

OPINION

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Dropping GST from books gets rave review

Does anyone smell an election in the wind?

It would certainly appear that one is in the offing, with the rumor mill grinding out stories of how the Campbell government is set to give taxpayers their first incentive to vote Tory in a long time.

The possible removal of the dreaded GST from books would truly be one of the most welcome government policies to come down the pike since the abolition of prohibition.

Campbell is alleged to be under substantial pressure from the publishers and her own cabinet hierarchy to do away with the ludicrous and damaging practice of taxing reading material.

Canada is one of the few coun-



Viewpoint

Andrew Mair

tries on earth that would see fit to tax the learning process.

David Hunt of the Don't Tax Reading Coalition lobby group was understandably elated at the move.

He told the Toronto Star top Tories were "very serious" about the tax break. However, they should have been this concerned in the first place.

Books were always sacred cows, put ahead of all political agendas, as it was thought col-

lecting monies for the free exchange of ideas was tantamount to a Nazi book burning party.

But that is precisely what Michael Wilson did.

And now, the PCs are asking to be seen in a new light.

Campbell is doing the only thing possible if she hopes to extend the eight years of Tory rule - that being, a complete house cleaning.

With most of the old guard gone, Campbell is looking at her party's most unpopular legislation and, while not completely wiping the slate, she is at least cognizant of the fact that if she hopes to retain her title, there is a lot of backtracking to be done.

It may seem like a token gift to the beleaguered taxpayer,

this break on the GST, but it is certainly a positive step.

The GST on books, magazines and newspapers was a ridiculous tax grab, one which effectively jeopardized the Canadian publishing industry, and likely cost many jobs.

Closing the book on the tax would cost the government \$160 million a year, analysts say, but it would be a small price to pay to regain the freedom from taxation on a precious resource.

Finally, a move by a politician that can be applauded.

Slashed buses full of paying customers

Dear Editor,

I am writing to protest the proposed cancellation of the Uxbridge/Stouffville/Markham GO Express bus route to downtown Toronto. I have been a passenger on these buses for 10 years and it is evident to me that, not only is it a paying proposition, but also performs an essential service for those living in the Markham, Stouffville, and Uxbridge areas who work in downtown Toronto.

One wonders if our government/GO Transit - in their combined efforts to cost cut - took the trouble to evaluate the profits (or lack thereof) of the transportation routes they were slashing.

Uxbridge/Stouffville/Markham buses are full of paying passengers.

Perhaps the powers that be should cast their eyes on the empty midmorning/mid-afternoon trains running to Oakville and Whitby.

The rationale for the proposed cancellation dwells on the existence of what is euphemistically termed a 'parallel route.'

The 'parallel routes' for the direct one hour nonstop express bus downtown are:

- a GO bus to the Scarborough Town Centre (time 30 minutes)
- LRT to Kennedy subway (time 30 minutes)
- Subway to downtown (time 30 minutes plus)

or:
- GO train to Union (time 50 minutes)

Editor's Mail

- Subway to place of work (time unknown)

Thus, it is hardly surprising that the vast majority of displaced bus passengers will resort to their cars thus adding to congestion and pollution.

It has always interested me

how governments often cause the situations that they love to rant about.

In conclusion, I can only shake my head in anger and bewilderment at a government which wildly wastes taxpayers' money, stumbles from one crisis and scandal to another, and then - as a final insult - cancels a service which MAKES money and performs a valuable service to the people the politicians profess to serve.

Gerry Crompton
Markham

What has happened to architecture...that the only passers-by who can contemplate it without pain are those equipped with a white stick and a dog?

Bernard Levin

I'm not sure office buildings ARE even architecture.

They're really a mathematical calculation, just three-dimensional investments.

Gordon Bunshaft

It may be rank heresy to say so, but I think Levin and Bunshaft are out of touch. Oh, modern architecture has been fairly horrific for the past half century or so - all those monolithic sixty-storey refrigerator cartons marching off to the horizon - but I think I detect a decided change for the better. My firm just moved into new digs in deepest darkest downtown Toronto, and you know what? The city skyline is spectacular.

Oh, sure there are still too many boring old boxes littering the land, but they are slowly but surely being upstaged by a dazzling constellation of turrets and spires and arches of glass and steel.

Colors are coming on strong, too. The drab look of raw cement that was such a rage just a few years back is suddenly as dead as the Edsel. Some of the new buildings are forest green and cobalt blue and iridescent pink. The one I'm in sports saucy red stripes up and down its flanks. Reminds me of a Swiss Army Knife.

Wacky and wondrous edifices speckle the Hogtown landscape. Viewed from a distance, the famous SkyDome resembles some colossal Galapagos tortoise lumbering through the downtown core. There's a life insurance building near Mount Pleasant and Bloor graced with flying buttresses and vaulting walkways and glittering domes. It looks like some crenellated fantasy castle straight out of Tinkerbell's Magic Kingdom.

And I love it. All of it. It looks to me like architects are finally having some fun.

Let's hope it lasts. Public fashion is a fickle old fop. This year's toast of the town can turn into next year's used-to-be quicker than you can say deely



Basic Black

Arthur Black

boppers and disco boots.

And the next major architectural left turn might not be nearly as appealing.

I note, for instance, a nineteenth century townhouse in London's Hammersmith Grove. The two-storey brick structure was the subject of a feature article in Vogue magazine recently - though it's hard to understand why when you see the photographs.

The joint, to be charitable, is a dump. The front yard is choked with weeds. Plaster is falling off the lintel over the front door. The bricks in the facade are chipped and cracked.

It doesn't improve noticeably when you get inside. Several layers of peeling wallpaper festoon most of the walls. There's a blackened fireplace in the parlor that looks like it was used to render whale blubber for a century or two.

The armchairs have stuffing leaking out of them. A photograph veiled by a cracked glass frame dangles crookedly from a nail in one wall. There's dust and grime and rust and slime on just about every surface in sight.

Nothing unusual about that - just another vermin-ridden inner city flop house, right?

Wrong. This is the home of a very rich and quite famous American designer by the name of Liza Bruce.

Liza and her husband Nicholas Vega not only live in this hole, they decorated it this way deliberately. "When we first got the house," says Nicholas, "we poured coffee and Guinness over the floors to darken them. It smelled wonderful, like a pub after hours."

Sounds swell, Nick. Oscar Wilde defined fashion as: "a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months."

I'm beginning to understand what Oscar was talking about.



Adam

by Brian Basset

