

to get GST procedures, and all the other positive elements that we are beginning to put in place now for the benefit of each and every business in Canada, particularly the small business community.

As I have said in the past, if we did not do that, if we did not prepare, we would be irresponsible. We are preparing.

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, the small business community to which the minister refers has been very outspoken in its opposition to the goods and services tax. The minister has been talking about the efficiency of the program he is putting in place. That program includes the hiring of 4,000 to 7,000 tax collectors and so-called tax police.

Since the Minister of National Revenue is debating the amount it is going to cost taxpayers to implement the GST, can he tell us how much it is going to cost small businesses which are going to be forced to collect the goods and services tax? How much is it going to cost them?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of elements in that question that have to be corrected.

The hon. member is wrong in the number of employees that are required to be hired to implement and administer the GST. The hon. member is wrong when he says that the small businesses we talked to are opposed to this. We know that John Bulloch wants a national sales tax. He is opposed to this system, but the majority of small businesses we are talking to are not opposed to it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Milliken: Give me a break.

Mr. Fontana: Your nose is growing. Pick up the phone line; you'll find out.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. minister could complete his answer.

Mr. Jelinek: Mr. Speaker, they get a little antsy when they start hearing the truth and the facts.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. minister does not answer the question, they will never hear the truth.

Mr. Jelinek: To answer my hon. friend specifically, the compliance costs to small business are going to be minimal. That is why we are offering the advance of up to \$1,000 to small businesses to be able to adjust to the new, better, fairer and simpler tax.

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CONSUMERS GAS

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister about the takeover of Consumers Gas by British Gas. The British Office of Gas Supply, a government watchdog agency in the U.K., has accused British Gas of encouraging energy waste in Britain with pricing policies which offer discounts to high volume purchasers.

Will the minister see to it that this environmentally damaging approach to pricing, which has been identified by this British watchdog agency as an environmentally dangerous approach, is brought to the attention of both Investment Canada and other agencies that have to make decisions with respect to this sale so that they will make decisions to keep Consumers Gas in Canadian hands?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that Investment Canada does not make decisions. It makes recommendations.

Its recommendations are based in takeovers of this sort on proving that there is net benefit to Canada from any such takeover. If that case is not made and the minister does not accept it, the takeover would not go through.

The hon. member should know, too, that the Ontario Energy Board plays a key role in this decision, as do the energy authorities in the province of Quebec.

• (1440)

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, that is why I suggested the variety of different agencies with which this government, if it takes environmental considerations seriously, should be communicat-