

Opinion

Bordering on chaos

By TERRY O'SHAUGHNESSY

If anyone had thought that the implementation of the federal government's Goods and Services Tax would take place unnoticed, they were dead wrong. After more than four months of living with the GST, it's clear that, contrary to the government's every prediction, Canadians are not coping well with the new tax.

Or perhaps more to the point, the Canadian economy is not coping well.

A recent national poll, for example, conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, is the latest sign that our beleaguered economy has had enough. The poll results showed that very nearly half of all Canadian households—45 per cent—have cut back on spending since the introduction of the GST on the first of the year. Meanwhile, Statistics Canada recently reported that retail sales in January plummeted by 4.1 per cent compared with a year ago, the worst monthly decline since 1961. The agency's index of 10 key economic indicators also fell by 1 per cent in January, the twelfth straight monthly decline and by far the largest of this recession. In addition, the GST has also triggered a sharper-than-predicted jump in consumer prices. In January, Canada's annualized inflation rate, propelled by the GST, soared 1.8 percentage points to 6.8 per cent—well above the 1.25 percentage points predicted by former Finance Minister Michael Wilson.

For once, it seems, just about everyone (outside of government, that is) is in agreement: the GST has, and probably will continue to dampen consumer demand and prolong the already weakened state of our economy.

CFIB's vice president of research and chief economist, Catherine Swift, isn't surprised by the public's frigid response to the new tax. Referring to the recent surge in cross-border shopping, Swift argues that the revolt against the tax has worked its way across the border as literally hundreds of thousands of Canadians are now shopping in the U.S. instead of their own country. For 1991, Swift anticipates that last year's 53 million border crossings will increase by as much as 30 per cent to approximately 69 million.

"It only stands to reason," she says, "that at least a portion of the respondents to this poll are driving across the border to shop.

"It's not the Canadian way to yell and scream in the street, but people have reached the breaking point. Consumers are using cross-border shopping as their tax revolt—and more and more they're using their cars to prove it."

Canada's retailers, she adds, are competing on an uneven playing field. Already suffering from a crippling tax burden which in many cases is as much as 40 per cent higher than their U.S. counterparts, border retailers were stung particularly hard by the GST.

"Let's face it. It's unfair to blame consumers for trying to save some money. Every level of government, however, must now face up to its responsibility to help curb the outflow of Canadian dollars from our economy."

CFIB is recommending that two good places to start would be with a lower Canadian dollar and a lower overall tax burden.

"And the sooner," Swift says, "the better. The country as a whole is desperately in need of a boost to help pull Canada's battered economy out of the basement."

CFIB Feature Service

Letters to the Editor are welcome.
Send to 211 Armstrong Ave.,
Georgetown, Ont. L7G 4X5



"...WE HAD BETTER STOCK UP ON THINGS THAT YOU CAN COOK AS THIS SUNDAY IS 'MOTHER'S DAY'!!"

Our Readers Write

Moms are special

Dear Editor:

In lieu of Mother's Day, I am sending you this letter in the hope that you might print it.

My mother passed away suddenly in 1988 while I was expecting my first child; therefore for me Mother's Day is very difficult.

I would like people to understand the importance of celebrations like "Mother's Day and "Father's Day."

Enclosed is a poem I wrote for my mother on April 3, 1985 at a time when she was feeling a little low.

Please take the time on Mother's Day to tell your mother you love her, you will be glad you did.

My Mother

*There is no other quite like my Mother.
A little woman which stands just over five foot,
wide eyed smile, with glowing cheeks.
Blonde shining curls and brown eyes so deep.*

*No matter the hour, my Mother's there,
for whatever the matter.*

*She's a painter, an electrician, a homemaker, a chef,
a philosopher, a psychologist, the list is immense.*

What makes my Mother more outstanding than any other,

is she's done all these things and more..

*But the most important of all what all of us tend to forget
is she's a woman,*

and not much time for that.

So if you have a Mother with qualities like mine;

Remember, treat her with care because

she comes once in a lifetime.

I love you Mom.

Thank you for taking time.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Amanda Heikamp,
Georgetown

POWER protest needs you

To the Editor:

POWER's protest at Queen's Park this Wednesday, May 15, should bring out every mobile person in Halton Hills, or we may deserve everything and anything we get from City Hall and Parliament.

With the exception of the police and fire departments, and hospitals, Halton Hills would be shrewd if "everyone" were allowed to attend this protest without any threat to their work, positions or jobs. After all this is a fight for our very lives. This planet is dying fast.

Every store and public place opposed to the Dump might make a statement by closing on May 15th.

I am actually horrified at the numbers who fear having their opinions made public. What is happen-

ing here?

If we don't or won't defend ourselves publicly, we are in danger of becoming another Third World. How did the Third World become so poverty stricken in the first place? Their world fell into the hands of ruling class and the greed of their barbarism.

The difference between the savage and the barbaric is the savage lives day by day, season by season. The barbaric mostly hoardes and hasn't much to do with being civilized.

Our territories, our whole world and its health is our only strength.

Come on Halton Hills ... let's say NO!

Lois A. Richardson,
Georgetown

Halton Hills

WEEKEND

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Publisher

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