

Oral Questions

I am not surprised. The Prime Minister finds democracy in Parliament a big nuisance and he did not listen—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition would want to put his question.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, small businesses in this country have opposed this sales tax right from the outset. For daring to stand up to the Minister of Finance the small business community received another kick in the teeth this morning. In order to teach the small business community a lesson, the minister gave them a \$600 million kick in the teeth by taking away the fee that they were supposed to receive for administering his tax.

The minister told hardworking, decent, independent Canadian business people that they would receive an administrative fee for administering the nightmare that this tax is going to bring. Today he broke that promise.

What explanation is he going to give to the million small business people in this country for having once again broken his word, or does he think that the changes he announced this morning will relieve small business of that administrative nightmare?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, first of all let me make it quite clear that if the Leader of the Opposition had spent some time trying to understand this tax he would know that it is not an administrative nightmare. There have been a number of proposals that have been specifically brought in to the GST proposal, including two forms of streamlined accounting. If others are brought to our attention that are workable, we will allow those to be used as well.

We have also provided the small business community a relief from sales tax on the purchase of new equipment that they might need for compliance with the sales tax, that is point of sale equipment as well as inventory control equipment. That will drop the cost of that by about 20 per cent, which is not insignificant.

The final point I have to make is that the small business community, particularly led by the Chamber of Commerce, has been one of the loudest proponents of a lower sales tax rate. That is what we have brought in as a

result of my proposal this morning. The drop from 9 per cent to 7 per cent is a major step forward in meeting the concerns of the small business community.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, a few months ago the Minister of Finance recognized the administrative difficulty that small business would have by allowing them a fee to administer the tax. Every small business representative who appeared before the committee chaired by the member for Mississauga South told the committee, and through the committee told Parliament, that the tax would be an administrative nightmare: two sets of taxes, one federal, one provincial, two sets of books. Absolutely impossible for the average small business person to administer.

This morning the minister admitted for the first time that there was a slowdown in the economy. He said that the economy was slowing down. Yet at this dangerous time the minister insists on proceeding with this inflationary tax. At a dangerous time for the economy he is imposing a new goods and services tax upon Canadians.

How can the minister justify proceeding with this tax at this time at the of the Canadian economy? Does he not believe that his responsibility to the people of Canada is to prevent a recession and not to create a recession?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): First, Mr. Speaker, let me correct something, as I usually have to do in response to the hon. member's questions. People do not have to keep two sets of books. They can calculate the goods and services tax off the same sets of books off of which they are calculating their income tax today. So there are no new sets of books.

I see that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is now nodding his head in agreement.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I am not. I am not.

Mr. Duhamel: You're having hallucinations.

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, today we saw the finance minister swallow himself whole. Canadians are not going to swallow this GST at 7 per cent any more than they were going to swallow it at 9 per cent.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Why in the world would Canadians believe this Minister of Finance