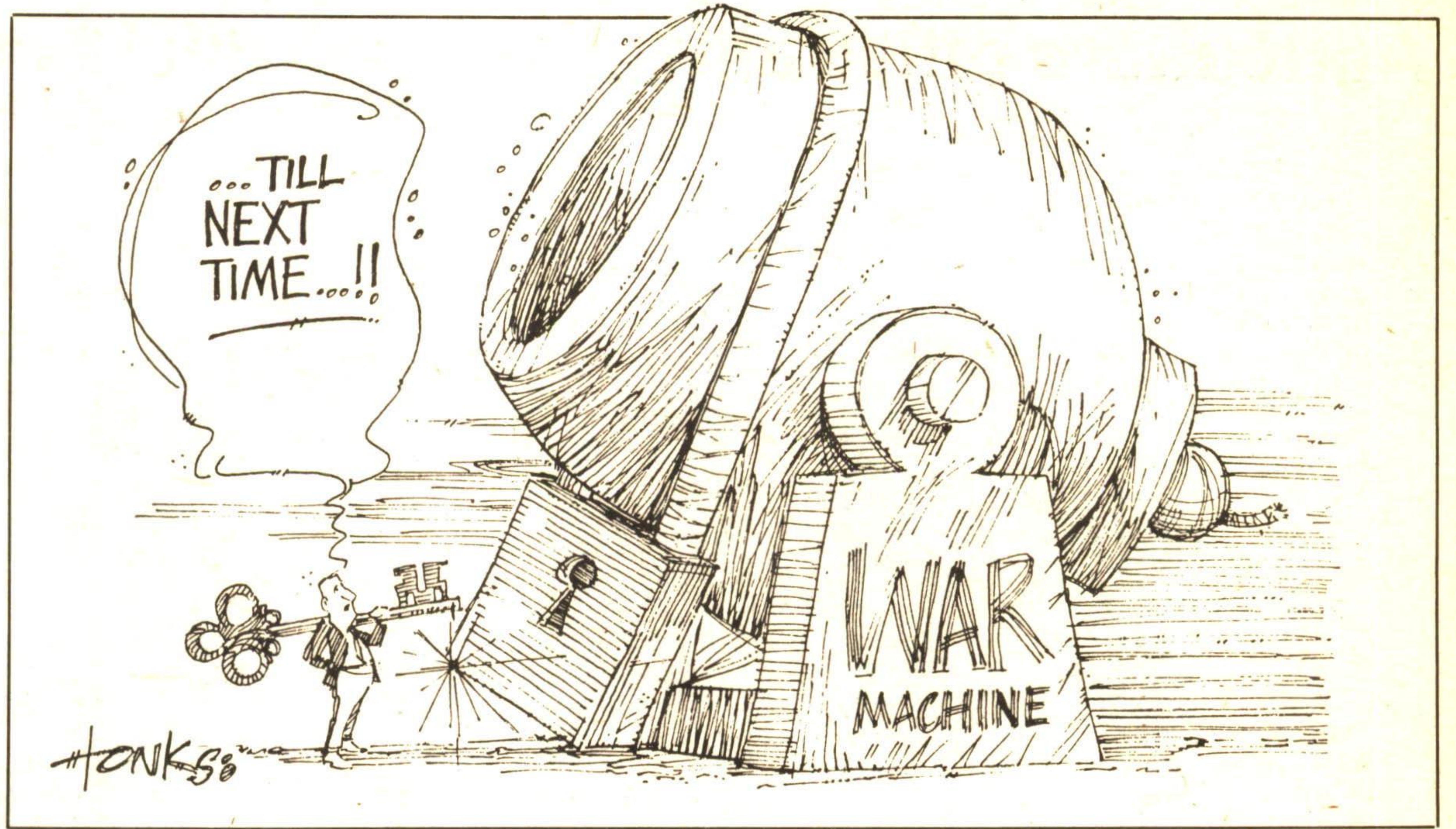
Those who feel the pinch most are the border towns where one can easily slip into the U.S., make purchases and get home within a few hours. Sometimes, even with the duty at the border, the items are cheaper.

