

- (16) Only if firms receive a full rebate for the tax paid on their inventory, will they be in a position on January 1, 1991 to reduce their prices to completely reflect the removal of the Federal Sales Tax. Where the rebate is inadequate to compensate firms for the tax content in their existing inventories, they can hardly be expected to reduce their prices fully until the old inventory is sold. Thus, even where firms intend to pass along any savings it may be some time until the expected price reductions on certain goods materialize.
- (17) At a cost of \$19 million, the Government has established a GST Consumer Information Office (CIO) within the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to monitor the implementation of the GST. Primarily, the CIO's purpose is to provide public information on price increases and decreases as the GST is introduced and the current Federal Sales Tax is removed. However, the CIO can also investigate consumer complaints about firms' pricing practices and inform the public of any irregularities.
- (18) A body like the CIO, which has no formal powers to rollback prices, is likely to have little influence on the behaviour of prices when the GST is introduced. Any power the CIO might have would stem from its ability to exercise moral suasion with companies and trade associations and to inform the public of irregular pricing practices. Even here, its ability to affect prices is limited. Publication of the names of businesses that are believed to be guilty of pricing abuses would leave the CIO open to the risk of legal action for defamation, according to testimony received by the Consumer and Corporate Affairs Committee.