



CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
BRITISH COLUMBIA DIVISION

510 - 4940 Canada Way, Burnaby, British Columbia V5G 4T3
www.cupe.bc.ca
Tel: 604-291-9119 Fax: 604-291-9043

FAXED
10/08/24
J.

August 24, 2010

Premier Gordon Campbell
Room 156
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

via fax: 250 387-0087

Dear Premier Campbell:

I write to you to urge you to call the BC Legislature back into session at the earliest possible opportunity so that MLAs of all parties may debate and have a free vote on the Harmonized Sales Tax your government introduced shortly after the most recent provincial election.

As you know, your party campaigned for re-election in part on a commitment *not* to bring in the HST. Furthermore, the means by which your government implemented the tax did not provide British Columbia's MLAs any opportunity to vote on the matter, either for or against. In addition, the HST is a massive shift to average citizens of \$2 billion in annual tax obligations previously levied on some of the biggest and most profitable corporations in BC.

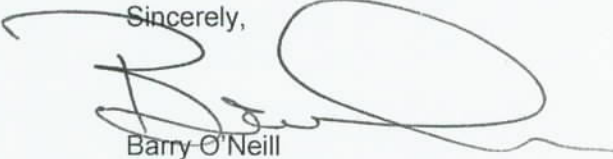
These three factors have landed your government in extremely hot water, and while it's certainly not my role (nor my intention) to advise you on escaping the political heat, I would suggest to you that bringing the matter to the Legislature for open, honest debate and a free vote is the only honourable course of action available to you.

I was pleased to see that following Chief Justice Robert Bauman's ruling last week the interim Chief Electoral Officer announced that he would forward the petition to the Legislature's Select Standing Committee on Legislative Initiatives. That said, the Committee has but two choices available to it: to recommend a province-wide referendum in 2011, or to introduce the legislation for debate. I strongly urge you to simply reconvene the Legislature yourself and table the Bill for debate and a free vote.

In the most recent provincial election, less than half the eligible voters exercised their electoral franchise. To me, that is a crisis in our democracy. Saying one thing to get elected and then doing the opposite once in office does nothing to reduce voter cynicism about politicians and the political process. If for no other reason than to reassure British Columbians that we still live in a functioning democracy, you must call the House back and introduce the legislation. The HST may be supported by a majority of MLAs; it may not. But it is clear that a majority of British Columbians oppose the tax and the way it was implemented. You have an opportunity to demonstrate the courage of your convictions and explain to British Columbians on the floor of the Legislature why you took the actions that have brought us to this point.

You and your party may not regain the trust with voters that has been shattered by the introduction of the HST. But the institutions of British Columbia's democratic government are far more important than partisan political considerations, and I would encourage you to consider that, along with your place in BC history, as you consider your next move.

Sincerely,


Barry O'Neill
President
CUPE BC Division

BON/LW - COPE-378

Barry O'Neill, President
Mark Hancock, Secretary-Treasurer

