

The Budget

• (1630)

[*English*]

It is this kind of deceitful record setting out the lack of fairness in Conservative tax reform that leaves Canadians absolutely unconvinced when the minister tries to tell them that the GST will be good for them, that they will be better off. That is the message we have been hearing. It is the message Canadians have been rejecting.

He says the GST will make low-income Canadians better off. Nobody believes that. Nobody believes the rate will state at 7 per cent very long either.

The minister said the GST will be revenue neutral, and everyone knows it is the beginning of the largest tax grab in Canadian tax history.

He told us for two years that the GST would raise \$18.5 billion in 1991. In yesterday's budget he now admits what we have been saying all along: the goods and services tax will raise more revenue than we have been told it would. The minister in his own document says the GST will raise \$19.5 billion, a \$1 billion increase. He just happened to find it and there it is already, an extra billion dollars.

[*Translation*]

The minister told us that the GST would be visible. We know that in most cases, it will be invisible. He said the GST would be simple. Just ask Canada's small businesses, because Canada will be the only country in the world with two systems for collecting sales tax: one federal and one provincial. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business told the government that the GST would be an administrative nightmare for small businesses.

The minister promised to abolish the temporary surtaxes on personal income tax as soon as the GST was implemented. Predictably, he has now made these surtaxes a permanent fixture and increased them from 3 to 5 per cent. He promised the GST would be accompanied by lower taxes for the middle class, but once again, he broke his promise. He promised that the government would pay compensation to small businesses who would have to collect the GST. That is not the case. He promised that the GST would not be imposed on food, but, Mr. Speaker, it will be added on to the price of cookies, pies, sandwiches and practically everything else

sold in a restaurant. And we must not forget that almost half of all food product sales will be affected by the GST because the products are eaten outside the home.

For months, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) kept telling Canadians that they would never bring the GST down from 9 per cent, but a few opinion polls later, the GST rate was reduced, but not enough, because Canadians still massively reject the proposed goods and services tax.

The Minister of Finance keeps telling us that the GST will not cause interest rates or inflation to go up. Nobody believes that, and nobody believes there will be no new taxes for Canadians as a result of the Budget he brought down yesterday, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Finance and the government should realize that all Canadian taxpayers have to pay federal, provincial and municipal taxes, and for the vast majority of Canadians, the goods and services tax is the last straw. Enough is enough. People are saying this across the country. Canadians are always willing to pay their share, but they fail to understand why they should be paying more taxes, when the Auditor General told us two weeks ago that the accounts receivable for taxes and other revenue owing to the government totalled over \$7 billion.

[*English*]

This government strategy on taxes can be summed up very simply: high, higher and highest. Canadians are saying no to the GST. My colleagues and I have collected the names of over 600,000 people on petitions, people who are saying no to the GST. My colleague from Dartmouth is heading up an electronic petition campaign, a first in this country I believe, against the GST. That campaign will be conducted between March 12 and March 16. We hope that Canadians across this country will call in and make sure they register their opposition to the goods and services tax. We in the Official Opposition are committed to stopping the tax. We hope the government will come to its senses, listen to Canadians and axe the goods and services tax.

Mr. Turner (Halton—Peel): What's your alternative?

Mr. Young (Gloucester): I listen to my hon. friend who used to have a great deal to say about tax reform. I understand his concern about an alternative. Certainly