

tion to the contrary I would appreciate it if they would let me know and we can gather them up accordingly.

The proposed GST is a key part of the government's plan to build a strong economy. We believe Canadians have a right to know and understand how the proposed tax will operate.

Let me assure you, Mr. Speaker, that in accordance with your ruling we will respect the principles that you have established in our information efforts and certainly any future information efforts that would involve the release of brochures by my department.

As a government we have a responsibility to explain why the GST is being introduced. The importance of public understanding is a key lesson from other countries where similar tax systems have been introduced and, indeed, the Finance Committee of the House has commented specifically on this. Where business people and consumers have been well informed implementation has gone smoothly.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to pursue a broad campaign of public information about the GST but to do so consistent with the ruling that you set out about one month ago and certainly in the production of any new materials will be very mindful of the parameters that you set out in that ruling.

• (1540)

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, first, I wonder if the Minister of Finance could inform the House as to exactly when the contract to which he referred ended. What was the date of completion of the contract?

Second, I would like to point out to the Minister of Finance that our concern is not about the government giving information about a proposal it wants to make to the House and the country regarding a new tax, but rather that it has been conveying information to the public in a way which conveys to the public the idea that this House has spoken, has made a decision on this tax that it will go into effect on January 1, 1991. This is not the case, and no matter how much the government believes in this proposal it has no right to convey to the public any information suggesting this House has acted, has taken a decision such that this tax will go into effect. I think this is the point, and I am sorry the Minister of Finance still has not got it.

Privilege

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, I thought I had made it clear that I had got that point, that I had made it very clear that we would be mindful of the parameters that you have set out in your ruling.

In answer to the specific question, I do not have that date in mind but I think the key point is that information is not being sent out. The brochures, I have been advised, have all been withdrawn from the supermarkets which has been part of the contract, so the information will not be provided at this point.

Mr. Speaker: This matter was raised earlier today by the Hon. Member for Kingston and The Islands and I appreciate very much the fact that the Minister of Finance has come into the House and given the statement that he has. The Hon. Member for Windsor West intervened and the Hon. Minister has responded. I think the Hon. Member for Kingston and The Islands would understand why I would now think that the matter has ended.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, it would be of interest, I respectfully submit to the House and to yourself, as to whether the distribution of these leaflets, pursuant to the contract, continued after you gave your ruling of some weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I spoke too hastily. I do not know whether the Minister can give us that information.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have not got that information. What I do know is that the contract is completed. The materials have been withdrawn. I am not going to say to you today that there were not materials that were in the supermarkets following your ruling that did get out into the hands of the Canadian public. The point is that by the end of October we were advised that they had all been withdrawn and that there are no further brochures being distributed through the supermarkets.

Mr. Speaker: Following the comment of the Hon. Member for Windsor West and the comment of the Minister of Finance, I will come back to the House with some comments about this matter after I have had a little more time to look at it.

Again, I thank the hon. minister for coming into the House and I thank the Hon. Member for Kingston and The Islands for raising this important matter.