

Oral Questions

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it might occur to the hon. member that one of the reasons why there might possibly be difficulty in companies meeting the demands is because business has been so good for the small business community that it has been ordering so many of these cash registers it is difficult for the cash register companies to meet this extraordinary demand.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I know the hon. member is quite aware that we have put forward two proposals already for streamlined accounting to help the small business community in meeting the requirements of the GST.

My colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, has at least one other proposal for streamlined accounting under consideration.

These will be in place to assist the small business community in meeting the requirements of the GST. I believe that this and a number of other things that I have talked about before in this House demonstrate quite clearly our sensitivity to the concerns of the small business community, as it approaches the requirements of the GST in January, 1991.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): If I may, Mr. Speaker, I will send a copy of the letter to the minister to help educate him on the problems with cash registers, if I can have a Page bring that to the Minister of Finance.

Some Hon. Members: Order!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, in the province of Quebec, the Prime Minister's home province, Michel Décaré, who works with Mr. Bullock, told the Quebec Finance Minister that the GST is a real nightmare for small and medium-sized businesses because the cash registers will not be converted in time to handle two separate taxes.

Mr. Speaker, my question is: Given this serious problem, how will Canadians know exactly what tax they will pay with the GST? Does the Minister of Finance have an answer to this important question for all Canadians this afternoon?

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I understand the attitude of many people in the small business community. They would prefer not to make changes. People can understand people who would prefer not to make changes.

When we look at the benefits that are going to be brought forward by the introduction of the goods and services tax, we see how it will help businesses which are competing today, and how it will put those businesses on a level playing field with the imports with which they compete. Canadian businesses are now paying one-third more tax than the imports that they are competing with.

These are the clear benefits that are in place. While there may be some difficulties as the small business community encounters that need for change, once that change is behind it the benefits are going to be very, very clear.

We have put in place a payment of up to \$1,000 which will pay small businesses to help them get over this transitional hurdle. We have also put in place the small business streamlined accounting. As well, we are making it less of a requirement for them to make the payments of the taxes than we are for big business. There are a number of ways in which we have helped the small business community—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville.

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GUN CONTROL

Mr. Bill Attewell (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. I have two points concerning gun control legislation.

First, why the delay? After the recent tragedy at the École Polytechnique in Montreal I thought we would have seen legislation passed or entered in this House very quickly.

Second, can the minister assure members of the House that the process of applying for a licence for a firearm will be much more rigorous and thorough in order to help prevent a massacre such as occurred in Montreal?