

*Excise Tax Act*

increase in taxes without redressing the inequities and unfairness.

This is one of the great concerns regarding the hidden aspect of consumption taxes. I cannot accept a sign on the wall as visibility. Everyone would need to have a calculator to calculate 9 per cent or 10 per cent of the price. When consumers see a tax at the bottom of the bills, they know exactly what they are paying. They know what percentage of the purchases go toward tax and they know when the tax is increased.

An article appeared in *The Financial Post* today written by Michael Walker, a columnist. He was addressing the issue of visibility of the tax in an article entitled: "I withdraw my support for sales tax". The point this columnist makes confirms the point I am making about the importance of taxpayers knowing what they are paying on each purchase. He makes the point that not having this tax visible to the consumer results in a less open and responsible Government.

This Government has not been open with the Canadian people about the tax system. There are loopholes for corporations, those 60,000 profit-making corporations that still do not pay any tax. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Windsor—Lake St. Clair (Mr. McCurdy), mentioned the need for a minimum corporate tax, something we have advocated for some time. That would show the people that everyone carried a fair share of the burden of taxation.

It has been my experience that if people know their tax dollars are going to provide essential services, whether health services, education services or other public services, they are willing to pay the price. However, they want to know exactly what it is they are paying for and that they are not paying a disproportionate share of the tax burden.

Since the Government came into power, every man, woman and child in Canada is paying an extra \$268 in sales and excise taxes, in hidden taxes. Taxes on gasoline have increased by over 7 cents a litre. Taxes on construction materials are now going up by another 1 per cent.

The Government says that it wants to and needs to raise taxes because of the deficit. It seems it has just discovered the deficit and the debt. We did not hear much about it during the election campaign, perhaps because the debt has increased by \$100 billion since the Government came into power.

**Mr. Milliken:** More than that.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Probably more than that, my colleague says. Regardless of that, the Government has felt it necessary to spend another \$2.7 million to tell Canadians that we have a deficit, a ridiculous expenditure if in fact the Government were serious about using tax dollars wisely.

The Government has also not presented to Canadians that there are many assets owned by the Government represented in the debt, investments in schools, hospitals, roads, municipalities, northern territories and services for the disabled, the elderly and families, all of which cost money. These are investments in Canadians, in a Canadian society that we want to see as being compassionate.

We in the New Democratic Party do not accept increasing wage gaps with more and more people becoming impoverished. We see now that one in six children live in poverty. This is totally unacceptable. The Government says it is working toward tax fairness but that is simply a joke. It is not tax fairness, it is a tax grab which takes from those people who are the most powerless to protest and benefits those who have the most wealth and the most power.

I would like to talk about a few of the specifics in this Bill which are particularly onerous for people who live in remote areas but also have an impact on people in urban areas. In an area like the Yukon, it is much tougher. One of these is the telecommunications tax.

Last year when the 10 per cent telecommunications tax on long distance calls was brought forward, it had a very severe impact on those in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and other rural areas. There are many people in those areas who use mobile and radio phones for business and also for ordinary, everyday use. All those calls then became taxable. It is a good example of people in one area with one perspective formulating a law without knowledge of people in other areas. I am sure many of those who formulated that tax do not use radio or mobile phones and had not even thought of that particular injustice.

The telecommunications tax has increased significantly the cost to small businesses and to governments. In the end, the taxpayer has to pay for that as well.