



Message from Queen's Park



Monthly Column by MPP John Yakabuski

June 14th, 2010

On most calendars in Ontario, July 1st is a special day, in that it's Canada Day, a day of mutual pride in being citizens of the greatest nation on Earth. It's usually observed through the practice of time-honoured Canadian traditions, like the barbecue, slapping mosquitoes, things like that, and it's greeted with the general happiness that most statutory holidays bring to the population.

But this July 1st, Ontarians will have a little something extra to capture their attention, as that's the day they start paying the HST, or Harmonized Sales Tax. And believe me, from the conversations I've had with people around the riding, and in my day to day meetings with others, harmony is not something I'm seeing a lot of, unless it's got to do with opposing this tax grab.

In a cynical attempt to lessen the anger out there, the McGuinty Liberals are cutting cheques to mail out to the fine citizens of Ontario, hoping they'll believe that these cheques, in some way, help cover the cost and pain the HST will inflict on them. What they are, plain and simple, is an attempt to quiet the outrage this tax has provoked across the province, as well as right here in Renfrew County.

They are, quite clearly, an attempt to bribe people with their own money. And that is unacceptable.

This is not a tax that applies evenly across the province. Here in the Valley, the increase in gasoline costs alone will more than exceed any cheque sent to you to buy your silence. The so-called rebate will not be a protective barrier against increases in hydro and home heating, which are already too expensive. These everyday necessities, that already consume a significant portion of the average family's budget, will be 8% more come next month.

The list of other things, that were never taxed before but will be effective July 1st includes, Legal fees, home renovations, vet bills, haircuts, vitamins, financial services, gym memberships, funerals, bicycles and there are more. Honestly, do the McGuinty Liberals think they can draw more water from the well they have already sucked dry through over taxation.

Premier McGuinty, a self-proclaimed thoughtful and reflective type, started out by saying the HST would be revenue-neutral, that people wouldn't notice its effect, the same way, I suppose, people don't immediately notice the effect of an accomplished pickpocket. Then, upon further reflection, he's come to the conclusion that it may draw as much as \$800.00 a year out of each family's revenue pool. Well, that's a bit of a tough sell to people struggling through tough times. So now the official line is that, well, the government needs the money. Which, of course, flies in the face of the government's intention to send cheques out in the first place. Friends, it would appear that they're all over the place on this one, and are prepared to say and do whatever it might take to take the sting out of any public reaction. And honestly, from what I'm hearing, they're not going to be too successful.

We have people struggling already with the way the economy's been, and now we're going to have to listen to how losing \$800.00 a year is going to be good for us? By what manner of logic does that fly? Or is it simply another example of how the McGuinty Liberals, as thoughtful and reflective as they'd have us believe, are just simply out of touch when it comes to the realities we see on the ground here in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke? I'll bet Nero was pretty thoughtful and reflective too, but when Rome burning, you can be sure, the people were looking for a little more than the sweet strains of his violin.

Sadly, the government puts people in a difficult position with these rebate cheques. The people I talk to would love to tell the McGuinty Liberals to stuff their cheques, right along with the whole HST. But they're in tough circumstances, and most of them are in no position to turn down the rebate, no matter how ineffective it may be against the full fury of the HST. Because even though not enough, and even though bribing people is an inappropriate thing for the government to do, most people have no choice but to take the money and run.

In short, the HST is going to hurt. The rebate, given at the start, will make it hurt somewhat less at first, but once the medicine wears off, then baby, you're on your own. Once these rebates pass, we'll be left to struggle with this tax on our own, from that point on. And that's going to hurt a lot of people out there. And that's not right.

I, along with Tim Hudak and the PC Caucus will continue to fight and oppose this tax, in every way available to us, and we will not stop, in that effort until an appropriate measure of justice is achieved on behalf of those who bear the burden of this HST. This tax is patently unfair to the people of this area, and I'm duty-bound to my constituents to oppose it.

Warmest regards,
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