

*Supply*

I wonder if the hon. member for Nickel Belt could tell us if the NDP in its upcoming Ontario budget is going to do away with its consumption tax, the Ontario sales tax, or does he think it is going to increase it? Could he also give us some comments about his own party's position on that very difficult decision that this party took and how it is going to approach the GST when it goes into the next election? Is it going to keep its position of saying it is going to eliminate it? Will he make a commitment today that his party will go into the next election saying that there will be no federal consumption tax?

Is that his position, or is his party just hiding around this issue, letting us take the heat on it and pretending that in fact it is going to do away with the GST when really all it is going to do is modify it and perhaps increase it to 15 per cent or so?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I wish I could have put more content in my speech, but like the Tory policy cupboard it is like a cuckoo's nest.

Let me say where we stand on the GST. We have said consistently all during the fight over the GST that it was not the way to go. Traditionally in Canada consumption taxes have been left as the fiefdom for the provinces. That is how the provinces get their revenues, partly from consumption taxes. I believe them to be regressive. This party said that they ought not to put the GST in place because we saw that as simply a money grab. We agreed that the manufacturers' sales tax was unfair, so they needed to get money if they wanted to eliminate the manufacturers' sales tax. Time and time again we put forward concrete proposals with respect to making the income tax system a lot fairer.

I identified just a couple of points in my speech. One was the trust accounts for the very rich in this country which now total some \$35 billion to \$36 billion, and not one penny of tax has been paid. How was that accumulated? It was accumulated within an atmosphere of collective Canadianism. It did not just drop out of a tree, brother. I want to say that. Not one penny of tax has been paid on that wealth.

We also said that they ought not to be allowing write-offs to corporations such as the costs of lobbyists. The other one has to do with the rip-off of the three-martini lunch which costs Canadian taxpayers \$1 billion.

There are people, individual business types, who are cheating the government on the three-martini lunch during which they are actually entertaining their family and friends and they have nothing to do with the cost of business.

I do not see why the taxpayers of Ontario should bear the burden in terms of the SkyDome while the corporations get a rip-off by being able to write off their box seats at the SkyDome against their federal income tax. Those are just a few of the areas. We can go through the whole list because we submitted it in committee.

There are billions of dollars. That is where to get them. If the income tax system is to be fair, it has to be progressive and redistributive. There is nothing fair about the consumption tax. I pay the GST for a haircut just as much as the person who makes \$20,000 a year, \$10,000 a year or \$5,000 a year. I do not see anything fair about that at all. It is not fair at all.

One of my constituents just wrote to me and sent me a copy of all the GST slips that she has paid. It totalled \$1,000 and she got back some \$145 for a year's rebate on the GST. They are hitting the poor people all the time. That is what they are doing, and I am telling them that this party will not be continuing a tax that is so unfair and so unjust.

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the member for Nickel Belt. I heard him give all the reasons why an election would not be called, but I was not sure if he really wanted one or not.

Does he not think, with the condition of the economy, with the number of people unemployed and the lack of creativity coming from the government, that every time we stand and vote against the government on a money bill we essentially are saying that we challenge the government and we risk bringing on an election?

My question is very simple. Is he for an election right now or would he rather wait?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question. I do not want to deal with hypothetical things. I fail to see the point in spitting in the wind and having all that spittle come back in my face. That is why people who watch this place wonder whether or not we are serious. They are the ones who control calling an election.