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[How rational are voters? A study in contrasts](#)

May 16, 2009 by Andrew Potter

Economists will tell you that the harmonized tax is sound policy, by replacing the regressive PST with a single, more efficient value-added tax. The consensus on this by informed, unbiased observers; the opposition that does exist tends to come from the ignorant or the [self-interested](#).

But what happens when most people are ignorant? Yesterday, [Nanos released a poll](#) showing that the vast majority of Ontarians, and a large plurality of Canadians, think Ontario's move to harmonize the GST and PST is bad for them personally, and bad for the economy.

What are we to do about this, given that we live in a democracy? One [Bryan Caplanesque solution](#) might be to shrug and say, so much the worse for democracy. In the extreme, we might want to disenfranchise the ignorant. A more hopeful suggestion might be for people to write [more popular and accessible books on economics](#).

A further thought that I'll throw out to the crowd: Assume that many of the Ontarians who are opposed to the HST are so opposed simply because they don't grasp the somewhat complex nature of how a VAT works and why it is more economically beneficial. What happens if we substitute the acronym STV for HST? Does the Nanos poll tell us something about the lack of support for STV in the recent BC election, and the general lack of support for electoral reform in Canada?

Or is this a case of apples and oranges?

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