

HST opposition remains strong in BC: Survey

Vander Zalm issues recall 'HST hit list'

By HELENA ZHU
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The Harmonized Sales Tax, which went into effect in British Columbia and Ontario on July 1, continues to be strongly opposed by the vast majority of B.C. residents, according to a new poll.

British Columbians blame both the government and the media for their lack of understanding of the 12 percent tax, and will significantly change their purchasing behaviour as a result of it, the Ipsos-Reid survey found.

Some will do that by going across the line to shop. Because also on July 1, Washington State began applying its non-resident sales tax exemption to British Columbians. Under this policy, B.C. residents will not have to pay sales tax in Washington State for goods used outside the state.

Just over half the 736 surveyed (54 percent) said they are likely to shop in Washington State as a result of the exemption, with 31 percent being a lot more likely and 23 percent a little more likely.

A significant majority claim they will be spending less on the goods and services that will be subject to the HST but have previously been taxed at a lower rate.

Eighty percent said they feel the HST will have a negative impact on them personally, while having less of a negative impact on small and large retailers. Fifty-five percent agreed that the HST will have a negative impact on the overall B.C. economy, with 59 percent agreeing that the tax will result in some small business owners going bust.

Meanwhile, although Ontario residents seem to have accepted the new tax with nary a whimper, anti-HST activists in B.C. have almost completed gathering signatures for a petition against the tax, which merges the GST and PST.

Canvassers in ex-premier Bill Vander Zalm's Fight HST campaign have collected more than 670,000



Former premier Bill Vander Zalm and provincial NDP leader Carole James during an anti-HST rally in Vancouver. ANDY CLARK / REUTERS

signatures on a petition in an attempt to overturn the legislation.

Once the petition is verified by Elections B.C., the government will be forced to either introduce legislation repealing the tax, or put the issue to a province-wide referendum.

In the meantime, Vander Zalm has issued a "HST hit list" composed of 24 MLAs from ridings where the petition campaign collected signatures from at least a quarter of registered voters. Those living in rural ridings are particularly strong in their opposition to the tax.

"We want these MLAs to pressure their government to listen to them, or risk losing them in a recall," Vander Zalm said in a press

release.

"We haven't yet decided which ones will be recalled first, or how many. Our sense is that we will recall one or two at a time, so as not to bring down the government, but to pressure them to repeal the HST."

Vander Zalm said his group had originally considered recalling Premier Gordon Campbell, but with the likelihood that the premier will resign before his third term expires, they felt it would be a waste of time and resources.

Under B.C.'s recall legislation, a registered voter can petition to remove an MLA from office. No other province or territory in Canada has such a system in place whereby voters can remove elected representatives from office between elections.

The legislation stipulates that the recall campaign cannot officially start until 18 months after the last provincial election, which in this case is November 2010. Signatures will need to be collected from 40 percent of eligible voters in each targeted MLAs riding, and organizers will only have 60 days to do it.

Meanwhile, as of July 1, restrictions on advertising related to the HST have been lifted. Campbell will embark on a province-wide speaking tour over the summer, and the government will be sending out pamphlets explaining the tax.

Finance Minister Colin Hansen also plans to spend the summer months touting the tax as beneficial for B.C.'s economy.

Committee to grill Fadden on foreign interference claims

FADDEN CONTINUED FROM P1

The CSIS head made the remarks in a rare television interview broadcasted on the eve of Hu Jintao's visit to Canada. He suggested that some officials get entangled after free visits to their "homeland," suggesting immigrant officials were more vulnerable to influence. He also said that officials were usually unaware they were being affected by their relationship with the foreign regime.

In the face of the uproar, Fadden later retracted much of the bite from his warning by reversing an earlier statement and saying CSIS had "not deemed the cases to be of sufficient concern to bring them to the attention of provincial authorities."

But while some MPs and at least one premier have been demanding that Fadden divulge details of suspected officials, Michel Juneau-Katsuya, former CSIS intelligence officer and head of the agency's Asia desk, said that is unlikely to happen.

"He will never give that information... The committee going and asking for it will be totally inappropriate. This is national security."

Juneau-Katsuya said details of the information CSIS has collected, whom it suspects, and details of its investigations are precisely the kinds of intelligence foreign spy agencies try to get their hands on.



CSIS director Richard Fadden. REUTERS/CHRIS WATTIE

spond to public displays of feelings among the electorate and it's the nature of the legislative beast in a democratic society to pay attention to such things."

'...this is like waging war, so today we are mobilizing for war...'

—Pro-Beijing student organizer Yuan Pinghua

CHINA'S CLANDESTINE EFFORTS

In the CBC interview, Fadden singled out China as a country most aggressive in recruiting political prospects at the university level, and said Chinese authorities organized demonstrations against the Canadian government in respect to some of Canada's China policies.

Coincidentally, that same day, the Epoch Times obtained a tape recording of a Chinese Embassy official directing Chinese students to join welcome rallies for Hu Jintao during his visit to Ottawa before the G20 (read the report here).

Liu Shaohua, the first secretary of the education section at the Chinese embassy in Ottawa, told the students they are to keep the embassy's request a secret and that the protest is to counteract the efforts of Tibetans, Uyghurs, democracy activists, and Falun Gong practitioners urging Canada to raise human rights with the Chinese regime.

"This time, for you, all the expenses will be paid by us," Liu said. "You do not talk about it outside. Do not talk about it to anyone except to people in this circle."

Liu directed the students to report any absence from the rally exceeding four hours to him and passed the meeting over to Yuan Pinghua, whose name does not appear on Canada's list of registered diplomatic staff.

Yuan went on to tell the students that their protest was a battle. "Now, in a word, this is like waging war, so today we are mobilizing for war, having all of you raise your guard," Yuan said.

He told the students that the embassy's role in the welcome rallies was a "state secret" and revealing plans to the "enemies" would put the embassy in a "death-trap."

Both men said all expenses for those attending the welcome rallies would be covered by the embassy. Those costs included transportation from other cities, hotels, and food.

INFLUENCE ON Canadian Officials

Harris said such efforts by the regime "amount to foreign interference in the democratic life and well-being of Canada."

"We know that politicians re-

He said such displays also legitimize those views in the eyes of Canadians, in this case that the Canadian government should not criticize the Chinese regime's various abuses.

"It is a multi-level manipulation of the democratic polity and its governors."

Like other former Canadian intelligence workers, Harris is also concerned by the Chinese regime and its efforts to influence Canadian officials.

"One of the ominous and one might say insidious considerations with influence operations is that one can find increasingly some of one's national elites compromised and therefore being rendered less and less likely to stand up to the threats."

An example of just that occurred last spring when Ottawa mayor Larry O'Brien returned from a trip to China and cancelled a proclamation for Falun Dafa Day (read the report here).

Former Vancouver mayor Sam Sullivan went to China as a city councillor and said he had been treated like "an emperor." Later, as mayor, he took court action to remove signs and a hut that had been erected outside the Chinese consulate for eight years as part of an appeal for Falun Gong.

Chen Yonglin, who defected to Australia while Consul for Political Affairs at the Chinese Embassy in Sydney, Australia, said influencing officials in regards to Falun Gong was a top priority for the Chinese regime.

He said one official had been caught in a "honey trap," seduced by a young Chinese woman and later blackmailed with the indiscretion, and forced by the regime to regularly advance its objectives.

Harris said that in the face of strong evidence that the Chinese regime makes concerted efforts to influence Canadian affairs, it is unreasonable for critics to offhandedly disregard the threat Fadden points to.

"I don't know how they could conclude so boldly that an experienced intelligence official, on this account, is wrong," he said.

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