



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Want respect for law? Close all the loopholes

It's a revolution. There are no guns and no guerrillas. This revolution is more subtle.

It's a re-ordering of the society that our forefathers created on these pristine shores. Canada, the world's great social experiment, is a country undergoing vast changes. However, not all of those changes are for the better. There is an example of that process right here in Milton.

A country sets laws to allow for a fair ordering of society. While laws change, a country must uphold its laws or they are rendered meaningless.

However, actual transgressions of the law are less damaging to a society than allowing law-breakers to go unpunished.

Which is worse, a murder, or murder that's effectively legal and institutionalized because there is no penalty?

A respect for law is the basis of any healthy, orderly society. It's what makes Canada great. Canadian citizens expect law breakers to be punished. They expect everyone to be treated equally under the law.

It's this principle that makes Canada a nice place to live. It's failure to adhere to this principle that makes much of the world a frightening place.

However, Canada hasn't always been this way and without vigilance it may not continue.

Currently in rural Milton, a philosophical society called Radha Soami Society Beas (RSSB) own a piece of property on which they have constructed a new building.

They call it a "barn" for which they don't require a change in the property's agricultural zoning.

The "barn" is the size of an arena. It's an attractive building that looms up over the adjoining Trafalgar Golf Club.

I have no doubt the Society will use part of its structure as a barn for the storage of agricultural equipment and for the staging of volunteers to work the 25-acre farm.

I also have no doubt they will use it as a gathering place or, using the term for a meeting place of like-minded people, a temple.

In a legal affidavit filed with Ontario Court,



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with a
View*

with BRAD REAUME

Donald Maedel, an RSSB member and the project's construction manager, said it was hoped the property could be used for the group's meetings.

"From the beginning we have tried to design and build a barn that would have a pleasing architectural appearance and the practical potential for multi-purpose use," he said.

Why did Town officials not recognize this "barn" for what it is long before construction had advanced so far? An ounce of prevention could have saved a lot of grief from neighbours. Now the RSSB has applied to virtually double the size of the existing house.

The Radha Soami Society Beas argue the structure is a barn because they will store agricultural implements there. Arguing that it's a barn because they say it's a barn, is not credible.

Various legal transgressions in Milton's rural area, from compost heaps to the creation of a landfill, have rendered the law-abiding population very cynical. The law, it seems, is so flimsy that it's almost meaningless. People feel that by following accepted processes they are being stymied by the law while others, who punch holes through terminology and process, get what they want.

Law abiding people want action to close these loopholes. If they don't get it, they might not be so law abiding in the future.

This is the beginning of an unraveling society — one that no longer has respect for law.

Faced with an inability to punish transgressors, the Town is setting itself up to be trod upon again, and again, and again.



Looking Back ...

Five generations of Edith McCullough's family got together in Milton in June, 1966. Seventy-six years spanned the oldest and youngest family members. Mrs. McCullough, 77, sits at the left. Behind her are her daughter Mrs. Isnor of Milton and grand-daughter Mrs. MacMillan of Oakville. Beside her are great-grand-daughter Mrs. Sheppard and great-great-grandson Lennie Sheppard, aged 15 months. Mrs. McCullough had five children, 24 grandchildren, 61 great-grandchildren and a great-great grandchild.

Democracy is key issue in ongoing GST fiasco

When most Canadians think about the GST, they think about how it affects their personal finances.

Business people think about the costs and headache of administering the tax and government bureaucrats think about how they can raise more revenues out of the GST-paying public.

But the most important issue in conjunction with the GST — democracy — seldom comes up in conversation. From the beginning, the GST has been a study in how Ottawa steamrolls over the democratic will of the Canadian people.

In 1989, the Mulroney administration foisted the most unpopular tax in Canadian history on an outraged public, pulling out all the stops, including stacking the unelected Senate.

In 1993, the federal Liberals were elected on a platform to "scrap," "kill," and "abolish" the GST. They recanted on that promise and are now attempting to "harmonize" the GST with provincial sales taxes. Prime Minister Jean Chretien even went so far as to use his dictatorial powers to throw John Nunziata out of the caucus for pointing out that the Liberals have no democratic mandate to continue enforcing the GST. But surprisingly, Ottawa's anti-democratic politicians have also made some constructive contributions to the GST debate.

The sleepy, patronage-infested, unaccountable Red Chamber recently pulled a fast one on

*Let's
Talk
Taxes*



with PAUL PAGNUELO

Finance Minister Paul Martin by defeating part of his new GST legislation that would hide the tax in the price of goods and services in Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Now most people would probably think this is a good thing and, in fact, in many respects it is.

By killing tax-inclusive pricing, the Senate has saved retailers millions of dollars that would have had to have been spent adapting inventory systems and putting different price stickers on those items to be sold in the Atlantic provinces.

More importantly, consumers in Atlantic Canada will actually be told up-front how much sales tax (15 per cent) they'll be paying every time they step up to the cash register. Keeping the tax visible ensures that Canadians are aware of how much governments are taking from them, thereby making it more difficult to raise the rate.

So perhaps the Senate did the right thing. But did they? Isn't there a bigger question here than whether or not the GST should be visible or hidden?

Taxpayers are certainly better off for the Senate's actions. But don't we need to ask ourselves whether or not an unelected, unaccountable group of old political hacks should be allowed to veto a popularly-elected body of representatives?

It's great that the Senate killed such an egregious measure as tax inclusive pricing this time, but what about next time?

"Let's Talk Taxes" is a commentary provided by the Ontario Taxpayers Federation.

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