Cross-border shopping has been going on for decades but in the past two years the free trade agreement, a strong Canadian dollar, high taxes, cheaper U.S. gasoline and accommodation has escalated the migration.

Statistics Canada shows a record 53 million Canadians went on one-day trips to the U.S. in 1990. Now that the GST has been implemented you can bet the number of trips will increase.

And yet we are cutting our own throats with this urge to shop for bargains in the U.S. We're losing more jobs at a time when unemployment is increasing. We are paying more taxes because of the loss of taxes to the U.S.

One day the ripple effect of constant U.S. shopping may come back to haunt the shoppers if they lose their own jobs or the social benefits we enjoy, and of which ordinary Americans are so envious. - H.C.



Our Readers Write

Cabinet responsible for inaction

Following is a letter to Premier Bob Rae filed with this newspaper for publication:
Dear Premier Rae,

We understand that as a result of our protest during your address at the NDP Convention yesterday there has been some "behind the scene" discussions about the effectiveness of Noel Duignan as our MPP.

With the help of his assistants, Bill Chard and Norma Peterson, Noel has been doing an excellent job in our riding. Noel has been very supportive of I.C.E. having attended our monthly meetings and expressing his unwavering support of a complete ban of garbage incineration. He continues to keep us up-to-date on government progress on the issue. We value his representation.

Make no mistake; you, Ruth Grier and your cabinet are completely responsible for your government's inaction on this issue.

1. You have broken your promise to ban garbage incineration "immediately."
2. You wrote Elsie Anderson that "any proposal dealing with incinerators or landfill sites will undergo public hearings in accordance with envi-

ronmental legislation." November 20, 1990.

3. You have not answered our letters of December 20, 1990 and January 18, 1991, even though you answered Greenpeace's letter of February 15, 1991 regarding incineration in four business days.

4. You and Ruth Grier have completely ignored the fact that Halton Region continues to pursue EFW options.

5. You will not meet with us, even though David Agnew met with a private waste management company on January 18, 1991.

Six short months ago you understood why an immediate ban on garbage incineration was so important. What has changed? Is Thomas Walkom right? "Fear of failure makes for cautious NDP... So better to be safe, better to keep real debate behind closed doors. It's been the motto of this government. It's become the motto of the once feisty NDP." (Toronto Star, March 4, 1991)

Icily Yours,
Rita Landry,

Incineration Counteracts the Environment (I.C.E.)
P.S. - Your motives and methods in Temagami are no different from ours today...

No way to run a country

Dear editor,

Canadians from sea to sea are growing increasingly angry, frustrated and cynical about both their political leaders and institutions.

Who can blame them?

Prime Minister Mulroney's government rammed through the Goods and Services Tax despite overwhelming opposition by citizens.

He tried to do the same with the Meech Lake Accord but was foiled by a filibustering Manitoba MLA.

Many Canadians feel that the only time when they can exert real control over their governments is on election day - once every three or four years. In between, voters must put up with what amounts to an elected dictatorship.

That's no way to run a country!

Canadians must get a grip on their own destiny through the system of citizen-initiated referendums. Initiatives allow citizens to make laws directly when their political representatives refuse to represent them.

Initiatives have worked well in Switzerland for more than a century and in the United States for most of this century. Indeed, a number of Canadian provinces once had laws providing for initiatives: it's time we brought them back!

We invite all Canadians, who share our commitment to direct democracy, to help promote initiatives in any way which they can. They would be doing their country a wonderful service.

Yours truly,
David Somerville, President,
The National Citizens' Coalition.

Look after the pennies...

Dear editor,

According to a report in one of our local newspapers the Chamber of Commerce in Georgetown gave a cheque for \$1,200 to Mr. Wilson, the finance minister. This money was raised by the Chamber to be used to reduce the deficit.

A funny thing - the cheque is now stale dated, since it has not been deposited in the bank. By politicians' standards this is such a small amount of money it probably did not matter. \$1,200 would

not even pay the average MP's wages and expenses for a day.

When I was a young man my parents used to say 'Look after the pennies (cents) and the pounds (dollars) will look after themselves'.

Makes cents to me. Makes sense to Libertarians, too.

John Shadbolt,
Libertarian, Acton.

Halton Hills

WEEKEND

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