

Re: Debate in BC on the HST referendum

The raging debate in B.C. about the HST referendum is irrelevant. There was a time for such debate, but that was squandered, we're beyond that now. The issue is clear, the decision simple.

We're being asked to accept, or reject, an ill-considered package of legislation about how much we should contribute to all our public services; which services should be funded, which should be subsidized and which not; who should bear the costs; and what should be the mechanisms of administration. These are hugely important questions about our social fabric requiring deep and broad consideration.

On these important questions, our government has left us with a single, simple-minded decision: Either we keep the HST legislation as they have written it, or not. And if that idiocy isn't enough, they have also made it urgent: Make up your mind FAST! You no longer have any time to listen, to think, to discuss; DO IT NOW!

If I were being asked to vote only for or against the worth of the legislation, I'm not sure what I would conclude, facts are scarce, questions are complex, and time has run out. But I'm no longer thinking about that, because a much bigger issue dominates: If we accept this package of legislation, we also accept its inherent governance -- the process by which it was created, passed into law, and now amended, and the whole process 'corrected.'

Holding a quick yes/no referendum to brush off a botched, arrogant piece of government legislation is no way to make decisions about such important policy. Debate under such circumstances is ridiculous. But a vote to continue the HST will endorse just such a process.

Once over and successful, the whole sequence of events will be blithely justified: "There, we consulted the people; we've corrected our mistake; we'll be more careful next time." Our governors will move on to the next topic that serves their agenda. The whole slipshod process will begin again, and we'll be stuck with this half-baked piece of social policy and it's equally sloppy designers -- now newly mandated -- for another generation or so.

We must reject this process, no matter what the dubious merits of this legislation may be, no matter what the costs may be to stop it. I want to have -- I demand to have! -- the full, careful discussion about taxation this government denied all of us. Further, I demand this same governance for ALL future legislation.

It will be costly to fix this lunacy, but any other alternative than stopping it will cost much more, in money, in energy, in poor tax policy, in poorly conceived and considered future legislation. We'll suffer the effects for decades, and they will compound.

So, on this HST referendum I will vote "Yes!" Get rid of the HST. Go back to square one. Re-introduce this legislation. You figure out how to handle the transitional problems and costs you've created. Tax policy is now your priority. Don't come back with excuses; don't try to divert us with other issues; don't blame us for this mess. Get this right or step aside. You've got until next election.

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