

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of National Revenue because the minister has decreed now that Canadians will have to pay the GST after the first of January, whether it is the law of the land or not.

Knowing that Canadians are aware they may not be legally required to pay that tax, does the minister understand the chaos and confusion that is going to be caused when angry, frustrated consumers walk in to purchase goods or services in the country knowing that they do not have to pay the goods and services tax if Parliament has not passed it? Is the minister going to go along with this knowing that even the Auditor General does not think he can implement this tax effectively?

Mr. Beatty: You should speak to Allan MacEachen about that.

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would get his facts straight he would know that what I said in the scrum to some 12 or 15 reporters last Friday was consistent with what the Minister of Finance and I and others have been saying all along and that the headline that came out from one of the 12 or 15 reporters was taken out of context. In the next sentence, in a transcript from the scrum, a reporter said: "Are you saying it is going into effect even if legislation doesn't pass?" My answer was: "No, no. I didn't say that. I am saying that I hope it passes sooner rather than later."

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that the business community is saying, whether it is the president or chairman of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce or others, that every day that the Senate delays the passage of this bill it is costing the business community money as a result of uncertainty. I would hope that the hon. member would have enough guts to stand up, speak to his friends on the Liberal side and make sure this is passed on behalf of the business community of Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Minister of National Revenue, because this morning we talked with the

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newspaper journalist who wrote that story and who explained it. In fact, it was a one-on-one interview which took place.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Langdon: I want to put this question to the minister: Is he saying that the various quotes, extensively put out at length in *The Financial Post* and which have been taped by the journalist in question, are, in fact, false? Is he denying what is in *The Financial Post*?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I thought I just explained quite clearly the result of the statement taken out of context.

If he reads the transcript, the hon. member will know that we were discussing as to when, in November, this may or may not pass in the Senate. We were talking about November 1, November 9, and November 15. That is where the quote came from in respect of when in November it will pass. I just said: "The GST is going to go ahead on January 1, 1990, regardless of when it is passed in the Senate", meaning in November. Later on, and I repeat what I just said to the hon. member, I was asked: "Are you saying it is going into effect even if legislation does not pass?" And I said: "No, no, I did not say that. I am saying that I hope it passes sooner rather than later." That is consistent with what I have been saying all along.

The concern with this whole matter is that the business community, as a result of the delay in the passage of the legislation in the Senate, is now confused and is uncertain as to what is happening. We are saying that we are certain that it is going to pass through the Senate, it will become law, and businesses should prepare early for their own benefit.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, frankly the minister is wriggling; he is attempting to squirm; he is trying somehow to escape—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member could put his preamble and put his question.

Mr. Langdon: I put it to the minister that it is time for him to stand up in the House and say very clearly what it was he said on Friday. Is the minister prepared to stand up and, quite clearly, say to the people of Canada that