

Business of the House

For the record, I will read that and it will go into the judgement. The radio ad said:

The proposed goods and services tax will be a tax on the sale of most goods and services in Canada. It is not an additional tax, since it replaces the current federal sales tax.

The GST has three objectives: First, to improve the overall fairness of Canada's tax system. Second, to lower costs so that our products will be more competitive in international markets, and here in Canada. That means more jobs. And finally, to provide a more reliable source of revenue, which will help to reduce the national deficit.

The GST is an important change for Canada. If you'd like more information on how the GST will affect you, call toll-free—

That is the advertisement complained about.

The essence of the argument put forward by the hon. member for Dartmouth and the hon. member for Sudbury is that they do not agree that the advertisement I have just read is correct, and both of them indicated that they felt strongly on that issue.

The difficulty the Chair has is that it may very well be that an advertisement, statement, or publication might draw different views from different members, depending on where they sit in this Chamber, or even from the public. It may be that an advertisement may seem to be very accurate from one person's point of view and less than accurate from somebody else's point of view. But that is, by and large, a question of debate.

I point out that in this particular case the ad does start off with the comment that it is the "proposed goods and services tax". The hon. member for Dartmouth asked me to consider whether the next words, that is, "will be a tax" in any way denigrate from the opening words, "the proposed goods and services tax". While one might argue the semantics of it, I am inclined to think that it does not in any way take away from the clear intention of the words, "the proposed goods and services tax".

In connection with the substance of the ad—or perhaps I should say the content of the ad, because the substance of it is very much a matter of dispute in this chamber—I find that while there may be disagreement as to the ad, I do not think it is possible for the Chair to find that this ad in any way infringes on the capacity of an hon. member to do his or her duty as a member of Parliament. That is the test, of course, which the Chair has to apply in determining whether or not there is a question of privilege.

The hon. member for Kamloops eloquently supported the argument of the hon. member for Dartmouth and the hon. member for Sudbury. The Minister of National Revenue rose and indicated that he was not in entire agreement with some of the arguments that had been put forward with respect to the facts of the general situation surrounding the proposed goods and services tax. At that point, I asked hon. members to let the Chair consider the matter because, clearly, we were in danger of getting into a debate which went beyond the procedural argument.

As I say, I have heard the arguments. I have reviewed carefully the transcript of the advertisement and brought it to the attention of the House and the public, but my ruling must be that I can find no basis upon which the Chair could make the *prima facie* link with parliamentary privilege or contempt. Hon. members may wish to dispute the facts or pursue the matter through further debate, as indeed was done today in Question Period, but I cannot, on the evidence submitted, give this complaint consideration as a matter of privilege.

I appreciate the fact that I was well informed in advance and I appreciate also the courtesy and co-operation of all hon. members throughout the debate.

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WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, on Thursdays it is the custom for the opposition House leader to ask the government House leader what legislation the House will be called upon to study for the next few days. Would the minister give us chapter and verse of the legislation that we will be looking at tomorrow, Tuesday, and, possibly, next Wednesday?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow it would be my intention to call Bill C-34, dealing with the establishment of a management centre, and Bill C-57, dealing with copyright protection for integrated circuits. Hopefully, both bills can proceed through report and third reading stages tomorrow. I understand there has been discussion among the parties and some agreement in that regard.