

A promotional banner for Porter Airlines. On the left, the Porter logo "porter flying refined" is displayed in white on a blue background. To the right, white text reads "Save 20% on any Porter flight", "Use promo code WINTER20", and "Book before November 30". Further right, smaller text states "New bookings only. Travel by March 31, 2010. Not valid with any other promotions or programs." On the far right, there is a cartoon penguin wearing a red Santa hat and scarf, standing in a snowy landscape with green Christmas trees and falling snowflakes.

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Dalton doesn't care about voters on HST

By SUN MEDIA

Last Updated: 24th November 2009, 8:32am

Premier Dalton McGuinty's refusal to hold public hearings on his controversial legislation imposing a 13% Harmonized Sales Tax on Ontarians as of July 1 next year would be defensible if he'd campaigned for it in the last election.

Then he could argue voters had already spoken on the issue.

But to claim, as he is now, that Ontarians will get their chance to vote on his imposition of the HST in the next election, almost two years away, is misleading and shows contempt for taxpayers.

By then, all voters will be able to do, if they are so inclined, is get rid of McGuinty and the Liberals, which isn't the same as getting rid of the HST.

The fact McGuinty doesn't understand the difference between himself and the long-term consequences of his policies is bad enough.

Worse, for Ontarians, is the practical reality that once the HST in place, it will be impossible to dismantle -- something Canadians learned in 1993 when Jean Chretien was elected promising to scrap Brian Mulroney's GST and promptly broke his word.

McGuinty has decided that for all his claims about how his overall tax reform package will leave the average Ontarian better off, there's no way he can win public support for the HST on the strength of his arguments.

A poll last week by Holinshed Research Group Inc. showed 76% of Ontarians surveyed oppose the HST. A Nanos Research poll last month -- before public fury over this issue really ignited -- showed Liberal strength down 10 points since the spring to 36.6%, barely ahead of the Conservatives at 35%.

That explains McGuinty's determination to ram through the HST legislation before Christmas and hope voter anger subsides by the October 2011 election.

McGuinty's refusal to hold public hearings -- which he would stack with business groups who support harmonization -- is more outrageous given that since the Liberals have a majority government, there's no way for the opposition to block the HST, despite stunts like yesterday's walkout by Conservative MPPs to protest the lack of hearings.

What it shows is the Liberals are running scared on the HST.

They should be.