

Oral Questions

forest products industry and mining industry, and the agricultural side as well. All of our exporting industries are helped by this. This is why we must proceed on this and that is why this government is bound to do so.

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the answer of the Minister of Finance quoting Mr. Bulloch, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. On Monday the minister stated, as reported at page 7892 of *Hansard*, February 6:

My hon. friend talks about the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I have letters from members of the CFIB who have listened to the rhetoric of their president—

My question to the Minister of Finance is fairly straightforward. If he does not believe that the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business disagrees with this goods and services tax, is he prepared to sit down at a round table with representatives like Mrs. Swift and Mr. Bulloch who represent small business in this country and try to explain to them why he thinks this tax is so good when they think it is a nightmare on Main Street.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have met with Mr. Bulloch on many occasions. We have a difference of opinion on certain aspects of the goods and services tax. The one thing we do agree on which Mr. Bulloch stated in the quote that I just read out is that there is not a better alternative. My hon. friend knows there is not a better alternative. My hon. friend knows that we must change from the manufacturers' sales tax. He said that himself on August 8 last year.

We are proceeding with change. We do not have the luxury as the opposition does of simply opposing and criticizing. We have to get on with making policy for the Government of Canada and we are going to do that. The goods and services tax is our best approach to changing the manufacturers' sales tax and replacing it with something that is much better, and we are going to go ahead and do that.

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, the minister is very interested in alternatives. I want to present an alternative to him. With respect to the \$14 million he is going to be spending on informing Canadians about the goods and services tax—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): This is the alternative?

Mr. Young (Gloucester): This is an alternative to spending \$14 million.

I wonder if the Minister of Finance would organize the members of Parliament who sit to your right, Mr. Speaker, the Conservative members of Parliament, all of whom are well paid and who enjoy the capacity to be able to travel—

Mr. Mulroney: What about you?

Mr. Young (Gloucester): I am too, certainly. They have the capacity to travel across the country. Instead of spending \$14 million on pamphlets, why does the Minister of Finance not ask his colleagues to fan out across the country and explain to Canadians what the goods and services tax is all about?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not think it passed your attention that the hon. member did not come up with an alternative to the goods and services tax. He does not have one.

He is encouraging hon. members on this side of the House to get out and talk to as many Canadians as possible about the GST. We are doing that. We have been and we will continue to do that, because on this side of the House we are committed to this. We understand that this is the best way to go, replacing a bad tax with a tax that is the right tax. I have any number of quotes from people who say that we must make a change from this tax. We are going to go ahead and do that because we know we must do that.

Members opposite have said from time time: "Why can we not have a more competitive country?" This is one of the ways that we can build a more competitive economy.

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COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State.

In early December, the Standing Committee on Human Rights strongly and unanimously recommended extension of the Court Challenges Program. The committee said that access to the courts is integral to the effective implementation of constitutional rights.

Yesterday every employee of the Court Challenges Program received a lay-off notice telling them the program is shutting down on March 31 of this year. Will the minister immediately allocate a short term increase