

EDITORIAL

A big load from the government

The new year brings with it a brand new expense. Tax-mania is sweeping the nation and this time the ivory sanctuary of university won't save students from being hit as severely as other citizens.

The Goods and Services Tax has become an unkind reality that coincides with what we've been told is only a minor slump in the economy (recession). And as students begin to pay a federal consumer tax on many items and services that were once tax-exempt (all in the interest of fairness), we must finally realize that the protective dome of accessible education around us is being dismantled piece by piece.

First, we had to face the accrued effects of provincial underfunding, and now the federal GST comes on as the finisher to many low-income students' chances for an affordable post-secondary education in Ontario.

No one is all too happy about this GST.

Pacifying statements by Revenue Minister Otto Jelinek that there is no confusion about the GST are blatantly untrue. Many businesses still don't know how to apply the tax properly and some Canadian consumers seem to be disregarding it altogether.

Here's the good news if you care to be a little anti-authoritarian. You can't be arrested if you refuse to pay the GST. Some people are starting to sense that this is an ideal form of civil disobedience and protest against unfair financial policies.

Even if you don't pay it, the vendor or business is still required to remit the GST amount to the federal government. Many businesses are upset that the government won't help them to enforce collecting the unpopular tax.

Thus, they are left with two options: sell the item and absorb the cost, or refuse to sell the item (which breaks the oral contract that a customer and vendor enter into at the beginning of a transaction). This second option becomes more difficult when a service has already been provided such as a haircut, tune-up or taxi-ride.

Finance Minister Michael Wilson has guaranteed that "most students will be better off under the GST than they are now" because students are eligible for the GST Credit.

It would be nice to believe Mike, but it remains a mystery how \$190 per year will compensate students for paying tax on their books, meals, clothing, transportation, and beer during the academic season.

Some organizations like the York Federation of Students which have publicly denounced the tax and decided to absorb many of the extra costs on principle instead of forwarding them to York students.

What is most distressing about the whole GST issue is the federal government's total disregard for the wishes of the majority of the population and specifically about the continued demands of student groups across the country for more financial aid.

In this regard, whether or not the GST will help to encourage Canadian manufacturing, or help to reduce our burgeoning deficit is of little consequence.

The Canadian democratic system needs a drastic enema starting with this government. Things have become too congested in recent years. Indeed, there is a wonderful place where the Prime Minister and Mikey can put their GST.



LETTERS

Excalibur welcomes letters to the editor on all topics. We will publish, space permitting, letters up to 500 words in length. They must be typed, double spaced, and accompanied by the writer's name, signature and telephone number. The opinions expressed belong to the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of *Excalibur* staff or directors. However, we will refuse letters that are racist, sexist, libellous or those which attempt to incite hatred toward an individual or an identifiable group. All material is subject to editing. All submissions must be addressed to the Editor-in-chief, Room 111, Central Square.

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Excalibur is an autonomous corporation with a mandate to inform, educate and provoke thought among York University's diverse population.

The distinct opinions and articles appearing in *Excalibur* belong first and foremost to the individual writers and are not necessarily shared by any other *Excalibur* staff or board member.

Final editorial responsibility is retained by the Editor-in-chief.

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Correction:

Alan Grad's letter in the Dec. 5 issue of *Excalibur* questioned whether Arabs can work out their problems all by themselves. The term Arabs implied the Arab states not the Arab people in general.

President Ghomeshi responds to criticisms

An open letter to the York student community.

As we approach the end of the first academic term, I feel it necessary to respond to recent questions and criticisms from some York undergraduates that have been directed towards me and the YFS/FEY.

Indeed, I wish to restate my principles and intentions as the president of the central student government.

First and foremost, I have been repeatedly accused of unfairly taking "one-sided" approaches to various campus issues. In reality, the suggestion that I have prompted one side on a number of political concerns is completely true, but this has in no way been undemocratic.

I have not engaged in any chiliastic attempt, as some have suggested, at imposing my own random "political propaganda" upon York students. On the contrary, I am simply trying to live up to the election platform upon which I was democratically elected to act.

Perhaps a midterm refresher on the content of my election promises is appropriate (in case anyone has forgotten the platform that was posted around the university during the campaign period). Among the highlights were:

1. to fight for a provincial government freeze on tuition fees — concomitant with a referendum on joining larger student lobbying groups and an explicitly OFS/CFS position.
2. to democratize the CYFS (YFS/FEY) through measures such as the formation of a Clubs' Coalition (the coalition has been formed and is functioning with efficacy in working towards complete self-determination for clubs).

3. to provide full funding to the Women's Centre (with last year's federation atrocities still in memory, \$5,000 has been committed to the centre so far, in addition to resources being put towards battling sexism, homophobia and heterosexism on campus).
4. to begin an awareness campaign to fight racism on campus (for the first time a student government at York has committed time and resources to this issue; it must remain a key priority).

Second, having stated the above, it is important to note that if students have legitimate concerns about YFS activities, club funding, the OFS/CFS referendum etc. . . . we must address such problems, and learn from imperfections for future circumstances.

But it is clear that the arguments expressed by those students organizing the colorful banner in Central Square, or protesting my attendance at the Mulroney visit demonstration have little to do with referendums or macaroni. Doubtless, the underlying question at hand is whether student government has a place in addressing "political" issues on and off campus.

On this basic question, I must once again emphatically state that I believe student government not only *should* address education-related political issues, but has a responsibility to education-related political issues, but has a responsibility to do so. How can anyone effectively argue that the GST, cuts in social programs, or attacks on lesbians and gays do not affect students and accessibility to post-secondary education?

The YFS/FEY is a political body, and may make decisions that do not reflect the view of every student at

York (that's what we have elections for!).

Silence in the face of, say, massive cutbacks in federal government transfer payments, or institutional racism, is a political statement also . . . consent.

Finally, if my pro-choice, bilingualism, anti-administration, anti-war, anti-Mulroney government stances offend some students on campus, I understand, but I will not apologize. I'm initiating the types of changes and actions that voters democratically — and in record numbers — elected me to pursue during last year's elections.

I challenge my opponents to enter the Presidential election race of March 1991 on the platform of undoing all of the progressive reforms the YFS/FEY have engaged in this year. You will have your opportunity . . . if that's what York students want.

Sincerely,
 Jean Ghomeshi
 President YFS/FEY

CHRY was insensitive

To the editor,

I've never been terribly bothered that a small portion of my money is funding York's radio station CHRY. However, after seeing their unprofessional conduct at the Memorial for the victims of the Montreal Massacre, I really question how wisely my money is being spent.

This was an extremely emotional time, and as I arrived at the Scott

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